

IN
TRANSITION

PNG IN THE 1970s

A personal memoir by

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Watts

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PART ONE

PROLOGUE

Personal Background

Fifty years ago In 1969, the same year indeed that man first walked on the moon, I hadn't yet discovered anything about the Territories of Papua and New Guinea on the other side of our own planet. I was even quite ignorant of where they were located on the globe, due north of Australia and about six degrees south of the equator.

Tony Watts and I were in the same tutorial group and studying to teach for our PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education), both of us specialising in Education In Tropical Areas and expecting to teach overseas.

As we were busy job hunting and reading the educational journals during that post graduate year, we were both drawn to an advertisement via the New Guinea Mission requesting qualified secondary teachers urgently for TPNG. Tony, himself an ex-VSO, already had a head start for a fellow undergraduate Colin had spent his own time as a VSO in TPNG and had spoken of his year at the St. Christopher's Training Centre in Popondetta there with enthusiasm. (Colin continued with that enthusiasm, remaining in contact with us throughout his lifetime. He eventually became a member of the PNG Church Partnership committee and lastly the Dean of Southwark Cathedral in London.)

The first decision was that we would get married, he a farmer's son from the remote Isles of Scilly off the west coast of Cornwall and I a daughter of a country rector from Essex and the S.E. of England.

Then we had established contact with the New Guinea Mission of the Anglican Church. The general secretary at that time, Fr Ted Kelly, arranged to recruit us both as secondary teachers for four years. The Mission was also able to gain from greatly subsidised air fares (£10 each) for us. We were amongst the last to qualify for Australia's 'White Australia' policy, offering generous incentives to white overseas workers who were prepared to commit at least one year in its territory. (Unrealised by me at the time was that this was the very same reason why my ineligible newly married sister, living then in Sydney, emigrated to Vancouver with her new Singapore/Chinese husband in 1970).

Precisely four months after our marriage, in late November 1970, we offloaded our thick coats and sweaters to my mother at Heathrow for the next four years, picked up our one rucksack and one suitcase, and set off to teach in TPNG, knowing little more than that. I also took with me, I recollect, one manual typewriter which I had recently mastered as a possible useful skill.

When the Bishop of New Guinea's secretary met us off the plane in Port Moresby and told us we would be getting the afternoon flight to Popondetta, and teaching at Martyrs School, I recall feeling quite relieved. This was at least one place we knew something about, thanks to Tony's student friend, and we would simply take things as they were from there.

It was only later that I gradually pieced together some of the threads that bound together not just the long-standing relationship between the Anglican Church and the national government but also the remarkable background of this pioneering school we would soon be getting to know so well.

Earlier Church & Government Relations

Before 1946

Back in the 19th century the country of New Guinea, roughly the eastern half of a large lizard shaped island north of Australia, was divided between German New Guinea to its northwest and British New Guinea, to the south and furthest east. In 1905 Australia took over the administration of the south eastern part of the island and renamed it Papua. After the First World War Australia was also granted the mandate for the former German New Guinea but the two parts continued to be administered separately and had separate names.

When different Christian missions started arriving to evangelise this largely unexplored country, an arrangement was reached that each of the five earliest missions should be granted jurisdiction over separate areas. From that time the Anglican Church in Australia put down its mission roots largely in the Northern district of Papua beyond the central spine of the Owen Stanley range of mountains, and also from Samarai furthest east and a coastal port for Australian shipping, all along the northern coast as far as the boundary with German New Guinea.

The first Anglican missionaries arrived in 1891 and over the next twenty years or so the mission increased in size and spread out from its early foundations at Dogura in the east as far as the Mamba river in the far northwest.

Priority was the training of teacher-evangelists, and emphasis was given to the steady building up of an indigenous Church and bringing basic literacy and primary education to the villages and mission stations.

The conventional Anglican hierarchy of bishop, priest, deacon, evangelist, remained paramount, regardless of race or background, but shortages of funding and staffing were ever-present realities as were the deprivation and isolation experienced. One of the commentaries of the earliest days of the New Guinea Mission described its ethos as “where trading was forbidden and all lived in a state of pinching and poverty”.

The period between the wars was one in which change was accelerating, wherever people were being exposed to the outside world. It was through an initiative of the Anglican Mission that local councillors were introduced and a new model of local government councils was started. District government was steadily advancing, and prospectors, miners and traders were introducing new ideas as well as the missions.

In the Northern District, new Mission stations at Gona and Duvira (Mamba) on the coast, and Sangara and Isivita further inland on the lower slopes of Mt. Lamington, were established in the 1920s and 30s.

In a land as rugged, remote and multi-lingual as Papua, improving communication was essential. The new Mission steam launch ‘Maclaren King’ now provided a regular monthly run to isolated Mission stations up and down the coast.

Mastering key languages for Bible and liturgy translations became a priority for many of the early missionaries, including Henry Holland and Romney Gill.

The rough dirt road inland from the Gona coast built largely by missionaries in the 1930s was already a great improvement on the crisscrossing network of traditional bush tracks that the isolated pioneering missionaries had previously depended upon.

By 1933, there were already seven fully trained Papuan priests and three deacons sharing in a clergy conference with their white missionary colleagues.

At the time of the outbreak of war in 1939, the majestic permanent structure of Dogura Cathedral, built as a community effort by local Anglicans throughout the Diocese, was finally consecrated. In spite of the war the grand jubilee celebrations of the Anglican Mission in 1941 continued to focus on Dogura as its heart and key training centre and throughout the war years the elderly retired bishop, Henry Newton, continued to train local men for the priesthood.

It was fortunate that Dogura was relatively untouched during the war years, though the main Anglican headquarters further east at Samarai had barely time to be evacuated and its store goods hastily transferred to Dogura before it was bombed by the Japanese.

But the Japanese really began to make their presence felt with the bombing and occupation of Rabaul in New Britain to the north, and their attack on Lae on the New Guinea mainland in early 1942.

The sudden and unanticipated invasion of the Japanese so close by on the north coast of Papua in July 1942 was to change life radically for the national administration and the Anglican Mission itself, especially over the following few months, and the work of the Church in the Northern district was particularly badly affected.

Key well established Mission stations of coastal Mamba and Gona and inland Sangara and Isivita were virtually obliterated by the advancing Japanese troops. They surged ever southward from their new Pacific base in Rabaul, aiming to head directly over the Kokoda Trail towards the capital Port Moresby, with the intention of using the capital as a launchpad for an invasion of Australia. In the end it was tropical infections and diseases that decimated the Japanese troops attempting to cross that hazardous and notorious Kokoda Trail, and it was this factor more than any military manoeuvres which ultimately caused their troop withdrawal from Kokoda in September 1942.

In all eleven loyal Mission staff brutally lost their lives and nearly all of Henry Holland's dedicated and meticulous translation papers were also completely destroyed at Isivita as the troops advanced.

But nature also took its toll of the diminished Anglican Mission, for shortly after the war a devastating cyclone and tidal wave was to hit the coast between Gona and the Mamba, destroying multiple coastal villages and their population.

From 1946

Yet one of the significant post-war benefits for the Anglican Mission in the Northern district was in the vastly improved communication networks between previously remote areas. The allied military, both Australian and American, had set up a valuable radio communication system, and the greatly improved roads, bridges, airstrips and wharves were to everyone's advantage.

The rapid rebuilding of so many damaged or destroyed Mission stations was the result of many scavenged and recycled building materials, military goods and vehicles.

Fr. Dennis Taylor (whose very name was going to become far more familiar to us eventually) in particular did much to improve the mission buildings and vehicle transport as a whole when he was sent from Wanigela to replace the martyred priest, Vivian Redlich, and rebuild the mission station at Sangara.

(Indeed, even during the time we were at Martyrs in the early 1970s, hidden dumps of military equipment and vehicles, by now well camouflaged by jungle creepers and lush greenery, were still being unearthed and requisitioned by their finders.

*The ubiquitous marsden matting, ancient fridges and rusting corrugated iron
were all evidence of wartime military activity.
I had also noted the frequent use of old shell cases being used as Angelus bells
outside Mission churches)*

But of course far harder to replace in that war ravaged Anglican Mission was the dreadful human loss of so many key personnel. In the first post-war Anglican staff conference held at Dogura in 1947, there remained only 20 of the 1941 staff, but Bishop Strong, who had personally demonstrated such Christian faith and conviction throughout all the dangers and hazards of the war years, showed great resilience to consolidate and even expand the Anglican Mission's outreach wherever new opportunities arose.

New Britain itself, under Japanese occupation during the war and previously under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Melanesia, was now included within the expanded Anglican Diocese of New Guinea, as was a previously unexplored part of the eastern Highlands of New Guinea.

The Government administration had been heavily hit in the Northern district during the war years especially at Buna and Killerton wharf not far from Gona on the coast. It moved its headquarters inland to Higaturu on Mount Lamington after the war and welcomed the reliable support network provided by the missions.

Fr James Benson, now back again amongst the Gona people in 1946, having spent the preceding years as a prisoner of war in New Britain, inspired the first regular cooperative society in TPNG. This then grew and expanded elsewhere in the territory as it harnessed the traditional method of mutual cooperation working within the tribe. It was incidentally also entirely in keeping with the Anglican Mission approach of encouraging and assisting the Papuan people in their own economic ventures rather than running any 'bisnis' for the Mission itself.

There was absolutely no government **medical provision** throughout northern Papua at the time, so the Administration encouraged the Anglican Mission to take on all medical work in the entire Northern district and the whole length of the northern coast as far as Samarai in the east. This was a huge task with no doctor anywhere and only five Mission nurses remaining. There were by now neither government schools nor hospitals, and very little funding support for the Mission to take over these tasks.

Health work started to be reorganised in the Northern district at Eroro on the coast on the site of old army buildings and a modest training hospital, St. Margaret's, was begun there. With the arrival of Dr Blanche Biggs in 1948, medical oversight of the whole northern region could finally begin. It was at that time quite an innovation, not just within the Mission, for local women to be trained as nurses alongside the male medical orderlies.

The importance of training in all three of the Mission's main ministries of evangelism, teaching and healing would continue apace. In keeping with the Anglican approach throughout from the very beginning, training of any kind had never been to take its indigenous members away from their own communities but rather to enhance life there for everyone.

By 1950 there were already 43 indigenous teacher evangelists from across the Anglican Church being trained at St. Aidan's college in Dogura alongside St Barnabas Hospital which was starting to train indigenous medical orderlies.

The following year a separate theological college named after Bishop Newton was also established at Dogura to train local candidates for ordination.

In the context of many constraints, not least in finance and staffing, the decision in 1947 to found a new secondary school at the rebuilt Mission station at Sangara spoke very much of the spirit and determination which Bishop Philip Strong had inspired with his leadership throughout the war years.

It was however in 1950 that Fr. David Hand, at the time priest in charge of Sangara station and chaplain of the new secondary school there, was consecrated as his assistant bishop in the new Diocese of New Guinea. He was given the specific charge to evangelise the remote Eastern Highland area that was only just being 'opened up' and where the government was actively encouraging church involvement as a stabilising influence. Bishop David happened to be away in Australia to raise interest in this new opportunity for outreach when the news first broke of the horrific **volcanic eruption of Mount Lamington in January 1951.**

The shocking and entirely unexpected effect of that eruption was utter devastation across a wide swathe of inhabited land on the lower slopes of the mountain as well as the total destruction of Sangara station and the main government administration centre at Higaturu higher up on the slopes. So many lost their lives that day, including amongst many others the District Commissioner and the government doctor. It narrowly, indeed almost miraculously, stopped short of engulfing the other main Mission station of Isivita, a relatively short distance away and further up and round the side of the mountain.

This dreadful devastation was a double tragedy for the Anglican Church in Papua as a whole. After all that initial promise the entire burgeoning Martyrs School was obliterated at a violent stroke. On top of that many of the most gifted local primary teachers, specially assembled for some upgrading and in-service training by the Martyrs school Head during school holidays, were also all killed. Having survived the war, Fr. Dennis Taylor with his entire family including all four young children also lost his life that day.

Thanks to being asked to assist with the Sunday services at Isivita, **George Ambo**, at that time one of the 40 teacher evangelists assembled at Sangara, narrowly escaped the eruption. In all, it was estimated that nearly 4,000 people lost their lives, all within the Anglican Mission's remit. There had been some deeply felt rumblings, earth tremors, landslides and signs of smoke over several days, but nowhere in the essentially oral tradition of local folklore, was there any suspicion that the much revered mountain was actually an active volcano, and from a volcanologist's point of view, to blow out the side, rather than the top, of a volcano was particularly rare.

Bishop David was immediately directed to return to his former base to assist with the volcano's aftermath and later did much to champion the rights of the remaining indigenous population of the Lamington area, who had also lost so much of value to their lives, no workable land, no subsistence food gardens, no timber resources. New legislation on land reform would become an increasingly urgent issue in subsequent years.

Soon a brand-new government hospital was built at Saiho between Popondetta and Kokoda to assist the casualties and now provided facilities not previously available to the Mission. **Sister Pat Durdin**, who had done so much at Isivita in the immediate aftermath of the eruption, continued her medical work from a smaller mission hospital nearer Kokoda. By 1959 in useful collaboration with the government but staffed by the Mission and masterminded by Dr Blanche Biggs, a new T.B. and leprosy hospital was opened near Eroro, and also in the 50s the land near the Jegerata mission station that Fr Dennis Taylor had acquired for food production was now renamed in his memory.

Communication improved greatly with more coordinated radio schedules shared by neighbouring missions. Elsewhere the **Eastern Highlands** became more opened up to the Anglican Mission. New Mission stations there were established in the 1950s mainly pioneered by Papuan evangelists, to whom this appeared quite a different country and unfamiliar way of life.

The decade before we arrived at Martyrs however was by far the most far reaching to date, both in the evolution of the Anglican Church and in the Territory's whole development.

1960 was the year that Fr. George Ambo became the first ever Papuan bishop, a huge boost to localisation at a time that the Australian administration was already predicting the need for growth towards self-government and independence, maybe within the next thirty years or so.

By 1963, when Bishop Strong was enthroned as the Archbishop of Queensland, Bishop David took over his mantle as Bishop of New Guinea. By this stage the size of the expanding Diocese was already becoming unwieldy, with an increasing number of new parishes and baptised members, so it was divided into separate regions to ensure better pastoral care.

Bishop Bevan then became a further assistant bishop at his consecration in 1967 with particular responsibility for the 'Highlands and Islands', taking over that responsibility from Bishop David. (This was the same **Bevan Meredith**, who having been one of the first three overseas teaching staff at the new look MMS, and starting out as a layman in the 50s, had then returned to Australia to be ordained. His early pioneering work as a priest in the 60s was at Sakarina in the newly opened up Managalas.)

Bishop David now had Port Moresby as his base, necessarily more central than Dogura. Bishop George had greater responsibility for the Northern District, while in 1968 the newly consecrated Bishop Kendall had pastoral oversight in the eastern region.

Just as the management structures of the Anglican Diocese were evolving, the Administration itself was undergoing major structural change during this decade.

Previously the Legislative Council's agenda had been driven largely from Canberra, but with the inauguration of the new **House of Assembly** in 1964 there was now a limited provision for elected nationals to have more of a say in their own government.

The new national Pangu Pati of 1968, led by **Michael Somare**, was growing more confident and outspoken in the House of Assembly and expressed its willingness to learn how to govern best by making its own mistakes.

The History of Martyrs Memorial School

Formation: 1947 to 1952

At the first post-war general meeting of the much depleted expatriate staff of the Anglican Church in 1947, there was universal agreement that there should be some appropriate living memorial to the nine missionaries and their companions who had remained at their posts and had given their lives in the recent conflict. They were without question acknowledged as true martyrs.

At the same time, there was a growing need to establish in this area a church based secondary school, the first to cater for some of the more able primary school leavers.

These two ideas coalesced with much rejoicing into the establishment of 'The Martyrs School'.

The new school was originally sited beside the Sangara Mission station on the lower slopes of Mount Lamington, where three of the original martyrs had been buried. There it was to remain for only the next three years, from February 1948 until its abrupt demise in January 1951 with that completely unpredicted volcanic eruption..

Very fortuitously the eruption took place during the school holidays when most of the boarders were back in their home villages. There was never any question that the school would close, despite the deep tragedy of the death of its charismatic head teacher, Margaret de Bibra, and so it was immediately relocated to temporary accommodation down on the coast at Gona.

(One of its early intake at that time was a 14 year old student called Rynold Sanana from Eroro, another coastal Mission station. He would eventually go on to become the second Papuan bishop in the Anglican diocese of New Guinea in 1976).

The hastily appointed replacement Head who was eventually to stay on for a further formative sixteen years, was Rev. Byam Roberts, Headmaster of the Slade School in Queensland. He spent much of his first year on that temporary site down on the coast, but an urgent search was on to find a suitable replacement site nearer the original location. The key criteria were good garden land, a reliable fresh water supply, a handy location for medical help and ready access for the Mission truck supplies.

Re-construction: 1953 to 1959

Suitable land, part virgin bush and part long abandoned food gardens with a flowing river, was finally offered by local people at Ginjiri (meaning stony place) in January 1953. It was located beside the road not far from the new government hospital at Saiho and just opposite Agenehambo, which was now acting as a replacement Mission station for Sangara.

Major clearing and building work began immediately and by Feb. 1954 the school site was just about up and running, ready for its new intake of students.

After a further tremendous amount of ground breaking hard work the school was finally re-dedicated at a mighty ceremony on Martyrs Day in 1955.

During those formative early years, many of the school's routines, structures and underlying ethos became firmly grounded. This was a predominately cashless economy with little actual money for the boys' families to be able to afford boarding school fees. The custom was therefore readily established that each boy should cultivate his own plot of land and grow vegetables specifically to supply the school as an 'offering' to offset his own school fees. Likewise there were no paid ground or domestic staff, and the boys would be divided into work squads and cook squads to take rostered turns at all routine cooking, grass cutting and general maintenance.

Most of the boarders came from up to 20 different language groups, some of which had been historically deeply suspicious of each other, so living harmoniously together at Martyrs was a practical way in which the school could set a good example to the community. It was in this context that the **established tradition of garden houses** came into its own.

While English was the accepted common language in the Anglican Mission for public activities and teaching, in those early days the one place where the boys could feel totally at home and secure was in their own language group garden houses, constructed by themselves in their own traditional style.

Over the years the tradition continued. Once in their own garden house the students could relax during their precious free time, notably at weekends. This came to be a special place where the older boys would initiate the younger ones into the strange mysteries of boarding school life and they were free to offer Martyrs' style hospitality to any visitors from home.

Meanwhile during those early years there was always the urgent need to develop further infrastructure for the expanding school population. Gradually small plantations of coconut and banana trees were established as potential food sources wherever the boys made clearings in the bush, and a rudimentary sports field was created on the deba-deba, an open space near the classrooms. But the demand for buildings simply never ceased: staff housing, classrooms, dormitories, chapel were all built in the traditional way from locally obtained bush material, which would and did have a relatively short lifespan.

The laborious introduction of pit-sawn timber for main frames in the late fifties partly extended the lives of school buildings. The continuous burden of essential building work however took up much of the time available for teaching and study and the perpetual demands of raising educational standards. Staff lighting was generally still limited to the tall pressurised paraffin 'Tilly' lamps, remembered from my own country childhood.

Two of the early staff members who made a significant personal contribution to the building up of the school in the 1950s we did get to know well many years afterwards, without realising much of their earlier contributions to Martyrs, namely Bevan Meredith and Father Denys Browning.

We encountered Fr. Denys Browning on more than one occasion in the 1970s, and also Bevan Meredith at Diocesan and Provincial Council meetings at CTC when he was already Bishop of the New Guinea Islands. I was to meet him again much later at PNGCP meetings with his graphic tales as a close eyewitness of the Rabaul volcanic eruption in 1994.

But back then in the 1950s, Bevan had been amongst the first of the new teachers to join Byam Roberts, taking on a large share of the outdoor work at MMS, as well as some necessary furniture making and starting a school choir.

Meanwhile in 1959, Fr Denys Browning was able to make full use of his multiple gifts when he arrived from the Bush Brotherhood in Australia. His first self-appointed task was an accurate survey and mapping of the entire school land that had never yet been done. He also maintained the precious school tractor, supervised the food gardens and ingeniously invented a water supply system for the whole school.

He was particularly instrumental in the design and build of several more permanent structures that were still in place when we first arrived in 1970.

Progression: 1960 to 1970

The government decision to upgrade all standards for secondary education gave a great challenge to the staff of MMS. Not only was there going to be greater demand for an up to date curriculum but much better facilities, with more science equipment and more extensive library for example, plus more teaching staff were going to be needed to cater for this new intake of secondary school students. The secondary population was by now increasing from 100 to a peak of almost 500, about the maximum capacity the school could sustain.

Fundraising became an overriding issue. The national government was by now providing some limited grants to extend secondary education as rapidly as possible, but there is no doubt that it was through the valuable overseas church contacts of some of the current and former expatriate staff that major fund raising projects and the building programme went ahead so constructively during this period.

Links with Australian Church schools, notably Geelong Grammar and Brighton Grammar near Melbourne, became the most significant, with regular school trips and working groups organised to galvanise interest and essential funds back home from their financial backers and supporters. The particular support of Geelong Grammar's Headmaster dated as far back as the war years, when Dr Darling had expressed his particular enthusiasm for working groups from school to assist with post-war reconstruction of Mission buildings.

(The much publicised visit of the 16 year old Prince Charles coincided with one such trip in 1966, when he came with a school group from Geelong and even spent a night in a traditional garden house, looked after conscientiously by MMS students while the official bodyguards stayed in the Mission House for the duration of that famous visit. This was a much spoken of event for many years at the school, and the Prince too referred to that first visit in his speech at the inauguration of the independent nation as part of the Commonwealth in 1975.)

Thanks to overseas donations, MMS benefited over these years greatly from material gifts such as new tractors, the school truck and a powerful generator that allowed far more activity and study time in the evenings, sports equipment, uniforms, text books and a duplicating machine.

By far the biggest expansion however came in the building programme. By 1963, work had begun on the permanent de Bibra building, designated as a science lab and library, followed by a much needed replacement Mission House, to accommodate all the single staff. The previous building had been erected out of bush material back in 1953 and was already on the point of collapsing.

It was planned that each completed building would be dedicated by name to one of the WWII martyrs, in order to keep their legacy alive. Over the following years of the decade were added more staff houses, including ones for the Head and Deputy Head, a new dispensary and library facilities, upgraded classrooms, a food store and maintenance department and two major new dormitories for more senior students.

It was also in the 60s that the government installed a Seismograph building in the grounds of MMS, for the resident staff there to monitor the slightest tremor from the dormant volcano not so very far away, which was in a way reassuring, as the staff would at least be the first to know.

Another innovation came with a more diverse teaching staff. As the earlier pattern of lifetime dedicated Anglican missionaries was diminishing, the need for more specialist subject teachers was increasing.

As well as several short term single volunteers from newer organisations such as VSO and AVA, there were also a few married overseas staff, the very first of whom took up teaching posts in 1961. By the time we arrived in late 1970, there were already three teaching couples from overseas, one Australian, one Canadian and one British.

There were as yet still no nationally qualified secondary teachers, mission or otherwise, although a recent government Teacher Training College had been started in Goroka in the Highlands. In 1969 the Anglican teacher training college at Dogura had closed, joining forces with the Lutheran Balob Teachers' College in Lae in order to share better facilities.

The following year the Anglican Church joined forces with the government, requiring that all secondary teaching staff should be properly qualified, hence the advertisement that was to draw us into the life of MMS for the coming four years.

Living at MMS: 1970 to 1974

RED HIBISCUS and GARDEN HOUSES

Finally, in early December 1970, Tony Watts and I arrived at Martyrs Memorial School (MMS) expecting to stay there as secondary school teachers for the next four years. As a newly married wife I realised the unfamiliar title of Mrs Watts was rarely used or even referred to, for as an established Mission school, we were quickly given the nomenclature of 'Brother Tony and Sister Gay'. (I had already noticed a local difficulty with my first name, Gabrielle, as the sounds of R and L were frequently interchangeable in that part of Papua (cf. grass/glass and river/liver).

Four years later though we left MMS (but not PNG in fact) as a family of three, for while Tony had become established there as head of Agriculture, I stopped full-time teaching after the first two years and became a mother instead, which was to change the dynamic of our life there and in the future quite considerably.

The following account therefore is not intended as an objective record of the school up to the end of 1974, but rather a personal memoir of those four years, drawing largely on selected excerpts of existing letters and my commentaries on various photographs and slides from myself to my mother.

The reinvigorated memories awakened by the close scrutiny of all this correspondence have now been added to the mix nearly fifty years later.

INITIATION: Early Days at M.M.S.1970 - 71

I will never forget the major shift at the end of November 1970 from cold, wintery Heathrow and our thick heavy clothing to the extraordinary sensation like a warm, damp flannel flung in my face on that first arrival at 7 a.m. in early December in Port Moresby.

By midday it was starting to look almost overcrowded with the large jets landed from Australia and Hongkong and all the smaller local planes arriving to make connections for the various passengers.

The whole airport had more of the atmosphere of a busy railway junction, with people rushing purposefully to and fro as we made our way to our 20-seater plane. This was the Twin Otter that would be taking us over the distant Owen Stanley range about 70 miles to Popondetta.

This had now become the Northern District's main centre following the eruption.

First letter home, December 1970

.... A break in the clouds showed us the miles upon miles of jungle forest that blanket the Range. Before the planes, people would have a physically gruelling six-day trek up and down along the famous Kokoda Trail to cross the mountains. To bring the post one carrier would bring a bag of mail from each end; they would then exchange loads when they met in the middle.

I can well understand how isolated the people were from each other before there were proper means of transport and why there are just so many languages.

As we came lower to land at Popondetta, we could see how quite a lot of the forest had been cleared for plantations and the rivers appeared quite shallow and fast flowing, full of boulders of volcanic rock swept down from the mountains. The road we could see clearly, the one and only one from the foot of the range at Kokoda as far as Popondetta and on one of the bends we spotted a village clearing with a few huts of thatch.

Popondetta airport when we finally arrived was little more than a corrugated iron shed as the only building in sight. We were glad someone was there to meet us! When the grass gets too long or the land is waterlogged there is another landing strip a few miles away apparently that can be used. This whole area has just been cleared straight out of the bush.

On an exploratory walk next day we discovered a 'creek' (Australian for river) in the school grounds not far from the boys' cookhouse, with thick creepers festooned from the trees and what appears as untamed jungle coming right down to the water's edge. The dense greenery and sound of running water flowing over the rocks is very fresh and cooling on such a humid day.

Because they are so fast-flowing the creeks round here are quite safe for bathing apparently, provided that the water hole is big enough and deep enough!

Locally people believe that rocks increase in size as they get older, possibly as more rocks appear after a heavy downpour in the rainy season from further up the mountain.

Our nearest village to Martyrs School is just up the road from the main entrance, a very small collection of houses built up on stilts for ventilation and protection from snakes, with traditional thatched roofs made from sago leaves and a separate communal cookhouse.

The church, primary school and main Mission station are directly opposite the small village. The school children are responsible for maintaining the grounds around their classrooms, mainly by cutting the grass with homemade scythes called petos. The church here was designed and built out of bush material by Martin Chittleborough, the Australian priest here, and looks very well maintained.

It was in fact a staff bush trek up to the site of the old government station at Higaturu to mark the twentieth anniversary of the eruption in Jan 1951, that gave us one of our first tastes of life outside the secure confines of Martyrs School. One of the senior prefects at the time had offered to be our guide into his home area. Without his care and guidance I am sure we staff would have become quickly lost, and it was salutary as 'westerners' to realise how much intrinsic knowledge the local students had of living in the bush.

It was hard to conceive that the whole of this area had been totally wiped out or else smothered in pumice dust and volcanic ash just twenty years previously. All this dense canopy of lush growth and tree creepers was no more than secondary rain forest and nowhere near the virgin jungle of my imagination!

Still, as I gingerly made my way over the undulating rope bridges crossing deep ravines, ever climbing towards the summit of the dormant volcano, even unearthing hidden relics of the station detritus once we had reached our destination, this more than satisfied my desire for further exploration, at least for the time being.

Letter home and commentary on slides, January 1971

Looking back up the road from the new entrance is the original way in to the school site, reached by fording the creek, with the remains of the old cross, a mark of all the Mission stations and schools in this area. This new entrance is lined with colourful croton bushes, very popular with the village people here. One of Tony's very first jobs was helping to erect the smart new school sign and the great 14 ft. Mission cross made out of a tree trunk behind it. The sweat absolutely poured off him with the exertion!

The school buildings begin about a further 500 yards down the drive, with the Mission House almost the first building we encountered, which is where we spent those early days. That first night was so stiflingly hot and humid, with a huge bat flying around, I quite lost any appetite, and could hardly believe it when Tony returned from breakfast to say he had just eaten a bowl of porridge! I couldn't even begin to think of wanting such a thing!

We had been woken at about 6 a.m. by the sound of some boys petoing the grass around the Mission House with the by now familiar long, sharpened metal strips. Apparently that is the usual way to keep grass cut round here.

When the boarders left for home in early December, for some of the more distant of them it has been a whole two years that they have been away. No wonder they left in such high spirits. Papuans love to decorate themselves with flowers and often stick scarlet hibiscus or dry grasses in their hair, so they took the opportunity to load the school truck with fronds and sprays of croton, despite the rain, no doubt blocking the poor driver's vision too.

The school truck takes them the 40 miles or so to the coast, the Mission boat then takes them for at least another 24 hours to their nearest coastal station, followed perhaps by another canoe paddle or for some the prospect of a two-day walk to get back to their home village.

For the boarders who were left there was the great event on Christmas Day of the arrival of Father Christmas, Papuan style, dressed up with red hibiscus and a red lap-lap, though his voice had a remarkable resemblance to Tony's!

The open sided veranda style space of the Mission House under what was our own guest room is almost concealed by the ubiquitous crotons which provide some element of privacy for the staff. This open space serves as a general common room cum dining room for all the single men. A bit further round is the Headmaster's flat above the admin. office.

Nearby is the newly built dispensary with its high raised up bench where the boys sit to get their routine leg sores and cuts dressed. A bush material round house next to it serves as a waiting room for any boys wanting to see the Head.

There are still several older bush material buildings around, some of them looking as if they are about to fall down, including dormitories used by the more junior boys. One of these has been converted into a temporary covered dining room, though the general cook area and servery are still out in the open. Any laundry is simply spread out on the grass to dry.

A coconut tree silhouetted against the night sky can look really dramatic, though I have now experienced it can also be quite frightening when a branch or a nut comes crashing down without any warning, hitting the ground with a sharp thud!

As a preventative measure the boys occasionally climb up the trees with their feet tied together for better grip, to knock down any nearly ripe coconuts. They appear to do it with so little effort, sometimes just holding on with their arms to give their legs a rest.

We have been able to have a good look around while there are few boarders during the school holidays. The few remaining boys prefer to sleep in their own garden houses anyway rather than the empty, deserted dormitories.

The two new dormitories for senior students with their adjoining washrooms and shower blocks look so much smarter than the old ones, and there is now a clever gravity-feed water supply with its above ground pipeline. We were told that a retired builder recently came up from Melbourne for 8 months to build the dormitories, as well as a classroom block and new staff married quarters for the Deputy Head and his wife, which has an annexe for the school chaplain.

We have also been told that a new building for further staff married quarters is due to be next in line and will be designated for us - very exciting! It is planned to be near the other new staff married quarters, right down below the new dormitories and about ten minutes' walk from the main Mission House.

It appears very quiet and secluded down there, especially during the school holidays and very pleasant with the sound of the river 50 yards or so away down a gentle slope. Surrounded by another mini coconut plantation we shall just have to watch out for falling coconuts!

Letter home, February 1971

What a difference it makes now most of the boys are back and raring to go again!

It is quite a sight to see the organisation required to cook breakfast for that number of students! Behind the dining room and servery, with the sound of the creek just below, are four or five huge cauldrons steaming over the open fires, in preparation for the vast mounds of sweet potato and pumpkin which make up their staple diet.

The entire school is divided into fourteen work and cook squads, which take it in turns to do all the catering and maintenance work for the whole school, as there are no domestic staff at all. They all get up really early each day to get all the chores done in time before school proper starts, especially the cook squad who have to get the cooking fires going first of all.

Now that the Mission housekeeper has left, even the staff have to look after themselves by rota too! Not even the married staff are left off the hook. Us three hapless wives have to take it in turn to cook a main meal for everyone over in the Mission House. I'm starting to dread even the idea, already!!

We now live permanently in one of the older staff houses right next to the food store and regularly see the boys bringing in their vegetables and bananas from their own food gardens to be weighed and recorded as their contribution towards their school fees.

One of Tony's new responsibilities is to oversee the business of 'hoija'. This is where the village women come to barter their piles of locally grown vegetables for the prized commodities of a cup of salt, a bottleful of paraffin or a twist of 'black stick', a really potent looking type of tobacco which is very popular around here and can be used as a trading commodity.

In a virtually cashless economy such as this, bartering for goods is a very familiar way of trading, it appears.

(I notice that a very common way for the village women to carry their babies and vegetables is in a string bag on their back which they hang from the top of their head. If the load is particularly heavy they pad their heads to ease the string handles. These bags are incredibly strong and roomy and can come in many different sizes and have a crocheted look about them.

I have heard as many as three laden bags can be carried like that, one on top of another, as the women trudge long treks through the bush from their food gardens, sometimes with a man walking proudly ahead carrying just his hunting spear.)

Letter home, February 1971

The view of Mount Lamington is becoming a familiar sight to us by now on the way to Martyrs. On a clear day it is just possible to see slight wisps of smoke rising from its crater and we can see the side where the eruption took place, blowing out the whole of this part of the rim of the crater which would explain the rather unusual profile it now has. It was just incredible when we saw for ourselves how over the years the tree growth has gradually crept back upwards towards the summit over land that had been completely blanketed in volcanic ash.

Nowadays there are far more sophisticated instruments to detect any ground tremors or disturbances, so with the seismograph we now have at Martyrs we would have much greater warning than the unfortunate inhabitants of 20 years ago.

The old house where we currently live is across the main drive from the Mission House, and when we first came it was in need of a fair bit of maintenance, which Tony has already made a good start at. He has put a thick layer of some tarred, insulating brown paper roll under the corrugated iron roof to deflect some of its heat, and repaired the window shutters of our bedroom with galvanised sheets of metal, instead of the original woven cane ones which were rotting away. It has very basic galvanised sheeting for the unplumbed wash room, but the bucket shower works well enough, as does the veritable museum piece of a wartime paraffin fridge I encountered in the kitchen.

There is a smallhouse (outside loo) in the back garden I am gradually getting used to!

We needed to cut back the rather straggly croton bush at the front which blocked out so much light, and we are now waiting for it to grow to an orderly four foot or so when we intend to keep it in trim.

Letter home, March 1971

I must say this term has seemed to fly by with hardly a moment to take breath!

One thing I do enjoy though, is the way the boys love decorating my desk in the classroom with freshly picked bright red hibiscus flowers absolutely everywhere and they put flowers in their hair as a matter of course - delightful!

Now that we are well settled into our house here, I don't find it so difficult to manage at all. I have a prescribed houseboy to help with basic chores now I am teaching. He comes every day after Work Parade when all the different jobs are allocated. I am even getting used to rushing over to the Mission House twin-tub with my load of dirty washing when the generator comes on in the evening. One big advantage is that we are very central to all the goings-on here and can rush out straight away if the truck arrives from Popondetta with any goods or mail.

There is a magnificent mural in one of the (new) classrooms here: very characteristic of the native art in this area. I have been landed with teaching two periods of Expressive Arts with Form 1, so if I get stuck for an idea I can always let them have a go at the walls!

It's been a long haul, these first ten weeks of school or so because Easter comes late this year. We have started doing silly things and forgetting things in our lessons, so this half term break comes at a good time and then only another four weeks to the end of term!

Letter home, April 1971

Latest big news! We have recently bought ourselves a motor bike!

It had already been decided that we would hand in our government pay cheques to the school. The New Guinea Mission takes responsibility for all long distance flights and medical expenses, insurance etc. and in return, we receive the standard married couple's mission allowance.

Now that Tony and I are fully independent of the Mission House for the buying of our food and household supplies, this extra freedom of movement allows us to go shopping in Popondetta at our own convenience and not be so reliant on the movements of the school truck. So now we can go for a bold expedition into Pop. on our Honda 90, to see what the latest shipment from Australia has brought in.

You should have heard the boys when we had a special showing of the Anthony Quinn film 'Barabbas' for **Holy Week**.

I felt so sorry for Tony. He had worked all week to erect an open-air film screen so the boys could sit under cover in the Manual Arts area, which is really no more than an open concreted floor with work benches and a corrugated iron roof.

They had intended to watch the film on this huge, 16 ft high white painted galvanised screen, placed about 20 yards away out in the open, built with a sloping roof to protect it from the rain. With the help of some of the boys, he had just about completed the screen and finished putting it up yesterday afternoon.

We realised, too late, that the film was in CinemaScope which needs an elongated screen to fit the picture, so only about a third of the picture was properly displayed. The rest of the film made distorted shapes on the bushes nearby. Still, it all worked out as the boys simply turned around to face the back wall, and we hung double sheets over the wall blackboard.

So in the end the whole school (and I suspect a large proportion of Agenehambo villagers on the fringes) was able to gasp and click tongues in amazement, and shout and stamp on the floor in the customary manner of Papuans watching a film, the first time ever for some of the younger first formers.

Their reactions are superb, it's worth going to watch, for that alone! They give advice and encouragement and a running commentary the whole time, cheering the 'goodies' and shouting at the 'baddies' with great gusto.

Today is the start of the half term break, but as it is Good Friday it is considered a quiet day until after the midday meditation service and the school maintains silence as much as possible. The school goes a bit high in its churchmanship during Holy Week though Palm Sunday itself I found quite striking, with a special procession to receive our freshly made palm crosses, and the whole chapel absolutely smothered with palm fronds that tickled your ears if you happened to be sitting near the walls. Then the boys enacted the Gospel reading very movingly and meaningfully.

For Maundy Thursday there was a candlelit communion and from then on, complete silence. At midday today we had a service in procession around the school grounds, stopping at different points where crosses had been erected. Tony and three other staff each gave a short sermon on what Good Friday means to them. Tony really put a lot of thought into it, and it was obvious that his theology teaching background came very much to the fore.

In all honesty I couldn't help finding the other talks almost trite in comparison. Considering that Martyrs has virtually sole responsibility for providing TPNG with its future indigenous Anglican clergy, the boys are provided with plenty of the external trappings of the Anglican Church but very facile sort of guidance in the relevance of the religion to their own lives.

*I had clearly been unaware at the time of their further Anglican training
at Newton Theological College in Dogura!*

It's Saturday now, and the boys have spent all morning decorating the Chapel for Easter, despite the very heavy rain which has been falling since yesterday afternoon and completely saturated the ground. Their criterion for good decoration is quantity, and as the Chapel has been divided up into sections for the different regions to decorate, there is a certain amount of rivalry as to which group can cram the most branches of croton and palm, festoons of creeper and garlands of flowers into their section. Not even the keenest Flower Festival enthusiast could rival this effort!

Not content with the inside, the outside walls are completely camouflaged with enormous branches and they have even lopped down whole boughs of trees and stuck them into the sodden earth around to make an impromptu avenue of trees leading to the Chapel. They've completely altered the whole landscape in a matter of hours!

If it hadn't been for the pouring rain throughout the night to dampen their enthusiasm somewhat, they would have been up at 2 a.m. to pick the hibiscus buds before they open out, so that they would be fresh for Easter Day. These boys are capable of the most extraordinary things!

To give us a break this half-term we had planned to go to **Kokoda** for a couple of days, taking our camp beds and sleeping at the Mission station there, but with the relentless rain of the past two days we are wondering what the roads will be like. Still, we are determined to go on a picnic of sorts whatever happens, even if we only go up to the end of the drive!

Letter home, May 1971

I can hardly believe this is the last week of term already, and I haven't even written to tell you how our half-term trip to Kokoda went.

We took a long time deciding whether to go or not as the weather was so uncertain, and even coming out of Chapel on Easter morning it started to rain yet again, but we had made so many preparations it seemed a shame not to go. We put our camp beds and sleeping bags with Tony's rucksack on the back of our brand new Honda, with just room for me to squeeze between the luggage and Tony, but at least the luggage provided a good backrest on the long drive. We had gone only a few miles when it started to pour with rain yet again, so we got off and stood at the side of the road, sheltering under an umbrella with my plastic mac draped over the luggage in an attempt to keep it dry!

Fortunately one of the boys from school passed us on his way home on foot for the half term holiday and suggested we shelter at the Mission station just half a mile or so ahead. He was able to introduce us to the local people who insisted we come in for a drink, even though they were already entertaining Bishop George, the Papuan bishop for the Northern District, who had been preaching there for Easter.

Tony and I are so struck by the bishop. This is the first time we have actually met him. He has a wonderful face and great dignity, and really believes in meeting the people of his area.

He was sitting cross legged on a rush mat on the floor of a native hut, amplifying more simply on the sermon he had preached that morning, addressing some real bush natives who were sitting together chewing betel nut with red stained teeth and dunking long sticks into carved wooden pots of white lime, which I gather is a really toxic combination!

Bishop George was really courteous to us, involving us in the conversation and introducing us to the old village councillors, and then when the rain eased off a bit he escorted us right out to the entrance of the station, helped to push us off on the bike and told us to introduce ourselves to his sister in a further village if we were in need of a rest.

The rain held off after that, thank goodness, and we were able to have a proper picnic by the side of the road, finally reaching Kokoda by 4 p.m.

Unfortunately Fr. Simon Peter the priest there (and Bp. George's half-brother, incidentally) had never got our letter and was away on patrol for Easter visiting the out-stations, but Mother Jennifer his wife was very hospitable and gave us the guest room to sleep in.

We were woken the next morning by a sudden shaking and juddering of the whole house, and I thought we were in for an earthquake, but when I heard a sharp slap and a squeal I realised it was only a village pig using one of the posts supporting our house as a scratching post!

'Mother' baked hot scones for us nonstop while we were there and invited us to the village Easter feast, which had fortuitously been postponed from the morning because of the rain. We all sat in a huge circle on banana leaves outside on the grass, and vast panfuls of boiled taro, pumpkin and sweet potato were passed around to everyone. They even opened tins of meat and fish specially in our honour, and hunted out knife, fork and plate for us to eat with!

One of the girls who had been tasked with looking after me told me about their women's club which has a communal sewing machine for dressmaking. (I noticed that the traditional dress for girls here was far more grass skirts than tapa cloth lap laps.)

Their members also weave pandanus mats and make intricate woven baskets, or cover cane-framed bags with tapa cloth to sell. They also have well organised football and volleyball teams who play against local villages.

They certainly showed no indication of being bored by their isolated life at the far end of the road at the foot of the Kokoda Trail.

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Now that our first term here is over, I would like to take you on an imaginary tour of the school. We could start in front of the new classroom blocks, with 'my' Form 1 classroom over on the left and straight ahead what is known as the High Building (for obvious reasons as it's the only two storey building around!) Above is the staff workroom, and below a very useful space for store rooms and an open area for storing timber and building materials which Tony frequents a lot nowadays with his various Manual Arts projects!

Through the gap between the classrooms is the ugly, windowless, asbestos covered government provided seismograph box of a building. Quite an eyesore, but I can't deny its potential usefulness. By architectural contrast is the adjacent school chapel, previously one of the bush classrooms temporarily modified till we have enough money to build a new chapel, as there is no government dollar for dollar subsidy at all for such a non-secular provision.

The altar frontal is a length of tapa cloth made of beaten bark with characteristic red and black native designs, and the seats and kneelers are rough sawn tree trunks in the same way as Agenehambo Mission church across the road. The interwoven cane on the wall behind the altar is a familiar covering for window shutters. (Our own front door is made of it as well.)

In front of the classrooms is a largish area of grass called the deba-deba, like an outside assembly hall for whole school gatherings like the daily work parade where all the various jobs are handed out, and the weekend 'soap and salt' parade where designated rations are also handed out for the different garden houses. This is the area too where all the dancing takes place at the traditional 'Singing' on Martyrs Day, a spectacle we have yet to see.

Beyond the deba-deba and the lovely spreading rain trees that provide wonderful shade on a hot day, there are several colourful hibiscus and banana tree lined paths down to the far end of the school, towards where our new house is planned.

Close up, these banana leaves are absolutely huge, and sometimes local people use them as instant umbrellas if they get caught in a sudden rain storm, or wrap their vegetables in them to bring for 'hoija'.

Further on down is the area of the boys' garden houses, built in their own local style, often raised on stilts with a thatched sago leaf roof and many of them really well maintained and cared for. There is a small creek here which runs through the school grounds and provides their fresh water. Some of the garden houses are almost hidden from view with their hedges of hibiscus and croton (perhaps deliberately?)

Sometimes if we happen to be walking by at the weekends, we have heard a baby crying or a woman talking. It is not an uncommon event for some boys to entertain their family members on the quiet!

On down past the garden houses and over their own washing creek is the sports oval, where they play football in bare feet and other gruesome activities! This whole area has been cleared straight out of the bush (Another Australianism for jungle!) which explains why the ground here is so uneven, and beyond it the boys performed their own commando style jungle patrol at the end of last term. On clear days there is a commanding view from here of Mount Lamington smoking away in the distance.

Nearby are some of the boys' own garden plots where they grow sweet potato to sell to the school. They have deliberately left some of the oldest, often quite grotesquely shaped, trees when the jungle was first cleared. Some of these trees are enormous and covered in jungle creepers, which makes them quite spectacular to look at.

That is just about the end of my verbal tour of the school, but I hope I have given you some idea of how we live here.

# EXPLORATION: Living at MMS 1971- 73

*The kind of life we lived at Martyrs of course changed once there were three in our family, but for the first two years we took advantage of various study visits and invitations to some of the boys' homes to travel further afield, and were particularly keen to visit the Highlands and learn for ourselves if there were significant differences in customs and lifestyle, as well as a total change in geography.*

*Our first major outing outside Martyrs was a stay at Movi, a Mission station in the **Eastern Highlands** beyond Goroka during the main school holiday in 1971. It was only much later that I appreciated how very recently any outsiders, including the Anglican Mission, had arrived there. Before 1956 the villagers in that area had been completely isolated.*

*Later in 1972 we had a most memorable visit to **Siai** village to the family of one of the Martyrs boys. It was only much later when I read more of the history of the wartime martyrs, that I learned how three of them had been sheltered by the local villagers in the swampy bush around Siiai village as they struggled to escape from the Japanese invasion along the coast at Gona. I have no recollection of that particular incident ever being talked about. Perhaps they assumed we already knew.*

## Letter home, April 1971

.....Now Fr. Ron (The Australian Head) is back from his leave, plans are zooming ahead for our new house, materials have been ordered and the main struts have arrived. A party of boys from Brighton Grammar in Australia, who are footing the whole bill by the way, as a memorial to one of their students who sadly died recently, will be arriving next month to help with the actual building. It's all quite exciting, choosing the colours for the paint and kitchen Formica, discussing where everything is to go, and thinking of the furniture Tony can make as a Manual Arts project. We'll have the luxury of a proper shower and indoor flush loo, fly screening on the windows and a new gas stove and possibly a new fridge with a proper ice-making compartment. I can't wait!

## Letter home, May 1971

Work is really getting underway for our new house now, for Tony has a team of boys who are keen on helping: "Who is going to live here, Brother?"

"Sister Gay and I."

"Ah, good one, Brother" ( their pet phrase of approval!)

They have cleared the site already, dug the footings, put in three iron trusses to support the weight of the roof and are now waiting for gravel to cement the floor before the Brighton boys arrive next week to put in the walls and inside partitions. On top of this they are also sending us a new tractor and \$1000 for new equipment!

Their Manual Arts teacher has already arrived and has supervised the putting on of the corrugated iron roof, with reflective insulating paper directly underneath to keep out some of the heat.

The Brighton boys will be staying here in the boys' garden houses for a week, so there are lots of preparations going on to give them a good welcome with a traditional feast, a concert organised by the boys of native dancing and music and a play in the vernacular with an English commentary about a tribal land dispute.

All the boys are taking this visit of boys who have done so much to help their school very seriously indeed. They are busy at the moment making beds out of bush timber woven with cane, so that their guests won't have to sleep on pandanus mats on the rough floor the way they do. They beg and borrow mosquito nets to put up, choose out their best enamel plates and dig out of their suitcases the odd prized possession of a mass-produced Chinese embroidered pillowcase with a peacock or 'Sweet Dreams' and a basket of roses - the ultimate in luxury!

When the boys arrive, they will be given a traditional MMS welcome. Our boys will be hiding in ambush right way down the drive, hidden in the old cocoa and coffee plantations, with their faces smeared with charcoal and stain from some bark, and flowers and leaves festooned all over their bodies. At the sound of the school truck approaching they will rush out of the bushes brandishing fierce-looking spears and axes and tree branches, uttering blood curdling shrieks.

In the past, the Australian boys have been so shattered by this onslaught that they have descended from the truck positively quaking with fear at the savagery of these strange Papuans. Yet when the war-paint comes off and each visitor is led away to his host's garden house and plied with green coconut to quench his thirst, these boys are really outstanding in their spontaneous hospitality and go to no end of trouble to look after their guests.

### **Letter home, new teaching project July 1971**

I had a brilliant idea to make a fairly long-term project for my Form 1 double period of Expressive Arts! I have been genuinely fascinated by all the variations in the different garden houses, and suggested they might like to make a 'model village' style of display. They have responded so enthusiastically and really entered into the spirit of the thing very readily. I am so relieved! The Head is quite keen on it too, so now the little patch of ground by the classroom will have a readymade display to be kept for Martyrs Day.

### **Letter home, first visit to the Highlands January 1972**

We have just returned from a most amazing journey up into the Highlands of New Guinea. Having flown to Lae for the first time, following the coast line most of the way, we were able to get a lift in a truck from Erap through the Markham Valley on the Highlands Highway up as far as Goroka. This road has only even existed less than ten years but it gets a tremendous amount of heavy traffic now, taking produce to and from the Highlands and the coast. Halfway up we stopped at the dramatic Kassam Pass to admire the view down into the valley below. It was already noticeably cooler, by the time we reached the top it was already quite cold.

The next leg of our journey was even more spectacular, on our way to Movi from Goroka, a mere 7 minutes by plane, but a hard slog for 24 hours on foot! On that short flight the scenery changed dramatically from bare mountain to thick jungle, with Mount Michael ever present in the background.

There are so many sharp ridges and deep valleys here in the Highlands. We flew so low over one ridge, you felt you could just reach your hand out and touch the tree tops! And then, before we knew it, we were coming in to land at Nambaiyufa airstrip. The gradient here is so steep the pilot has to land at the lower end, and the uphill slope hopefully slows the plane down enough to stop before the end of an incredibly short runway! We could hardly believe we were actually going to land right there.

Our little four seater Cessna is typical of the Mission planes servicing the stations hereabouts, often part of the MAF network (Mission Aviation Fellowship) and we were grateful for the skill of the MAF pilot in bringing us down so smoothly. Movi Mission station where we would be staying was still another hour's walk away along a rough track, over a ridge and round several hills.

The Mission school there is where most of our highland boys have gone and there is still one elderly 'old school' type missionary living nearby who insists apparently on Choral Evensong from Westminster Abbey each evening on his ancient wind-up gramophone. I can't imagine anything more utterly out of place than a cathedral organ ringing out in the middle of the jungle!!

I had been intrigued why several of the boys had been christened with the more unusual New Testament names such as Nicodemus and Onesimus, and even more esoteric names like Early Church Polycarp and Remigiosus. Perhaps it was the inheritance of earlier missionaries in their area. (N.B. I also had Rob Roy and Robin Hood in my class!)

I also now understand better how Michael David, with his deep bass voice and heavy frame, was able to say with such confidence that he was 12 years old. A school inspector had once assured him he was 12 years old and he had religiously been twelve ever since!

On one village visit here, we were well entertained by one of our own students, and plied with enormous bush cucumbers to quench our thirst. Being very conscious that there was still quite a long walk to get back to the Mission station, we made preparations to leave, only to realise that the harried village chicken we had been watching with some amusement being chased by a host of children, was in fact entirely for our benefit, and there was no way we could courteously leave until it had been caught, killed, plucked and finally cooked enough for us to eat! It was certainly unbelievably tough when we finally did get to eat it!

What we have particularly noted on this trip is how very different in build the native highlanders are, compared with the taller, fish eating coastal people we are becoming more familiar with. They are far more stocky and sturdy, with almost triangular spread out feet and splayed toes, ideally adapted to gardening and walking on the almost vertical steep hillsides that abound there. We have learnt a lot in a short while I feel.

*What I did not at all appreciate at the time of our stay in the Highlands was the very novelty of a visit from two of their secondary teachers, and so to spend any time with one of the Martyrs students was in itself a completely unknown factor for some local villagers.*

### **Letter home, January 1972**

When we arrived back from our Highlands holiday we found about 100 bags of cement left over from installing the septic tank, lying in the main room of our new house. The bags had to be dumped in there hastily to keep dry till the building team found somewhere else to put them.

There was quite a bit of pressure on us to move in as soon as possible, for new staff were due any day to take over our old house, and this needed quite a bit of adapting to allow three separate bachelors to live there. So in less than three days, we had swept out the dreadful choking cement dust in the new house, scrubbed the floor down, made some curtains for privacy, and sorted out the terrible bits of junk that had accumulated over the past year in the other house.

### **Letter home, teaching schedule February 1972**

Term started again, incredibly, three weeks ago and once again we're flung in non-stop for the next ten months with barely a fortnight's break from beginning to end.

Our programmes are slightly changed from last year. I teach Form 2 English as well as Form 1 which is harder work to prepare well as we have no text books and have to dig around for our own language exercises and comprehension passages etc, but it gives me a better perspective on the boys' ability than just Form 1 work.

I also teach Form 1 Social Science which is a well coordinated course directed from the University, with tapes and slides and picture series to go with the lessons. I quite enjoy it as a change from English. We have sufficient Maths teachers this year thank goodness, so my services in that field weren't needed. I was getting fed up with the desperately inappropriate text books we were using, with verbal problems like working out how many rolls of wallpaper are needed to paper one wall - as if!!!

*Just the very fact of number and money calculations in Maths can be quite a challenge in this essentially non-numerical and cashless culture.*

*The Orokaiva are limited to just two number words in their language, heriso = 1, wahai = 2. Heriso wahai = 3 and wahai wahai = 4. The number for 5 is the same as for hand, and beyond that there is the catch all word for many. I can only deduce that there has been no need to count and calculate in more detail until relatively recently, especially as traditional building uses rough hewn bush materials.*

*Trading is usually conducted by barter and indebtedness is calculated by a traditional system of gift exchange. No wonder that 'Business Principles' has become such a significant subject to study nowadays. It is not always easy for a people completely unfamiliar with coin currency to realise that a single dollar coin has the equivalent value of 10 separate 10 cent coins.*

*In the Highlands I understand that shiny ten cent coins are the most popular method of payment, sometimes by the sackful!*

*I have also heard there is some misconception about the magical chequebook.*

*Just because there are empty unused cheques in the book in no way means there is still money available in the savings bank!*

Tony's timetable is tremendously out of doors and practical which suits him well. He is still in charge of Form 2 Manual Arts and also is taking a bigger share in Agriculture this year, in readiness for when Ken leaves at Christmas when he will probably take over that department.

## **Letter home, Our New House February 1972**

The biggest news from us is that we have at last moved into our new home!

We are so delighted that we have finally moved, and by contrast are a little concerned about how you are faring with that terrible power strike. I can't help smiling a little when we hear about power cuts for several hours in the day. I get so used to fitting my own washing and ironing in to those few precious hours between 7 and 9 a.m. and 5 to 6.30 p.m. when our overloaded generator can cope with the strain.

When Tony brought the tractor and trailer down here from the other house, all piled high with boxes and bags and cartons of books, complete with a double bed and mattress, the boys gathered round wide-eyed at all the extraordinary things these Europeans have in their homes.

*(Not so different I recall from the reaction of the houseboy when our big trunk finally arrived after several months on the high seas and stuck in a distant warehouse.*

*Unpacking It brought back so many memories for me of unwrapping those brand new, unopened wedding gifts and repacking them directly into Tony's old school trunk in the front passage of my mother's home, ready for shipping to the Anglican centre at Lae, without knowing quite when or specifically where we would see them again.*

*Of course, it was like Christmas, with so many colourful, forgotten gifts, and an absolute revelation to my houseboy!)*

Now we are settled in, the boys, especially the new ones straight from their villages, are quite uninhibited about gawping in wonderment at us through a window as we are preparing to eat a meal. In their own more 'open plan' houses, there is no such thing as domestic privacy. For many of them this is their first view of a stove, for instance, and they come inside and just gaze at the curtains or calendar or the kitchen clock on the wall that winds up by pulling a string.

While we were in Lae on our return from the Highlands we were able to buy quite a few extra things for the house, mainly kitchen equipment and lengths of curtain material and a seven foot square of seagrass matting for the living area.

Also while we were away one of the Highland boys who was staying back at school had created some beautiful, traditionally woven cane patterns for the seats and backs for the chairs and armchair Tony has designed and it all blends in very attractively together.

We thought it would be nice to have a house-warming party down here the Saturday before school started again as a good way of getting to know the new staff, so that gave us nine days to get kitchen / dining / living area ready. While I painted, varnished, and renovated the filthy old Mission House fridge which we inherited, Tony set about constructing the counter cum tall cupboard which serves to separate the kitchen from the dining area. The counter is slightly higher than the kitchen sink level, and covered with bright coloured Formica. With open shelving across to the wall, and with the tall stools that the boys are making in Manual Arts, we will be able to use it as a breakfast bar.

If we get more time and can spare the money, and also if Popondetta can provide, we are hoping to tile the kitchen floor area, as I'm not too keen on the prospect of standing for long hours on a concrete floor. The thick matting in the living area makes such a difference when your feet are tired, which they often are after a full day's teaching. In his spare moments, Tony is also building us a replacement bed for the one we 'borrowed' from the Canadian couple, George and Margaret.

### **Letter home, March 1972**

Our two sows are now 'in pig' and the boys are busily occupied with building traditional style houses as piggeries with thatched kunai grass roofs. They never show any worries about clambering about on bouncing bush timbers, 20 ft or so above ground.

Tony now has great plans for breeding and selling pigs to the local people and also to a cattle man in Kokoda who has just set up a butcher's shop in Pop.

At the moment he is busy with new moveable pig houses so that the pigs can rout out potatoes from old gardens during the day and be shut up at night. Then he ploughs up the ground, strip by strip, where the pigs have been, to prepare it for beans and peanuts and other fodder crops.

He is also extending the chicken shed and our stock of cattle. Life is never dull here!

### **Letter home, June 1972**

The boys are constantly hanging over the piggery rails, watching the antics of the perky young half Tamworth, half bush piglets, who seem to spend their whole time chasing each other round and round in the sawdust.

All this farming is so obviously the type of activity Tony is most suited for.

### **Letter home, July 1972**

No wonder this end of the school is nicknamed Suburbia by some of the other staff!

I have some colourful zinnias growing in the front flower bed now, and a beautiful brand new gas stove has just been installed (cylinder gas), with a lovely grill and a big oven with see-through door. I'm thrilled with it! The twin tub washing machine and large sink are at the back in the 'laundry'. The worst parts of the house to keep clean are the windows. The glass louvres harbour countless spiders and insects and collect a layer of dust depressingly quickly! Nevertheless we are so lucky to be living here.

Helen Keith (wife of the Deputy Head) and I are now good neighbours down here, and have decided to go shares on half a carcass of lamb each month. (The Mission House buys its meat wholesale, has it jointed and stores it in our new deepfreeze, but we have to be very economical when we open it up, with such limited generator time each day.) Our partnership in the new twin tub washing machine works very well too. I can put a couple of loads in as soon as the generator comes on in the evenings, while I'm cooking the dinner. It takes a tremendous amount of backache out of the washing, I must say.

We are really happy in the house, although there's still a tremendous amount to be done and very short weekends to do it in.

### **Letter home, August 1972**

We shall be spending one week of the holiday soon on our In - service course. This year we are hoping to make it a bit more relevant to the theme of 'Education and the Community' by staying in a village and having a bit more personal experience of the background of the students. Tony and I will be staying with one of the boys in his class, David Jagipa.

I must admit I am a bit apprehensive, especially about the food and the washing facilities, living on a diet of sweet potato and tinned meat, or bird, fish, bandicoot or pig cooked in any number of weird and wonderful ways as a special treat. I'll certainly appreciate a good hot shower after washing myself in the creek for a week! Even if I am a bit apprehensive, it's an experience we wouldn't miss. Anyway, more news of that after it has happened.

A week or so ago, the Headmaster asked Tony if he would be acting Subject Master for Agriculture for the rest of this year, which pleased him a great deal. At present he does not have the necessary qualifications or experience to get the higher salary for the school, but if he shows he is capable of filling the post for the rest of the year the Inspector will be able to upgrade him as from the start of next year when he will definitely become Head of Agriculture.

I really think he deserves it. The school's agriculture projects have improved tremendously since he got involved and I notice how many of the staff who teach Agriculture come up to Tony to ask for advice and seem quite pleased that he's officially in charge now.

### **Hand written letter home from Siai, August 1972**

I am writing this letter seated at a hand hewn table in a bush material house. We are right out in the bush, a full day's walk from the road to school and an hour and a half's walk away from the airstrip at Kikinonda where we landed. Tony and I are having a really wonderful holiday here, with plenty of time just to sit and rest. David is proving an exceptional host.

When we reached the far side of the Kumusi river David blew into a huge conch shell that had been tucked into a tree, as a signal to his father to come over in his dugout canoe to ferry us across. It was my first trip in a canoe with an outrigger and yesterday we were taken for another trip several miles upriver, sometimes being punted, sometimes paddled. Tony took a turn at paddling which everyone thought a great joke, but I think they were actually quite pleased.

I need have had no qualms about food. David's mother Petra is an excellent cook and we have taro, sweet potato, pumpkin, banana, sweet corn, rice, native cabbage, all cooked with shallots and coconut juice which makes everything taste really appetising.

They are going to a lot of trouble to provide us with protein, all so far fresh with no tins of bully beef as we had anticipated. For the first meal we had baked river fish that David had caught, then his father went out to shoot birds and returned with a pigeon. Since then we have eaten smoked fish similar to a kipper cooked with cabbage.

On yesterday's fishing expedition David and his younger brother narrowly missed an eel but compensated for that by spearing five turtles!

They bored a hole through their shells and tied them all onto a canoe paddle to carry home shoulder high, still flailing their legs around in a hopeless sort of way. I shuddered at the way they were killed though, thrown still alive on a blazing fire until their shells were charred and blackened.

For breakfast this morning we had wild pig, David's father's share in a pig that was killed in a hunting expedition held in a neighbouring village.

(Tuesday) Because we gave David's father some cartridges he has been able to do a lot of shooting and returned one day with three wild ducks shot with a single cartridge, which tasted really delicious. They quite embarrass us by selecting all the best bits and putting them in a dish especially for us which no one else is allowed to touch. The plates, cups and saucers look suspiciously new and are made of patterned china, instead of the usual enamel dishes from the Chinese trade store and I know the forks were bought from a catalogue.

They have really spared no trouble to make our stay comfortable, even to the extent of building a new guest house specifically for us, with its own private smallhouse exclusively for our use, with bunches of large, soft, green leaves adorning the walls for use as toilet paper!

Our house is delightful, with an open veranda at the front where we sit on hand woven mats to have all our meals. (Though they have also provided us from goodness knows where, two chairs and a table should we get tired of squatting on the floor.)

Inside is a small wash room with a bowl on a stand, a mirror and a bucket of water, and our own bedroom where David had even made us a double bed with a bush timber frame, lashed across with lengths of split black palm, the same way as they make their floors.

In spite of lying on a sleeping mat and a large blanket folded in four, our first night was agony, and I woke up feeling aware of every bone in my body! After four nights' practice we are getting a bit more expert, but that is one aspect of life here that doesn't appeal so much, however beautifully straight it makes your back. Another bit of torture is having graciously to accept a full cup of sweetened, unskimmed tea after every meal, which I am sure they are taking great pains to prepare specially for us.

After every expedition day we have a rest day, which is necessary to recover from an overdose of suntan. Yesterday's trip we went on a picnic down river, catching a turtle on the way. We then baked it over a driftwood fire on the sandy riverbank and ate it with the usual sweet potato and pumpkin. Fresh pawpaw was our second course.

Gardening here seems so much work for so little gain, cutting down virgin jungle, burning old tree stumps. planting just one crop of vegetables before letting it go back to bush and then starting all over again somewhere else. Still, that's the way it's been done for generations they say with a shrug of the shoulders.

Sometimes we wonder at the point of all the things the boys learn at school, which is so utterly alien to this casual unchallenging village life.

One of the customs here is to have open house and take your own dish of vegetables with you to your neighbour's house and then all the food is put out together. We have had many people joining us for meals in this way, though I suspect it's to get a good look at Tony and me! They chatter away in their own language with David giving the odd translation every now and again.

Last night they told of one old woman in the village who used to prepare man's flesh for cooking 40 odd years ago, usually one of their enemies from one of the coastal villages. (Though to be fair, I have never heard rumours like this since).

Tonight is our last night here, with a big, farewell feast promised and all the village people coming, which is why the whole village appears quietly deserted at the moment.

I think everyone is off hunting or gathering vegetables from the food gardens. We shall see !

### **Further extended commentary on accompanying slides of village visit**

# When we arrived at Kikinonda airstrip, clearly once part of the river bed, you can well imagine as we lost height to land, I was thinking, "I do hope David will be there to meet us"!

The pilot was in a bad mood when we landed, because pigs had been digging up holes in the runway which made landing a bit hazardous. He even threatened not to make a return flight if they didn't do something about it! Help!!!

In the distance is the Owen Stanley mountain range with Port Moresby beyond.

# I had clearly misunderstood David's directions. What I had thought to be a one and a half mile walk to the village was obviously a one and a half hour walk, so we were grateful for a refreshment halt halfway. David is laughing at my efforts to drink from a freshly picked green coconut, while his younger brother and cousin who have come along to help with our luggage, are looking on.

This dress I am wearing will appear frequently in the following photos. It was at this point in the journey we realised we had left all those carefully ironed clothes hanging up at home. Honestly, as if increased clothing really matters out here! And we had thought so carefully about what to take with us!

# Having a rest on the steps of our special house, surrounded by all the Jagipa younger generation and curious friends. They had only completed the finishing touches to the house the day before. Their own family house is beside this one. We were very touched by all the efforts they had made to make us feel welcome, but it's their custom, they say, to build a separate house for any special visitors - and Europeans in the village was quite an event!

# Here is the whole family outside our house, including five more children and Petra with baby James. The village church is in the background where David's father is the evangelist. Their eldest son, Paul, is training as a librarian at Goroka, and will be joining the staff of MMS next year. They really were an exceptionally friendly and hospitable family with hard-working children who took their full part in looking after us.

# From the side of our little house you can get a view right through the village which is divided into two main clans, one clan down each side. All the houses are built entirely from timber, thatch and split sago palms from the bush. The low cut croton hedges are found in every village simply for decoration nowadays, though they used not to bother with such fancy frills and had just plain, beaten earth before.

# All set for a family picnic! This actually involves quite a lot of luggage, pots for cooking vegetables and the fresh caught turtle, string bags full of vegetables, a large kettle, a huge stalk of bananas, plus an extra bag specifically containing plates, cups and knives for our benefit!

# This is rather a lovely, and quite characteristic, picture of Petra and her baby James on one of the outrigger canoes. A string bag like this is the traditional way to carry a baby, using a bilum made of natural twine from the twisted fibres of a pandanus tree.

(I have seen some multicoloured bilums coloured with bush dyes from different leaves and berries, or even brighter with shop-bought dyes from the local trade store.)

We had three canoes altogether, rather than any risk of overloading. One of the canoes had the divers on it, going in and out amongst the trees lying on the river bed, brought down by earlier floods, where fish are most likely to be found.

# This is one of the many 'cousin brothers' who was our 'chauffeur' on the way down river. We weren't always passengers though! The boys were delighted when Tony offered to try his hand at paddling, though one of the younger ones is looking a bit uncertain!

# My turn to work now! I took the opportunity of a hot sun and plenty of water to wash out Tony's one and only shirt and decent pair of shorts with a bar of Sunlight soap as we made our way downstream. I just held them in the water to rinse them through and then spread them on the platform of the outrigger to dry.

Thank goodness he still has his swimming trunks!

# Our last memory before we set off at the end of this memorable visit. Here we are festooned with beads and armbands, and my own string bag decorated with bobbles of cuscus fur, which we had been given by many different villagers at our farewell feast the evening before. David's cousin sister had walked over from another village to help Petra with the cooking for the feast.

On our return trek through the bush to get to the airstrip we were presented with a traditional black palm fighting club by a village elder, as news of our visit had spread.

### **Further letter home, August 1972**

We did get back safely from Kikinonda, after all. It was the very same pilot too, but a bit more cheerful this time. Even so, I found it rather disconcerting when he sang, repetitively and tunelessly the song 'Bridge over Troubled Waters' as we flew over the Kumusi river and then all the way to Pop.! After all, the great Kumusi river which we had to cross to reach the village, is still only flowing very gently with wide sandy beaches on either side as it has been such a dry season. We could see massive tree trunks brought down by previous rains, left sticking up out of the sand.

From the air I spotted the peaceful lake, once a U bend in the river but now cut off and full of water lilies, bush fowl and wild ducks, where we went to cut some sugar cane from an abandoned garden in the vicinity.

*There was also another happy post-script to this visit.*

*Several months after Anna was born, while Petra was staying in a garden house to see her son David he brought her down to visit us.*

*Although we had no language in common and she had always insisted that I should keep my distance as her son's teacher from anything domestic while I was in her village, she came straight into my own home and held out her hands for my baby with such obvious delight. I was extraordinarily touched by that. It meant a huge amount to me that we had motherhood in common we could so easily share.*

### **Letter home, first news of new baby August 1972**

I suppose it's almost inevitable in this sort of life where we seem to be rushing around non-stop from one thing to another all the time in this hot and humid atmosphere, that almost everyone loses a fair bit of weight. But I am hoping that I will be putting on a fair bit of weight for quite another reason, for I do believe I am pregnant now, though it is still a bit soon to be absolutely sure.

.... I can go for checkups to the maternity unit further up the road at Saiho. It's run by two nurses both called Kate, though mainly concerned for local infant welfare needs. In many ways it is fortunate for us it is relatively close by. (The English nurse eventually became Anna's godmother). It started life as the main government hospital to cater for the aftermath of the Lamington volcano, but when the main government hospital moved down to Pop. it got converted into a Mother and Baby unit, which I don't think was so useful up to now for the school clientele!

Out here, people are always encouraged, even obliged, to fall back on their own resources, so if you could send me any literature on pre-natal care etc, I could get myself up a bit. Popondetta simply doesn't have any such books for sale, the best it can produce are lurid railway station type paperbacks for bored expatriate wives.

Helen Keith came down only a fortnight ago to say that she too is expecting a baby. What a coincidence, after all this time for them! I think things aren't as straightforward for her though, and she will be glad to be leaving here at Christmas to have her baby back home in Queensland.

Generator is due to go out at any minute and I must rush for I still have to have my bucket shower. It usually happens that I have it by the flickering light of the hurricane lamp.

### **Letter home, Martyrs Day preparations September 1972**

For Martyrs Day this year, Tony will once again be putting on a furniture display for Manual Arts. He's got some rather neat little folding tables and stools for picnics which the boys have painted in bright colours, and we are hoping to sell some of them. We should really transplant our whole living room, for all the furniture there came from Manual Arts originally,

It's hopeless trying to teach anything serious at the moment. Boys are constantly being called out of classes for play rehearsals or choir practices, drums are beating every evening in the garden houses where boys are practising their own dances for the big Singing on Martyrs Day afternoon

The Parents and Citizens group will be running their first Fete at the celebrations this year, and we are all keeping our fingers crossed that it will all go off alright, for they are far more used to bartering than to using currency, and I am sure that getting the correct prices for goods will be the most difficult challenge of all.

Highland boys live too far away from home to get their traditional dancing gear sent over for these annual celebrations, but they are doing an excellent job of improvising with strips from colourful magazines, begging or borrowing any bits of material or paint or wood, scraps of any kind for their various costumes. At least the rhythm from their dancing drums will be authentic!

Ken and Helen have invited us to spend part of the school holidays with them in Brisbane, which we are really looking forward to now, with both of us ladies expecting babies. We are due for our two-yearly leave fare paid down to Sydney in any case. After two years in the bush, we shall be in need of a fair bit of shopping, especially at this time.

## **Letter home, October 1972**

Tony and I both think it would be too much of a strain to be a full-time teacher as well as a mother, and as the Dept. does not cater for part time employment, I have decided to stop teaching at the end of this year. We are so excited about this pregnancy and even if I stop classroom teaching, I am sure there will still be plenty of non-teaching jobs around the office I can help with.

I won't be getting a salary, of course, though we will still be getting our Mission allowance and we will also be eligible for a child allowance to help towards its upkeep. We don't think we're draining the school's finances too much, as Tony has received a very good inspection report and is due to be promoted as from the beginning of next year. Also his pig projects are bringing in quite a bit of money to the school funds from the sale of pigs.

I am now really able to look forward to next year. There are times when teaching can be quite a strain and I'd far rather be taking an interest in Tony's work than in preparing my own!

Helen has been inundated with 'baby' literature from home, which she has been conveniently passing on to me. We are looking forward even more to our Australia holiday now, which will give us a chance to get some baby things which would be impossible or expensive to buy even in Moresby, and out of the question in Popondetta.

## **Letter home, November 1972**

I recently took all 32 of my Form 1 Soc. Science class to stay in a local village Hohorita for two nights. Looking back I recognise that our previous village visit to Siai was invaluable in giving me a better understanding of what to expect this time round.

I divided the class into six groups, each with its own group leader, making sure that at least one boy was an Orokaiva speaker, for very few of the local people speak English at all. Most of the boys were billeted amongst the villagers with no problem.

I was quite pleased at the way the boys got on with their projects so well on their own, and only came to consult me just to check they were doing things the right way.

Each group had four or five activities which involved asking the village people about their customs, ways of gardening, building, caring for the sick etc, and taking notes of any legends, songs and folk tales they have. They then had to write up reports, charts and graphs to illustrate what they had found out.

So many of the boys come from different areas with widely different ways of doing quite traditional things, I think many were surprised to find so much variation in their everyday way of life. I too benefited greatly from the whole experience. The entire Social Science project was really enjoyable and worthwhile and I am so glad I was still able to take part in it.

There was quite a funny incident while we were staying there. Tony and I were billeted with Nancy, the Papuan primary school teacher, for the two nights. She made us very welcome and cooked some lovely meals for us. Tony had to be teaching at school each day of course, but he came down on the bike each evening and joined in, then roared off again in the mornings.

I had had such trouble on our village visit to Siai, by not explaining right from the outset that I don't drink tea, and I knew very well at this stage that I simply dared not have tea for breakfast. I explained to Nancy about the baby so she wouldn't be offended at my refusing any tea, but she was most distressed that I would get thirsty. There was no luxury of coffee in the village trade store (though I noticed plenty of berries on their coffee trees - produced as a cash crop for export!)

After consulting with the deacon she promptly returned and asked if I would like a drink of hot chocolate instead. I was astonished but thanked her and then realised what she was offering me -a packet of Mary Baker type cake mix, with CHOCOLATE written in large letters and cake mix in small. Deacon said he had tried mixing it up with powdered milk but it hadn't tasted very nice! Anyway, I explained what it was for and said they would find it difficult to make with only an outside wood fire, so I said I could take it home and bake it in my oven for them. His wife was very grateful and promptly went inside to produce two more packets that Deacon had bought in a fit of extravagance in Pop. one day.

Thank goodness the long, dusty dry season is over now. The sky has clouded over once again. After four and a half months almost continual drought it has thankfully started raining again, but the riverbeds still look dry and water must still be carted to the livestock. It has been the longest dry season on record.

### **Letter home, January 1973**

The first part of our holiday we spent on a dairy farm near Brisbane with Helen's parents. The most glorious part of that was going up to the milking shed before breakfast and dipping a ladle into an enormous cooler tank of rich, creamy, fresh milk. I had quite forgotten the taste after two years of powdered milk!

We then spent a few days with Ken's brother at his new home by a man made irrigation lake in the dry Western outback, 200 miles or so from Brisbane. He keeps about 1,000 hives of bees in various colonies there, within a radius of about 80 miles.

We seemed to travel miles in our fortnight's stay there even though we had barely gone an inch on the standard map of Australia. During that December the weather was just so HOT. Frozen ice cream Christmas pudding and 102 degrees on Christmas Day!!

Tony has now received a very good inspection report and is due to be promoted to Agriculture Subject Master as from the beginning of term.

### **Letter home, February 1973**

Now school has begun again, Tony is busy with all his ideas as official Subject Master for Agriculture. With my greater 'leisure' time I've been typing out all sorts of letters for him to different firms for seeds, chickens, ducklings, electric fencing, teaching charts...

He is making a great financial contribution to the school too, with all these livestock sales.

The fact that I am no longer teaching this year is an enormous relief. It is so wonderful not to be faced with evenings and weekends of lesson preparation and huge piles of marking, something my particular subjects of Maths and English were inevitably prone to.

I was always more interested in Tony's subjects than my own anyway!

### **Hand written letter home from Moresby General hospital, February 1973**

When we came back from Australia I went for my first check up at the main government hospital in Pop. There is now a new, very conscientious doctor stationed there who is clearly accustomed to all the facilities readily available in a hospital back in Australia. Consequently I have been diagnosed, much to my surprise, with a very slight heart murmur and he thought I might benefit from an electro-cardiograph reading, "just to be on the safe side".

So here I am, lying in unnecessary idleness and being fed 3 three course meals + coffee and sandwich breaks a day, and all for a false alarm.

There's always plenty to do at school nowadays in any case, what with typing in the office while we wait for the new secretary to arrive and looking after the freezer store.

We get through half a carcass of beef, one carcass of lamb, plus pies, fish and liver, bacon and cheese every month, a far cry from the limited diet of tinned fish and butter, Irish stew and bully beef and the weevil infested flour and rice stored in metal dustbins that we had when we first came here!!

At least we had wonderful tropical fruit and a supply of fresh local vegetables from the 'hoija'.

Now the Headmaster has asked me to be in charge of the freezer store. I restrict opening up to once after school each day for people to come and buy things. The hours when the generator is on are still very limited and I don't want to let out too much cold air. I quite enjoy ordering different things for a change so the single staff can get easy things to cook.

Several boys bring shirts and shorts to mend, so with making my own maternity dresses and baby things, and new kitchen curtains and cushion covers, my sewing machine is kept quite busy.

We took a new couple with their very 'townie' oriented young children who are missing their ice cream to our favourite river picnic barbecue spot the other day at Ilimo on the Kumusi river, to cheer them up with a swim and barbecue. It isn't far, about 15 miles up the Kokoda road.

*(It is near the place where an evacuee camp was first set up after the Lamington eruption. Apparently the rivers around there got clogged up and then flooded from all the rockfalls from the mountain and volcanic ash debris, so the camp was moved higher up to Eiwo)*

The weather was a bit dull at first, but brightened later, and they all had great fun bracing themselves against big rocks in the fast flowing river, while we two matrons sat on the riverbank and chatted!

I met a couple of expat. wives out at the airstrip in Popondetta on my way to hospital, who had asked if I was going over for a bit of R. & R. too, and I hadn't a clue what they were talking about. Apparently it's quite common for them to fly over to Moresby for a bit of 'rest and relaxation'. I just want to get back home again!

.... I have just had a surprise visit on my ward from Win Goody, the rather quiet New Guinea Mission secretary. We met her at our original interview and she's now here on her first fact finding visit. I think she is finding the heat very oppressive, so I have invited her back to Martyrs to stay with us a bit once I get home again.

### **Letter home, March 1973**

Just another month for me now, and I am starting to feel a bit weighed down at last. There are certain advantages in having the baby in the fairly informal surrounds of Pop. hospital as there are few restrictions there. Anyway, I don't plan to stay there very long at all, as there are no facilities for providing European style food and I would have to arrange my own. ( Blanche Biggs, a long-serving Anglican doctor stationed nearby, brought me food, I remember)

I am just as happy to be at home in any case, with the sisters at Saiho on hand if the need arises.

Tony still does a token bit of Manual Arts teaching with senior boys. The project at the moment is the installation of a water tank, it just happens that it's ours! In view of the prospective newcomer to our house, the Headmaster said we should have our own rainwater supply instead of Tony having to cart it from the next door tank, so I am really pleased about that!

The Board of Governors have approved Tony's promotion to a Level 2 position in Agriculture, and have now further recommended him for an Acting Level 3 position which gives a Higher Duties Allowance. I'm sure the Head thinks highly of all his various projects for developing agriculture in the school, at least he always seems willing to give him the go ahead!

Two of the new steers were very wild when they first arrived from Kokoda and got frightened when Tony was trying to put them in the crush, so they bolted, right across the paddock and out into the thick bush where they wandered for miles. They were finally spotted by some local villagers. One got himself into a village cattle project up the road, where Tony arranged with the owner to keep him there for a couple of days till they could send up a truck to bring him back.

As a thank you to the villager for looking after the steer, Tony took some of the boys with the tractor and trailer one Saturday, and carted several loads of gravel from the creek to improve the surface of his cattle yard. He was delighted and gave Tony some cuttings of a good pasture grass in his turn. This informal gift exchange is one of the most effective ways of improving community relations between the school and the local people.

I can't help noticing how much Tony loves helping to improve agricultural methods in the villages. He is one of the few staff who can really be involved with the local community by selling them our livestock and encouraging the boys to take back new crops or seeds to their villages.

We decided to give a picnic at Ilimo by the Kumusi river for all the stay-at-school boys who had helped looking after all the livestock while we were away in Australia, so they had quite a treat of barbecued sausages and burgers at the picnic site there.

There is still room for more on the farm, we now have 50 ducklings for the Form 1 classes project, a regular order for 25 chicks arriving every month, with different groups of boys taking total responsibility for them, including feeding, cleaning, killing and marketing, They then are able to have a share in any profits.

The farm also has four sows and a huge boar, plus a couple of litters due within the next month. Our two cows are away at present on a neighbouring cattle project, finding suitable husbands, as well as the three steers we are keeping for fattening and slaughtering, one small heifer and two orphan calves.

Tony acquired these from the big cattle farm at Kokoda so the boys could learn how to handfeed them while young, and then they won't be so scared to handle them later on.

## **Anna's birth, April 13th, 1973**

### **Extracts from Mother and Baby magazine article: Birth in other Countries**

I became unnecessarily apprehensive at the state of the road, for the recent heavy rains had left deep corrugations and ruts, even washing parts of the road right away. However when the day did come the weather had improved considerably and the road was quite passable.

The most reliable vehicle at the school was the three ton truck which the Headmaster was happy for Tony to drive.

Once the contractions became more frequent the Head put a message through on the Mission two-way radio to Popondetta post office to contact the hospital and say I was on the way.

*(In fact, everyone listening in could hear it too!)*

News of Anna's birth was broadcast the next day over the mission radio and our hospital room was invaded throughout the day with school staff wanting to see the new baby and hear how we had all fared.

Tony left for school early each morning, returning in the late afternoon to spend the night with us and by the Tuesday I felt well enough to leave. That return journey remains clearly in my memory, leaving Popondetta in a tropical sunset that grew to dusk within minutes, so that by the time we were halfway home the mountains were swathed in mist and a large full moon could be seen through the branches of the trees.

We arrived at school just as the boys were gathering for their dinner. At the first sight of the car's headlights appearing down the drive, the boys gave shouts of "Ai-yo! Anna Margaret!" They came rushing round the car to catch their first glimpse of our new born baby.

*Anna's birth marked a distinct change not just for ourselves  
but for the rest of the school community too.  
For many of the distant boarders  
she represented the family life they were familiar with  
and we could always be sure of a warm welcome with her  
wherever we went.*

## **EXPANSION: both Family and Farm 1973-74**

*The last twenty months or so  
of our years at Martyrs was a time of great change.  
In our own lives we were taking on greater responsibilities  
with a new-born baby and the ever expanding school farm,  
and nationally and educationally too,  
this was an era of far greater striving towards  
self government, nationalisation and the raising of standards.*

### **Letter home, July 1973**

Thank you for your suggestion but we are both sure it would be absolutely out of the question to go back to England with Anna for even four weeks, especially travelling without Tony. Just from a purely practical point of view, he puts so much physical effort into all his farming work here and sometimes comes back home quite hungry and exhausted.

We obviously need to sell the bike, for it's no good for all three of us now!

Perhaps it's no bad thing. I must admit that even travelling down the Popondetta road has been quite an adventure at times, especially if there has been a heavy rainfall which has pitted and rutted the road so much that the jolts have almost knocked the breath out of me, or else it has been so hot and dry that the road is like a pebble-strewn sandy beach when we have to crawl along for miles in bottom gear with one foot ever ready to shoot out to maintain the balance.

### **Letter home, August 1973**

I just heard this news item on the radio which I found rather amusing:  
First prize for the traditional canoe race at the Hiri festival in P. Moresby, 50 dollars in bank notes plus 5 sacks of rice and 3 sacks of sugar.  
A classic hybrid of financial incentive and cashless economy in action, I thought!

Over this holiday we have spent quite a bit of time putting the finishing touches to Anna's nursery so it is by now really fresh and bright. The greatest achievement is her cot that Tony has just finished with its slide-down side, which she has taken to immediately.

### **Letter home, September 1973**

Back to school routine again now, with 3rd term already underway. Do you realise we are now two thirds of our way through our time here?

At times, the days just seem to fly by, yet Tony still has so much he has planned to do before we leave, while here at home Anna continues to grow in a delightful way.

Tony has now got a magnificent bushman's hat. It's proving very necessary when he spends most of his working day out in the blazing sun, planting crops and sawing logs for his new cattle yard posts. He has now cleared and fenced a new cattle paddock and helped carry a 4-5 cwt. tree trunk.

What he loves most out of all his work, however tiring it is, is building structures out of bush material using his carpentry skills and ingenuity.

### **Letter home, October 1973**

Tony doesn't want to be known as the school 'farmer' who also teaches agriculture, for he sees the farm as being a long term project to assist the school in becoming as self sufficient as possible in the future. The three additional pigs we now have are all part of that thinking.

He has his first Board of Governors meeting tomorrow now he is the official staff representative for the coming year. He has been quite encouraged to know he has staff support, for often he feels he is fighting a lone battle in his ideas for the development of the school and the school farm.

His big concern at present is the state of the natural bush. Over the past 20 years or so of the school's existence here, the surrounding jungle area still on school ground has been steadily cut down for the school's enormous fuel consumption needs, and although on the surface the bush still looks impressively dense, it is really only light undergrowth with relatively few solid trees.

The boys in his Agriculture classes seem to have quite a bit of rivalry to see who can discover the best hardwood trees to use for the yard. One champion log they cut up down by the banks of the creek is intended as a post for this yard. It proved to be so big and heavy that it required the whole class of 26 boys (in fact several are grown young men by now) to carry it up the slope, all trussed up with bush string tied to two long carrying poles.

Most of the wood the boys chop and saw is dead and really hard, but Tony wanted one or two posts to be cut from live wood so that they would reroot and eventually provide some permanent shade for the cattle.

He had a visit from the Forestry Commission people the other day. He took advantage of the visit to see if they could suggest which hardwoods to underplant in the bush to replace all those already cut out. There is a rumoured large scale timber milling plant to be set up nearby, so in another 20 years or so, when these new trees will be well established, the extra timber could provide the school with quite a substantial income.

We have taken to going on a regular Sunday afternoon inspection of the farm with Anna, visiting the new cattle paddock Tony has just finished fencing or inspecting the geese, though she is not at all sure of the noise they make!

Late afternoon is also a good time for us all to go, when school is over and the temperature has cooled down a bit. One afternoon we went to look at the little yellow ducklings that have just hatched. We had one here at home once with a bad leg, the only survivor when a village dog broken into the shed and killed all our chickens and ducklings, which was quite a disaster.

### **Letter home, Anna's illness November 1973**

I am so thankful that Anna's godmother Kate was on hand when Anna developed a serious gastric infection recently, I don't know what we would have done without her in fact, though Anna has quite recovered by now.

We took her straight away to Saiho when she suddenly developed quite a temperature. She was hardly drinking anything and I knew how quickly babies can become dehydrated in this climate, but after a whole series of injections her appetite has now returned with a vengeance!

### **Letter home after first three years, December 1973**

I suppose we have changed in many ways in the three years we have been out here already, but one practical thing it's taught us is to learn to differentiate between what is essential and what is an 'extra'.

Because there are so few extras here to be tempted by, we find that we live in a very simple way, but for all that I find that we are able to eat extremely well in the circumstances with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Apart from the Volkswagen which we are in the process of purchasing from the Kates at Saiho when they go on leave, I think most of our worldly possessions could be packed in a couple of boxes. It's almost inevitable that with Tony's great gift of carpentry skills we have also subconsciously evolved a policy of Do-it-yourself or Do without.

*(Soon after we bought the 'Beetle' and I was first spotted behind the wheel,  
I can recall a particular conversation between two boys.  
".... and I saw Sister driving, and Brother was just sitting!")*

### **Letter home, first SIL holiday January 1974**

We have been having a great holiday staying at Ukarumpa in the Highlands, in the guest house of S.I.L. headquarters (Summer Institute of Linguistics) the main linguistic centre for the many Bible translators in the country, and closely connected with the Wycliffe Bible Translators. This is all thanks to Bud and Marlys Larsen who are becoming good friends and are in the process of translating Acts into the local Orokaiva language.

*(The reality that there are so many languages in this country  
doesn't even begin to take into account the myriad of local dialects.  
The very fact that the Larsens had chosen to live in one dialect area  
was seen by the Orokaiva speaking inhabitants of Popondetta, a full 25 miles away,  
as a very controversial decision  
when it came to the 'correct' dialect for Bible translation into Orokaiva!)*

They have been back 'on base' and arranged for us to have our own flat in the guest house for a week. This was ideal as we had all mod cons. but could manage much better with Anna that way. They arranged an all-American pizza party at the guest house for us to meet some of their colleagues and took us for drives around to see the place.

The printing and publishing set up is amazing for they do all the printing in house for their different translations, so far over 100 with many more to come. It seems a super efficient organisation for they have their own plumbing, building and maintenance workshops, their own kindergarten, primary and even high school, for these translators are committed to spending at least 10 years in their language area and so obviously bring or start their families here.

Anna didn't seem at all phased by the change in her routine and flying in a little six-seater Cessna didn't bother her at all.

### **Letter home, local village visit May 1974**

This year's Easter services were particularly good, with the school band accompanying the hymns and responses. Halfway through the service some of the Mamba boys dressed in traditional tapa cloth, beads and feathers, sang and danced a gift-bringing dance as they brought the offerings and sacraments to the altar. It was a very striking part of the service.

Then over the Easter weekend while the school was having a holiday, several of us went to Sui, the village a few miles up the road where Bud and Marlys live. They told us they had been given a pig by their village people. As it belonged to members of that clan, they themselves were not allowed to eat it so they told Bud it was for him to share out amongst his friends.

So they cooked it in the traditional 'mumu' way, cut up in big hunks over hot stones in a pit in the ground, covered with vegetables and topped with banana leaves, then left to steam-bake for a couple of hours.

The pig was well cooked ( never referred to as pork in the village) but somewhat dry by our European gravy-minded standards. There were so many pig joints left over after we had eaten, that according to local custom each visitor was given a portion to take away and enjoy the next day. At any feast, the returning guests are always provided with piles of vegetables and any leftover meat to take back with them.

### **28th birthday letter home, May 30th 1974**

Life has changed tremendously now that Anna is truly mobile. My greying hair started soon after Anna was born, though she certainly gives me far less worry than teaching the boys for the whole of the previous two years!

For one short week we had holiday time again and then back to school, this time for both of us. There are a lot of timetable changes this term now the new chaplain has unexpectedly left as well as one of the local staff. I thought I had better offer to teach again part-time, using the Social Science syllabus which has well prepared material, though I am no Women's Libber and would much rather look after my family!

To help out we do have a student teacher from Goroka Teachers' College teaching Agriculture who seems very cheerful and willing to learn what he can while he is here. He is taking over some of Tony's classes so that Tony will be free to take on a pilot project Religious Studies course that should have been the Chaplain's responsibility. It's a well prepared and well documented course and looks very interesting.

After all the build up of Agriculture work Tony has been doing to get everything in order for when we leave here, he really doesn't mind too much at all having something completely different to occupy his mind these last two terms.

### **Letter home, July 1974**

Tony was up very early to check on a cow with a retained placenta he had had to operate on a few days earlier and was thankfully O.K. it seemed. He had only ever watched the vet do that particular operation at home, but he knew there was a grave risk of infection if he left it and the cow might easily have died.

Straight after that he had to go to the airstrip at Pop. to meet the early morning flight with 250 day-old chicks on board from Brisbane. This time we were lucky, only two had died on the journey. Twice before they had forgotten to put them on the Pop. plane and they have been left in their boxes without fresh air or water for the whole weekend, poor things, and we have lost nearly half of them as a result.

A lot has changed on the farm, and Tony has introduced so many outdoor activities into the Agriculture syllabus it is difficult to decide where 'classroom' activities stop and farming starts! Certainly I have frequently noted that Fr Ron, the Headmaster, chooses to bring visitors down to this end of the school a lot more than before!

With the new strongly built piggery and its concrete flooring, the big Agriculture store for the growing amount of tools and equipment, the new cattle crush and chicken houses, the duck pond and cattle paddocks, and all the variety of livestock here too, there's a lot more life to see here than in dusty classrooms!

When I think how the whole cattle project started with just two cows three years ago, tethered with ropes to eat up the grass round about, we now have a herd of over 20. We now have proper fully fenced cattle paddocks, and our first steer is due to go off to the abattoir tomorrow to be slaughtered to provide meat for the staff and boys here. Self support for the school is really on its way!

*(I recall two MMS boys were being interviewed for a local school project about learning how to milk a cow. One confided to the other, "I tasted some of that milk, and I may say it tasted every bit as good as powdered milk". That comment made me realise that the familiar tin of Sunshine Powdered Milk was for many of the students their first ever experience of cow's milk.)*

The monster boar we have now is the father of all our young piglets (coming up to 100 by now, I reckon ) I can clearly remember waking one morning just two years ago to see him being born, for his mother was one of the first pigs we ever had here and Tony was most concerned to be there when she farrowed. He was quite a dear little thing only two years ago!

Growing food crops is still an important part of school life, though it is far more diversified now than just the sweet potato and pumpkin it used to be when we first came. I had no idea that tapioca (aka manioc) is considered a root crop and is the same as the African cassava I had read so much about. All the boys need to do is break off the stem into sections and stick them in the ground, where they sprout roots in no time.

The senior school market garden project is progressing well too. There are now tomatoes, peanuts, sweet corn, runner beans, cabbage, lettuce, Chinese cabbage, carrots and radish. Form 4 students can get seeds on credit from the Ag. dept, and then repay when they start selling their produce around the school to staff and the school kitchen for the boys' own meals.

### **Letter home, July 1974**

Yesterday was our fourth wedding anniversary and I couldn't have wished for a happier or more rewarding four years!

I notice that the cattle always like to come up to us in their paddock when they see Tony, for a friendly rub or sometimes a lick at a handful of salt. Sometimes tensions can build up at school or things go wrong, (like when a mighty tree blew down in a fierce gale and destroyed the fencing the boys had only just recently completed). Then Tony gets a great deal of satisfaction and peace of mind from just coming to watch his cows quietly grazing away in the paddock. The boys too, seem to be drawn down this way, just watching the various animals and their antics.

Another of the older steers will be due for the cooking pot soon. It's always a bit sad to see one go, but the herd by now is getting a little too large for the amount of grass we have under pasture and we would like to pay off a large proportion of the loan to the school before we leave.

One of my jobs is to be in charge of the Agriculture accounts, so in that respect I suppose I am also involved in the running of the school farm.

### **Edited excerpts from REPORT ON AGRICULTURE AT MMS IN 1974**

Martyrs has a long tradition of agriculture; for many years every student has been given a garden in which to grow food for the school. During the last few years however, the range of agricultural activities has widened considerably and the traditional garden system is now being incorporated into a school farm with cattle, pigs and poultry as well as food crops.

Old garden land which had previously been left to lie fallow for six years is now being fenced up by the students for our herd of beef cattle. After four years under improved pasture the land will be used for students' gardens again after two more years.

Students take it in turns to be 'cowboys' each day, with major responsibility for all aspects of animal husbandry, including management of the piggery.

They have also helped a local man by clearing bush and planting grass for his cattle project. In return he has loaned his bull for three months.

Young chickens are sold to local people and to students to take back to their villages; most of the pigs are also sold as weaners locally. Poultry feed is expensive as it has to be shipped from Lae.

Gardening is a very important part of school life where students are encouraged to spend a lot of their time. Suitable garden land is becoming more limited nowadays for individual gardens, so larger plots are being amalgamated for groups as a whole. Each group of six students (2 senior and 4 junior) now plans and plants their given plot, with help and advice from agriculture staff, emphasising good soil structure and nutritional variety.

Nurturing and developing the four acres of coffee plantation is also part of the curriculum.

The school farm strives to be self-supporting, with most of its income coming from the sale of its pigs and cattle. Much of this is used for repaying the original start-up loan and improving and expanding existing farm projects.

The Agriculture department has its own bank account, with detailed records of all income and expenditure circulated monthly to the students. They can then see for themselves how the money is used and the contribution of their particular project to the total development of agriculture at the school.

## **Martyrs School Magazine, special edition September 1974**

### **From the Headmaster's foreword:**

This year the magazine has been produced for the first time by a group of Form 4 students who have written articles, taken photographs and gathered news. They have planned the whole magazine with very little help from the staff.

Following on from the national theme of 'Education for Self Reliance', which remains the foundation of our school life here, much of the school's day to day running is entirely carried out by the boys. This school was built by the students and staff at the time, and for many years the students almost entirely supported themselves with the food that they grew in the school gardens.

Our aim now is to give to students the opportunity to be self reliant in as many fields as possible; to take responsibility for chapel services, school organisation, sports, canteen, medical duties, projects, assignments and excursions, in fact for as many aspects of school life as possible, with the staff there to guide, encourage and assist with these activities.

Students are often told that they will become leaders; in the village, in town, in business, in the Church and in Government.

Leadership involves responsibility, so the more responsibility that students take whilst at school, the better fitted they will be for the future.

*As well as the regular school magazine content such as class and staff photos and samples of poetry and writing, there were clear indications of the greater role that more senior students were taking nowadays in the overall management of the school: reports of the committees on the library, chapel, sports and athletics, canteen, farm, gardens and garden houses, dispensary, mess and magazine were all included, as well as the more formal structures of prefects and the much expanded School Council, much broader in scope than when we first came back in 1970.*

*Another significant difference was the much greater inclusion of indigenous staff across all school activities, from the medical orderly to assistant librarian, from lab. technician to catering, from driving to teaching, with seven locally trained secondary school teachers (of whom six were MMS Old Boys), where there were none at all in 1971 I recall, the first arriving with great fanfare in 1972. The recently convened Board of Governors, chaired by the Bishop and with wide local representation, was also a major development in the overall management of the school.*

### **Letter home, Our final Martyrs Day, September 1974**

Joseph, one of the New Britain boys, had promised us all a special treat for Martyrs Day and brought us first thing in the morning an enormous chunk of his famous cassava pudding to sample. This is a traditional delicacy back home, made by scraping tapioca root, squeezing coconut juice over it to make a solid 'dough' and then wrapping it all in banana leaves to bake in the fire. Anna, bless her, really loved it and Joseph was thrilled !!

Later on, having recovered from that 'breakfast', we joined the rest of the school on the deba-deba for the traditional Martyrs Day dancing. The first dance was a story dance from the Mamba. Some of their village men had walked for several days from the coastal area northeast of Gona to reach the school and take part in the leading roles.

The story was danced very cleverly; going up to a tree to try and catch an owl hiding there, then returning to their village to enlist the help of more expert bird-catchers to entice the owl out of the tree. The 'tree' was really a platform the boys had built high off the ground and covered with coconut fronds, where about ten other 'birds' were hidden.

Anna was fascinated by all their bright feathers and decorations so after the dance we went 'backstage' to see two of our own Martyrs boys from the Mamba dancing team and then were given a good look at a native dancing drum. It was shaped and hollowed out of one piece of wood with a lizard skin stretched tight across the top and small lumps of beeswax fixed to it for resonance.

*It is good to have the recollection of that special Martyrs Day*

*as one of our final memories of that time.*

*The very fact that we were witness to a rich and harmonious mix*

*of young men from disparate clans and language groups*

*genuinely enjoying their life together*

*was a wonderful experience.*

# P.S. Not only ..... but also...

## Letter home, December 1973

As this year comes to an end, we have inevitably been thinking of this time next year when we shall be returning home and of what will be in store for us after that.

Tony has been growing increasingly convinced that it is in this kind of environment with this degree of economic development that his interests and skills can be put to the best use.

This does mean that until Anna's and any other children's education poses a problem, we have more or less decided to spend quite a few more years in dim and distant lands, with only leave or further training periods in England

I suppose we have changed in many ways in the three years we have been out here already, but one practical thing it's taught us is to learn to differentiate between what is essential and what is an 'extra'.

We had two Bishops to dinner a few nights ago, Bishop David was showing Bishop Stephen Neil around PNG. He is an absolutely brilliant man, former bishop in India who can speak 8 Indian languages plus several European ones, a professor of Theology in Kenya and an eminent author. He was altogether a very striking and unassuming man.

While Tony was showing him round the school grounds they got talking quite a lot when he discovered that Tony's degree was not in Agriculture but in Theology. He appeared very impressed with the work Tony is doing here and said he thought Tony was up to taking on even more challenges and wanted to speak more on this again. He also said he wants to meet up with him again when he visits London at the end of next year.

I am sure by now there is some purpose in the way our life is working out.

*(It was about this time that the beginnings were started of the new Christian Training Centre at Jegerata near Popondetta, led by the Cottiers, a couple who had done a lot of pioneering work for the Anglican Church in the Highlands. C.T.C. was planned and financed as an ecumenical Centre, a conference and training centre for the Churches in the area with a section for some outreach work in the local communities.)*

## Letter home, future planning May 1974

We have just had a quick surprise visit from Bishop David, en route back from a Diocesan Council meeting at CTC. That is the place where Martin and Anne Chittleborough are now in charge since they left our own local church at Agenehambo.

He had been speaking to Martin about this proposed Community Development work I mentioned in my last letter. He wanted to have a word with Tony himself about the proposals and left us with the feeling he would be keen to have Tony in charge of the work. Anything that Tony suggested he would nod his head enthusiastically over and seemed to agree wholeheartedly. He has now asked Tony to prepare a paper outlining his ideas for the next meeting of Diocesan Council, so that they can talk it over and give it their blessing.

We have been giving a lot of thought about what exactly we want to do and one striking book that has helped to give us some guidelines is called Small is Beautiful by E.F. Schumacher. He is chairman of a very interesting organisation in London called the Intermediate Technology Development Group. I was struck by the sub title too: 'a study of economics as if people mattered' I am enclosing their little introductory leaflet to give you some idea. It makes clear why it appeals to Tony's ingenuity in creating something out of nothing!

## Letter home, July 1974

Plans for next year's job are progressing well. We are actually getting down to details for the new staff houses to be built, so we will be able to have quite a say in the interior design and Martin will give us an allocation of funds to be spent on furnishings either in Moresby or back in England, so that things can be bought all ready before we return, which is excellent.

He has already recruited the Mission vehicle maintenance man to join the CTC staff next year to work on the technology side as a partner to Tony's farm work. Tony already gets on well with both him and Martin, so they should make a very integrated team together.

## Final available letter home, September 1974

Did I tell you that Tony went off to Port Moresby with Martin to attend a seminar on 'The Role of the Church in PNG Rural Development'? The Bishop had suggested they go to represent the Anglicans. It was organised by the Melanesians and seven different churches were represented there. This meant that a lot of the discussion was in Pidgin, which made it quite a challenge for Tony as he had to concentrate hard on what some of the local people were saying!

*It has been a consistent policy of the Anglican Church that English should be the universal common language throughout our particular area with its plethora of different languages, so we are generally unfamiliar with Niu Gini pidgin and Motu, the local vernacular of Port Moresby and the nearest thing to a 'lingua franca' in Papua overall.*

The main theme of the conference was that the search for rapid development should not be concentrating solely on economic or technical change, but rather on taking human development as a whole in every sphere, physical, mental and spiritual and with relationships between different people too.

In this context particularly he has found the new course he is currently piloting at school very worthwhile, especially as it deals with comparative religions which was one of his special subjects at King's, and also includes traditional Melanesian beliefs. This is giving him greater insights into the power of the boys' belief in spirits in their daily life, as for them there is no distinction between the spiritual and material world, an important consideration in the context of development.

Economic expansion is hitting PNG at such a rapid rate now, with Japanese interests and multinational corporations trying to open up vast expanses of previously untouched local land with their mining, hydroelectricity or timber milling so the whole village way of life can be toppled in just a matter of a few years.

The different church representatives were able to share ideas too of the various ways they are trying to assist in helping people to adapt to this new way of life. Tony also picked up on how important it is going to be to help people learn new skills and techniques in order to appreciate their own potential.....

Sorry. I have just read that through and it's a real stodge! I was finding it hard to concentrate with Anna wanting my attention...!!

*We had reached the final few days of our time at Martyrs Memorial School when we received the untimely and completely unexpected news that the local Anglican Council had actually turned down this new as yet untried project as they couldn't guarantee sufficient funds to cover it.*

*Also the two of us were at that time a very unknown quantity to many of the church members.*

*We were however, still as committed as ever, and even more determined to return to PNG, once our home leave was over.*

*The following pages chronicle what happened next.....!*

# **PART TWO**

## **CTC: FOOD CROPS and BUILDING HOUSES**

*This second part covering our life and work in PNG from 1975 until 1982,  
continues as before with the extracts from letters home to my mother  
and my later observations and reflections,*

*together with additional details from the more general newsletters we sent  
out to an increasing number of friends and supporters over the years,  
plus extracts from the more official reports and magazine articles  
and some added historical context and commentary.*

# Foundation: 1975

## National politics and the role of the Church 1970/75

There had already been wide changes taking place throughout the country in the intervening years of our time at Martyrs, not least the impact of major new mining exploration in the remote regions of Ok Tedi in the far west of Papua and the disturbing influence of the vast new copper mine at Panguna on Bougainville. This was already causing major soil degradation and pollution and might well have a similar impact in any further major mining activity. The issue of traditional land ownership was also looking increasingly more contentious. Was it the state or the local people themselves who owned the great wealth buried beneath their feet, was a key question now being asked.

Another key event during that time was the unexpected change of government in Australia in 1972. Gough Whitlam's Premiership of a new Labour government very radically altered Canberra's relationship with its overseas territories. This was to catapult the embryonic nation of PNG into self-government and independence within a matter of months rather than years and immediately heightened an already politicised House of Assembly.

The general consensus had previously been that independence would be inevitable one day 'when the time was right'. It is hard to underestimate the dramatic psychological change that now ensued, notably amongst the indigenous educated urban 'elite' who were already experiencing a major mismatch between their salaries and earnings and the 'expats' doing comparable work.

The growing influence of the national Pangu Pati in the House of Assembly under the 'eloquent and charismatic' leadership of Michael Somare increased apace, with a more significant role in political decision making and greater pressure on land reform legislation and indigenous timber rights.

By 1973 the two separate territories of Papua and New Guinea were joined together under one administration as one country, henceforth to be known as Papua New Guinea (PNG). Unity was a major theme, and the police and armed forces (PIR Pacific Islands Regiment) were well trained to cross any regional and tribal divides.

*(By the time we returned in May 1975, there were what seemed to us almost daily announcements over the national radio that yet another job or profession would in future be open to nationals only, together with various competitions to choose a new national anthem, a new national flag and even a new national costume.)*

Meanwhile the national theme of 'Education for Self-reliance' was being echoed by the Anglican Church in its stewardship campaign amongst members of its congregations.

In 1972 Bishop David had launched his Garamut Appeal with an ambitious and personally demanding fund-raising and awareness-making walk across the infamous Kokoda Trail, specifically with the aim of ensuring ongoing support for existing Anglican training programmes rather than for initiating any new enterprises.

With the limited resources of the Anglican Church at the time, it was becoming abundantly clear to the Diocesan bishop that the church should not be dependent on overseas contributions for its future growth and it needed to establish its own source of funding.

*(Unlike other established Missions such as the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans, the Anglicans had always eschewed any major business dealings, and so had acquired or cultivated no large plantations as regular sources of revenue. Severe shortage of funds and lack of resources continued to be uppermost in the considerations of future Diocesan Councils.)*

For us, to share in the coming of Independence for the nation on 16th September 1975 was a unique experience, being actual participants in the country at such a significant time. All went well and smoothly in spite of all the previous misgivings about the unexpected pace of change in this major transition.

#### **General newsletter to friends and supporters, December 1975**

It was a historical moment taking part in the Independence celebrations in Popondetta on September 16th and to hear broadcasts from Port Moresby of the main constitutional events. On the eve of Independence we stayed up until after midnight to listen to a speech by the Prime Minister Michael Somare followed by a short but moving Declaration of Independence by the Governor General, Sir John Guise. Then by climbing onto the veranda of our half-built house we could watch the firework display rockets from Pop.

Then later in the afternoon we all joined the elaborately decorated dancing crowds from many different districts who had come in to town and watched the new national flag being raised in a ceremony that was being repeated all over the country. Then there was a broadcast of yet more speeches from Prince Charles and we heard the new national anthem being played for the first time.

It was for all of us here an occasion of fellowship and excitement, free from tension or trouble and one that we were proud to have a share in.

*After all the festivities life returned very much to normal, in fact there was little obvious change, specifically for people in the rural areas. Job opportunities and the chance to participate in the 'modern' way of life were very much limited to the towns.*



## **Life at the Christian Training Centre, Popondetta**

*It had become very clear to us both after that fateful Diocesan Council meeting in 1974 that money issues over our future work needed urgently to be addressed, and so during our time on leave we made our first personal contact with Christian Aid. From that time on, they always demonstrated great sympathy and financial support for our approach and I was to continue that association by eventually joining the Board of Christian Aid as Chair of its Asia/Pacific committee in 1984.*

*At least we had guaranteed funding for the work itself for the next three years from the German Church Development Aid agency known as EZE, and the New Guinea Mission continued to support us as a family.*

### **Letter home from Port Moresby, May 1975**

When we finally arrived back from that long journey, we picked up a message at Jackson's airport in Moresby that Martin Chittleborough had realised we would be in time to attend a conference at the University on 'Change and Development'. He thought it was too good an opportunity to miss, so has made arrangements for us to stay here an extra week to attend. That suits us fine, helping us to get 'tuned in' for our new work.

As a wonderful bonus we can use the Bishop's secretary's flat as our own in her absence and every morning we open the door onto the veranda and watch the boats down below in the harbour. So many signs of heat and humidity I had forgotten: the inevitable fusty smell when I opened a cupboard door, rock hard butter from the fridge starting to melt within ten minutes, but also the lovely freedom from heavy clothing, beautiful tropical evenings, sitting out on the veranda. I am out here now as I write this.....

*In many ways, at least at the start of our time at C.T. C., there were many echoes of our previous experience at Martyrs, but it also differed in three notable ways.*

*One was that we now had a growing, lively two year old daughter as an integral part of our involvement with the work, but also the work itself had evolved in a way we hadn't at first envisaged, and there was no longer a specific time frame for what we were now setting out upon.*

### **Letter home, May 1975**

Incredible to believe that a month ago today we left England!

We are really getting down to things at last. Martin and Anne and the other staff made us very welcome when we arrived but for the first few days we were not clear how we fitted into the existing framework of life here. We had thought so much about our outlook to the work we were setting out on, and inevitably I suppose we were a bit troubled when we found reality did not really fit with our preconceptions.

Time and again, reading through past reports and correspondence to get ourselves up to date, we read phrases such as "With the arrival of the Watts decisions (or a period of real planning and progress) should take place ". Very gratifying in a way, but it means there are so many things to get started on all at once!

One crucial aspect of all this prevaricating is finding somewhere appropriate for us to live as a family, instead of temporarily in the Transit House as we are at present. As it has turned out, the more permanent European style staff house (cement brick, sawn timber, corrugated iron roof, inside plumbing) originally planned for us has since been put on hold and there is allocation for only one such house, rather than the original two, as planned.

*Following that famous Diocesan Council meeting which had turned down this new, untried project that the Bishops and Martin had fought so hard to save, the church's executive reluctantly gave permission for just one house to be built, and they would sort out what to do about us when we arrived!*

At first sight this would appear very unfair, but Tony and I are actually very glad things have turned out like this, as we can set up our own part of C.T.C. completely from scratch, as it were. We have spent so much time thinking and reading about the right approach to development for a country such as this and are convinced that if we really believe in what we are trying to do for the people here, then we ourselves must practise what we preach as much as possible.

What we have been presented with, as the only outward and visible sign of this new project, is a brand-new European style house going up, and a ready-made workshop containing sophisticated electrical and mechanical equipment, both far beyond the means of the great majority of Papuans. There is in fact no way we could justify to ourselves the building of yet another European style house in terms of cost, suitability, relevance to the situation etc., and also a place where visiting village people could feel relaxed and at ease.

The first thing Tony did, as a sort of protest, was to fix back together the handle of his scythe and go out and cut some grass!

I am writing at some length about the way things were as we first saw them, as it is easier to look back now after a few weeks and see how things are gradually working out.

In spite of everything we are genuinely very happy to be here.

One thing that has surprised us though is that when we wrote that paper for Diocesan Council last December to justify our own determination to continue with the project, everyone had seemed most approving of what we had written. Yet it appears that the other staff hadn't fully analysed what it would mean in terms of personal commitment, whereas that thought had been constantly in our minds when we wrote it. The next step was to put all this on paper, both for our own (somewhat sceptical!) Diocesan Secretary and for EZE who are funding the bulk of the project.

Our criteria for any of our CCC work (Christian Community Centres - our 'thing') is that it should be easy to construct and maintain, make use of local materials wherever possible, and finally be suitable for the village situation.

So far, it seems the general pattern has been to do something first, so that people can see what we're on about, and then they start getting engaged with some enthusiasm!

*(This brought back the recollection of the expression which would soon become increasingly familiar: "Now I have seen it with my eyes, now I understand".)*

Our idea for our house is to build the walls and the framework entirely from timber cut here in the bush. With sawn timber Tony would be able to build a far more substantial house than the usual village houses which have to be replaced every two or three years, but the design built up on stilts with an open veranda would be far more familiar to the local people than a more conventional European style one with its cement floor.

There will be a few 'western' improvements however, which I think justifiable especially with a young family, such as an indoor flush toilet, a bottle gas stove and a basic fridge. We have designed the bathroom area as an extension down at the back, but otherwise the main components of the house would be fairly similar to that of a Papuan one.

So there's not much more we can do about getting on with somewhere suitable to live until we receive official consent to our plans.

Meanwhile I am discovering that all the paperwork involved with C.C.C. seems to be in a terrible muddle, especially as all the accounting seems to take place 150 miles away in Lae, at the church's main admin. office. Anyway, we are all set for reformation all round.....

My own work has been to sort through the myriad of correspondence and our predecessor Chris Gardner's considerable research on the customs, gardening, Church, historical and philosophical background of Orokaiva society.

That in itself is absorbing enough, without even getting down to our actual work!

When we uncovered a specific request for help and support from a local C.C.C. village leader in the mountains of the Managalas, this was an obvious starting point for Tony to find out at first hand exactly what the local people are expecting of us and in what ways we can best help. So he straightaway sent out a message over Radio Northern District to say he would be arriving on the weekly Coffee Growers Society plane to Itokama, the nearest airstrip.

## **2nd letter home, May 1975**

..... Tony has just left on his first patrol, armed with rucksack and bedding roll, not forgetting the specially requested sack of rice, no doubt to help cater for this European visitor! As he was preparing to leave, he couldn't help commenting how infinitely preferable this was to his previous life in the classroom!

One job I would like to get finished before his return is to varnish the bed he has just been making for us, beautifully of course with not a nail in sight and all neatly jointed. Total cost is under four pounds! It's just so much more fun to live like this than the incessant worry over money that seems inevitable in England at the moment.

## **Letter home, June 1975**

Another month has gone by already and things are really getting going at last.

We now have the official go-ahead from the Diocesan Executive for our revised building project, so on Friday the building team started clearing the site for the new house and by now it is all marked out with 28 post holes and framework timber cut and ready to go! EZE have also given their full support for any new initiatives we might want to introduce which is very encouraging.

Tony's first experience of patrolling went off very well and he returned looking more tanned and not too footsore. Now he and some local school leavers have been busily putting up a substantial anti - pig fence around our little smallholding. There's not much point in planting anything until that's fixed up!

.....When Tony brought back a lovely box of fresh vegetables from the market I was so impatient to get our own vegetable patch into production.....

We are setting up some sort of **reference library and resource centre** for anyone wanting information on growing a particular crop or simple food processing. Tony has built me some bookshelves and a desk in the corner of the office. We also now have an official CCC bank account locally and I have taken over all our book keeping, so can at least keep a hold on how (and how much) the grant money is being used. I do believe people are starting to realise that we are wanting to make a go of this work and Fr Fred (Diocesan Sec. in Lae) is willing to agree to many more of our requests. In fact, that's where Tony is right now, sorting through the last quarter's accounts with him, as well as meeting useful people to contact.

We have also been experimenting with making corn meal with our new food grinder. One day we did a very ad hoc trial with a group here of some biscuits using cornmeal mixed with ground fresh peanuts, bound with eggs and a little water and sweetened with raw sugar. I particularly emphasised while I was demonstrating that it used only vegetable ingredients that could be grown in their gardens; the biscuits didn't taste bad either!

### **August 1975: first general newsletter to friends and supporters**

One thing that made us feel at home on our return over three months ago, was the welcome given us by various friends and boys from Martyrs School, all interested to hear about our time on leave.

Our main job now is building our own house which may well take another month or more. We have enjoyed designing it just the way we want it, and Tony is now eager to get on building it. We are aiming to use as much local material as we can, except for the plumbing and corrugated iron roof for our rain water supply. Several local people have shown interest, one has given all the hardwood posts, another has cut for us a whole trailer load of long poles for wall and floor frames and yet another has provided four special palm trees for their traditional style floor boards.

In return for their help, we have agreed to give these neighbours young chickens and new seeds for planting, as well as general help and advice in setting up a chicken project, rather than the inevitable exchange of money.

Now we have a much stronger, pig-proof fence for our demonstration vegetable plot, we are aiming to introduce far more crops for their nutritional value, such as peanuts and mung beans and we are also trying out new ways of processing familiar crops like sugar cane and maize to make home-produced sugar and flour for baking. We have acquired a very simple little hand mill for grinding corn and other grains, (very similar to the mincer my mother used to clamp to the kitchen table in my childhood) and have already produced fresh ground roasted coffee and some very convincing peanut butter that people found hard to believe was home-made!

Our new DIY reference library of all sorts of booklets, articles, information leaflets is already proving useful and several people have been looking along the shelves and noting down helpful information and references.

Fifty day-old chicks will be arriving shortly but at present our only livestock are six ducks intended for breeding that waddle around the grounds and have even ventured into the open plan chapel. They take great delight in splashing in puddles but so far have produced no eggs.

### **Letter home, November 1975**

It must be a mark of how full and varied our lives are, that I just do not realise how long ago it is since my last letter to you. Independence Day has come and gone quite happily, and seems an age away by now!

Everything here is really getting ahead, for we have our beautiful Landrover at last! ..... Within days of those five enormous crates arriving from Germany, Tony and John Heki were busy sawing the timber for our house, as well as salvaging the pungently scented packing crate pine. First of all John and the building team went into the forest to cut down a huge red cedar, making a rough track through the undergrowth with their axes and bush knives, then when Tony joined them with the Landrover winch and logging trailer, the logging operations really got underway.

Anna and I have now gone on several exciting cross-country trips with the Landrover, one time driving through 12 foot high kunai grass with the front of the vehicle just pushing the kunai down before us as Tony drove 'blind' towards some distant trees where timber had been left for us to load. This time we turned straight off the road into the rain forest, jolting our way over fallen branches and twisted roots until we came to a rough clearing. The felled tree had been axed into 15 foot lengths to bring out on the trailer. Six trips altogether in one day!

It was quite exciting to watch the big, powerful winch attached to the front of the Landrover pulling inch by inch on the thick wire rope. It would have been an impossible task to cut down and transport such mighty logs without our equipment, but it also means that a whole new range of timber can be used for construction work now, using much harder, older wood rather than the smaller, weaker immature saplings used for house building traditionally.

The sight of the rich golden pink coloured boards steadily stacking up to be seasoned before being fitted for our walls is most satisfying and the sweet cedar scent of the sawdust pile is very pleasant. The children love burrowing through it to make tunnels.

I am often struck by the unique experience Anna is having of watching her own home grow stage by stage from the very trees in the forest right through, and clearly taking in every process.

In fact the wonder of creation is quite simply part of her world. She watches closely as Daddy takes a hard, rough lump of wood and shapes it into a smooth, tapered chair leg; she sees flour and yeast being mixed together and watches through the glass oven window as it rises up into a crusty loaf of bread; she has watched the tomatoes daily, from tiny yellow flowers to large ripe, red fruit; she hunts for duck eggs in their house every morning and helps to feed the chickens every evening.

Who are those people who fear that she will be missing out on 'educational opportunities' if we stay here? She is surrounded by a positive wealth of natural stimulation.

### **November 1975: Official report for German Church Development Aid (EZE)**

The main work remaining on the new staff house is the sawing and fitting of boards for the walls, for which the portable Dolmar saw has already attracted a great deal of interest.

A number of people have come from their villages enquiring how to convert their own timber for building. We are confident we shall be able to make full use of the saw in our work.

The Landrover 109 has already proved its worth. We have converted an old chisel plough into a small but very strong logging trailer and with the winch on the LR, we have been able to haul quite large logs out of the forest along roughly cleared tracks. It also means that with the saw being portable, very heavy logs can be sawn on the spot and then carried out as sawn timber.

Our aim on the smallholding is to develop the production of protein rich crops and encourage their inclusion in village food gardens; ultimately to improve the local diet, especially for children.

## **Early December 1975, general newsletter to friends and supporters**

Building our house has given us a tremendous starting point, for it illustrates in many ways the nature of our work. We have been able to combine traditional skills, techniques and materials like the ant-resistant posts and split palm flooring with the new techniques of sawn timber panelling and permanent roofing. Now Tony's main focus is to try and get the house nearly finished this month. The sawn red cedar of the outside walls and panelling in the dining room looks really lovely. Our house is becoming the envy of all around!

Several local men who have contributed some of their own timber recommended sesenga (red cedar) as being resistant to white ants as well as having such a delightful scent and colour, deep pink when freshly sawn, changing to a rich golden brown when it is seasoned - quite a bonus!

People are always welcome to come up and have a look around while it is being built. In fact, we should have organised a visitors' book right from the start to record all the comments that have been made, especially about Tony's Chinese influenced design of the lattice-worked windows which are considered very unusual! Like so much of the house they were not fully understood until seen in the context of the whole building.

Quite a number of villagers have wanted to watch our saw in action and have become really enthusiastic. One man commented that the only use they could make of their big trees previously had been to sell them to the big building contractors in town. Now he realised they would be able to use their own timber for their own homes and buildings in the village itself.

One popular new venture since September is selling Rhode Island chickens to the local villagers. We have kept six for ourselves and hope they will be laying by next March. We are planning to spend Christmas in a little fishing village down the coast not far from Wanigela, travelling there by plane and canoe. An ex-MMS student friend of ours, Peter Bendo, has invited us there to attend his wedding in December and we are all looking forward to that.

## **Letter home, January 1976**

We are in our new house at last, but there is so much more to tell you!

So much for our 'Christmas in the Village' holiday! We have since learned that travel arrangements anywhere in Papua New Guinea are notoriously unreliable. It appears it is rare to go on a journey of any length without some tale to tell at the end of it!

## **Family visit to the Coast**

Our journey to Peter's village started well enough, flying in a small plane along the coastline to Wanigela, but we had barely stepped off the plane when we were greeted with news that Peter was still stranded in Lae and would not be available to take us to his village by canoe as planned. Nevertheless Fr Denys Browning and Sr. Helen Roberts at the main Mission station and hospital made us very welcome there.

*We were to get to know Denys Browning and his dog Patch much more in 1976/77 when he was designing and building the new Newton Theological College nearby, still not registering his earlier unique link with Martyrs, and Sister Helen was already the coordinator for all medical work in the Diocese, but we knew nothing of that at this first encounter.*

So we were obliged to stay at the Mission station, listening daily on the mission radio schedule for news of Peter's arrival by mission boat from Lae.

We then spent pleasant evenings listening to Bishop David (also an unexpected guest) and Sister Helen telling tales of well-known mission personalities and the famous Mt. Lamington eruption, for they have both been in this country for almost thirty years.

We also heard the tales of Fr. Dennis Taylor's exploits when he was stationed here during the war and of how he had escorted three women missionaries, including his young wife and baby, right across the Kokoda Trail to escape possible capture by the Japanese,

After four days of waiting we realised sadly there was no chance of Peter being able to get a boat in time for us to meet him before our return plane, so we accepted an invitation by yet another ex-MMS boy who is now a primary school teacher to visit his own coastal village of Uiaku and speak to the people there about our work.

*These contacts with former Martyrs' students proved invaluable over the following years by giving us a readymade crisscrossing network throughout the region and which instantly gave more credibility to our work.*

At Uiaku we would be able to stay with Peter's uncle Russell whom we had already met at CTC. He could then advise us what to do about our missed visit to Peter's village, for there was no way to contact anyone there other than by canoe.

So the following morning we set out at sunrise for the four hour walk to Uiaku, armed with sunhats and barrier cream, sharing Anna and one rucksack between us and with the assurance that none of the rivers would reach higher than our chests if the tide was right!

We couldn't get lost.

Our instructions were to turn right at the beach and simply follow the shoreline, for there is merely a thin band of sandy soil and a line of coconuts between the sea on one side and the mangrove swamps on the other, with occasional clusters of houses where the beach widened.

In the cool of the early morning it was quite pleasant walking barefoot along the wet sand. Our first river crossing was no problem with Tony carrying Anna across on his shoulders. Our clothes soon dried off on us in the warmth of the sun, but the water of the next river looked dark and still and deep, reflecting the green of the mangroves on each bank. We were thankful when two small boys from the village opposite jumped into their dugout canoe to ferry us across. We had luck too for our third river crossing. A group of young people were setting off upriver to their food gardens, when they caught sight of us hesitating at the water's edge. Calling out to us to wait they brought their canoe over, so we were ferried across once again.

By the time we reached our fourth river crossing it was getting much hotter and there wasn't another soul in sight. So Anna and I parked ourselves in the shade under a tree while Tony took the plunge to try and find the shallowest place to cross, but each time he tried he was forced to swim before he was halfway across.

Just at that moment we saw a woman with a baby on her hip, calling and pointing out to sea. She walked straight out into the water, crossing over in a wide arc where the river waters had silted up and formed a concealed sandbank, so that she never once needed to lift her baby off her hip. She crossed back and forth making several trips for all three of us, always splashing at the water with her free hand. We learned later, that was to keep the crocodiles at bay!

We were most grateful for her help and soon came upon her village, the first in Peter's language group of Maisin. We were made wonderfully welcome there, and offered a rest and a refreshing drink of green coconut juice (Anna's favourite!), so we thankfully accepted their offer to take us the last leg of the journey to Uiaku by canoe for there was still quite a way to walk.

We were again made so welcome at Uiaku with refreshing crisp slices of watermelon to quench our thirst. During that first evening walk through the village, just watching and listening, we were able to experience at first hand the considerable skills and knowledge that these coastal people already possess: the women beating out their tapa bark, the men mending their fishing nets around the cooking fires, the fascination of watching an old woman sitting cross-legged by her pot of native red dye, deftly filling in her own traditional pattern outlined in black on the plain folded tapa cloth.

Our host, Russell, was most anxious that we should not return home without at least having met Peter's family and his bride-to-be Julie Grey, so he offered to take us the next morning in a big sailing canoe around the point of the bay on the four hour trip to Marua village.

It turned out an amazing trip. The sea was wonderfully calm, the sky was dazzling blue, the large canoe rocked gently as Russell pointed out various landmarks along the distant mountain range and told us of the different legends attached to them.

Our sudden and unexpected arrival at Marua caused a great surprise. After greeting Peter's parents we were taken to another house to meet Julie Grey, where according to custom she was being kept in seclusion for over a week before her wedding, patiently waiting for Peter to arrive.

Until our arrival they had had no news of his delay, for their village is extremely isolated, just a small cluster of houses hemmed in between the mangrove swamps behind and the wide, unbroken arc of the sea in front, with a narrow strip of sandy beach on either side.

As a special concession to her guests Julie Grey was allowed to join us all (very shyly!) for a meal, wearing all her feathers and necklaces and tapa skirt, her hair glistening with a traditional red dye and her skin gleaming with oil. We ate delicious freshly caught fish and the customary sweet potato and taro, boiled in a large, locally made clay pot with a banana leaf as a lid.

By now Russell was anxious to leave again, the wind having turned in our favour for the return trip. That journey back in the tropical twilight was quite spectacular, with the rays of the setting sun ahead of us over the mountain ranges and the large full moon rising from the horizon behind, lighting our way through the water.

We kept close to the shore this time rather than cutting across the open sea of the bay, and as evening drew on the noise of countless insects in the mangrove swamps grew more strident, the roots of the mangrove trees stretching out into the water throwing grotesque shadows in the moonlight.

We reached Uiaku with the moon already high in the sky, and as we came down to the beach early next morning to continue our journey to Wanigela to catch the weekly Popondetta plane, the first rays of the morning sun were showing from across the bay.

One of our most vivid recollections of that short stay is the memory of Russell's wife, Beatrice, presiding over breakfast with perfect composure as she balanced on the edge of the canoe handing out platefuls of shellfish and vegetables and hot mugs of tea, while Russell punted the canoe back along that shoreline we had walked along barely two days previously.

You can imagine that our staff were surprised to see us back so soon after we had set off, but the building team had worked hard in our absence putting some finishing touches to cupboards and doors. With a few more days spent painting and plumbing, we were finally able to move in on Christmas Eve itself. So we were able to spend Christmas in our new home after all!

# Rural Outreach

## Letter home, May 1975

We had a very useful conversation recently with the Nobles, who have themselves just spent two years on the Sakarina Mission station in the Managalas. That's the same station which was opened up by Fr Bevan Meredith back in 1963, when he was first ordained. Amazing, that's barely twelve years ago now. I still find it incredible how recent this all is.

They are sure that no matter what good works we try to do, people will simply not be convinced and not want to know if our own lifestyle belies what we are saying.

## Letter home, June 1975

After Tony's return from that first rural patrol it made me realise how protected we had been at Martyrs and how far removed from the real village situation it had been. Before the recent airstrip was established, there was just no way of getting trade store goods except on foot, carrying them along a tough, strenuous, endlessly up and down track through the bush for well over six hours from the nearest Mission station airstrip at Sila, and that airstrip itself is already isolated enough.

People up there in the Managalas for the most part wear nothing more than a bark loin cloth, eat nothing but baked yam, have no pots for cooking and so instead use bamboo sections, stuffed with vegetables and steamed in the fire, or make a traditional mu-mu with heated stones. Their only regular gardening tool is a sharpened stick for loosening the earth and digging up their yams.

As Tony was walking down a track between two villages, a woman appeared from a little rough-built bush shelter higher up the hill. Tony's guide explained she had gone up there according to custom and had her baby "under that tree over there". She was now obliged to stay up there for several weeks until the baby was old enough to join the family. People would bring her food each day and leave it nearby for her to collect, but she had to give birth to the baby entirely alone.

*(Nancy Vesperman, who had been nursing at the head station in Sakarina a few years earlier, told of the local reluctance for improved midwifery practice at that time.)*

Tony stayed at Itokama with Winterford and his wife, and met an American SIL translator who is working on the language there. Since his return we have sent up a sewing machine and some basic brown paper patterns I had cut out, a bale of cotton, some saucepans and a recipe book for the Community Centre up there, as well as some simple carpentry tools so these things can all be made available for the local people to use and share.

Winterford was so pleased to see Tony and I think appreciated very much being visited so soon after our arrival. When he saw Tony getting off that little plane, he said later that his first thought had been 'Ah, this is the man I can plan with'.

As there was no other plane for a further week, Tony set off early one morning for the long walk to Sakarina to catch the next plane out. He said one section was especially strenuous, slithering and sliding down a steep hill, across a rough made bridge over a river then straight up the other side, only to go down and up six times more! He quickly learned that there's no need for a water bottle on patrol. Far simpler to cut a length of bamboo that grows everywhere on the mountains. Each section contains several gulps of beautifully cool, fresh water. This is obviously one of the reasons that local people hardly carry a thing with them on long treks except their bush knife, as the jungle can provide all their needs!

Tony said the most alarming part of the whole patrol was the eventual take-off from Sila airstrip, but the view of Sakarina Mission down below was well worth the effort with its lovely shingle roofed church and the whole station nestled among the surrounding mountains.

Sila runway is set into the side of the mountain and is ridiculously short, with a 1 in 10 gradient from the top to the bottom of it. The uphill drive as you land acts as a very effective brake, but for take-off the pilot just roars downhill and lifts up the nose seemingly inches away from the end of the runway!

By contrast, on his return, there have been over the last few weeks 300 M.U. members at the conference centre here, each week two separate groups from different areas, so we have taken the opportunity to talk to them about the work we would like to do and hear their ideas.

We have also done some cookery demonstrations with the different groups.

Several groups have been very enthusiastic and asked that we visit their villages later in the year.

## **General newsletter to friends and supporters: August 1975**

### **Tony's Visit to the Managalas:**

This trip was very helpful for me to see the way our work should develop as it was the first time I had visited such a remote area.

I was very struck by the marked contrast in the way of life between the villagers there and the relatively sophisticated villagers near here with their far easier access to the town and shops. Itokama people still rely largely on their traditional food and traditional ways for almost everything.

The villagers held a meeting while I was there to discuss the work of CCC and talk about their ideas for development. It is clear that there is a great desire for 'development' but confusion about what the word signifies.

To date, development in the more remote villages has been limited to growing coffee for export which has brought money into the area, but also depleted the area available for growing their own food crops.

There is a widespread understanding that development means exclusively 'opportunities for making more money' - an idea certainly not limited to Papua New Guinea!

The very expression 'cash crop' says it all in a way.

I believe that a key role of the Church is to show that economic development is not the only, or even the most important, aspect of development.

It should include all aspects of human development, opening up opportunities to learn new skills and raise stronger, healthier families.

We still have a lot to learn yet about this work, but we firmly believe we must direct our efforts towards this kind of development.

## **Official EZE Report July-September 1975**

The new Landrover 109 has already proved its worth, enabling us to reach villages off the main road network which we had previously spent several hours walking to, and for rugged cross country driving.

There is evidence of anaemia and malnutrition amongst infants and young children in the area so we are aiming to encourage more legume crops and increase poultry and egg production. By raising standards of poultry husbandry in the villages we aim to increase protein in the local diet.

At the Itokama Community Centre some have commented that they are now too busy for 'community work'. Clearly we must avoid portraying our work as another bit of development that people should add on to their existing way of life, but rather to integrate this into village life as a way of providing alternatives and opportunities for improvement on what already exists.

There is by now an increasing number of potential CCC leaders already in the villages, (primary school teachers, evangelists, youth group leaders etc) who are interested in making use of our equipment, facilities and advice and who already have a recognised part to play in their local communities. We aim to build upon these core people to expand our programme.

### **Letter home, November 1975**

We have arranged for Ted Kelly to visit one of our key CCC outreach workers in his home village of Hirijo. Thomas is thrilled at the thought of making him a home-made cup of coffee and a completely home produced biscuit.....

There has been a disastrous flu epidemic throughout the whole country, especially with all the movement over the Independence week. The wave of sickness has passed beyond our district now, and all is well again, but at one stage they were treating over 1,000 outpatients a day at our local hospital.

It has just made us more aware than ever of the crying need to improve nutrition and create healthy communities. It has been the under fives and the older people who have been the most vulnerable.

As with all the situations here, I find we try to condition ourselves to look for something constructive we can do if something appears to have gone wrong.

So far, we have found that quite a helpful approach!

### **Early December 1975: general newsletter to friends and supporters**

After all the Independence festivities life has returned very much to normal. In fact there is little obvious change, particularly for people in the rural areas, a comment that is frequently made to us on our visits to various villages.

We can well see how job opportunities and the chance to participate in the 'modern' way of life are very much limited to the towns and this inevitably has a disruptive effect on traditional village life.

Unfortunately the magnificent Rhode Island Red cockerel we sent up to the Managalas to breed with the local chickens didn't survive long. It was greatly admired - for its plumage, and now some unknown person in Itokama has benefited from a magnificent feathered head-dress, especially during those Independence Day celebrations!

We are very thrilled that an ex Martyrs' student of ours called Lionel has asked to work with us, having just completed his two years' agricultural training. He plans to live in his home village and work with the Orokaiva people there, which is ideal and promises to be a very valuable development to the work.

### **Letter home, January 1976**

On that quite unplanned visit to the coast at Uiaku, we had the opportunity to meet with some of the villagers and many of the younger, town-employed men and women who were home on leave for Christmas, and tell them something of our work.

# Consolidation: 1976

## National and Church Governance and Wider Networking

During Michael Somare's first year as Prime Minister, he was realising at first hand that the future for which nationals had been prepared in the past was not necessarily meeting the contemporary needs of a new indigenous nation. He was also needing to deal with the rising threat of secessionists in Bougainville, lured by the evident wealth from the extensive Panguna Copper Mine in the centre of the island, plus the ongoing need for land reform in the light of further agricultural and forestry development.

He chose the speech he gave in June 1976 at Dogura, after the consecration of a new indigenous Anglican Bishop, Rt. Rev. Rhynold Sanana, as a general plea and warning that any future work, whether secular or church based, be made more relevant and responsive to the local community. He appreciated the vital role that the churches could play in this context and was positive about the recently proposed joint church/government committee participation, realising there was still much that could be achieved constructively together.

The theme of closer partnership between equals was even then being echoed in the evolution of the historic New Guinea Mission. This society had been supporting Anglicans via the U.K. for many years, but the relationship was now being challenged to be no longer perceived as 'senders and receivers', but rather that issues should be mutually shared. The organisation would therefore change its name symbolically from New Guinea Mission to Papua New Guinea Church Partnership (from NGM to PNGCP).

Meanwhile the Diocesan Bishop of Papua New Guinea was moving rapidly ahead with the preparations for an independent Province during the Archbishop of Canterbury's proposed visit in 1977. There were already five bishops consecrated, of whom Bishop George and Bishop Rhynold were both Papuan, each of the bishops with geographical responsibilities covering all five areas of the Diocese. (By now the Highlands and Islands had been separated into two.)

By 1976 Fr. Denys Browning had moved on from Wanigela and was masterminding the building of the new Newton Theological College at Jonita nearby, to replace the old college at Dogura. He already had a well established reputation as an architect and builder and was once again providing essential infrastructure for an Anglican Church institution, just as he had done originally at Martyrs back in the 50s.

The ethos of Newton College was changing too, engaging the students less in a traditional routine of study and lectures and more in their own practical and community training and drive towards self-sufficiency, which would equip them more realistically for the rigours of rural ministry.

### General newsletter to friends and supporters: March 1976

An important event in January was the World Council of Churches conference on Development Aid in the Pacific region that was held here at C.T.C. and which I was asked to cater for.

*(Some of those attending then I was to encounter again in 1990 in Western Samoa, at a very similar conference which I attended as the Christian Aid delegate - extraordinary!)*

W.C.C. was the main donor agency that had funded the setting up of C.T.C. and its conference centre three years earlier, so we wanted them to feel welcome, but I had never catered for so large nor so mixed a group before. At least Tony and Anna could eat their meals at the conference centre, and thereby met up with some fascinating delegates from all parts of the world.

We gained enormously from the valuable contacts we made with such an interesting and committed group of people, Tony especially enjoying the chance to exchange ideas and enter into discussions with like minded people concerned with village level development.

Many there commented on how much more appropriate the simple, rural setting of C.T.C. was to their discussions than the far-removed air conditioned environment of a large hotel in a capital city.

### **Tony's report on his Visit to Indonesia: September 1976**

Sponsored by the Melanesian Council of Churches to study the church's participation in rural development, I was part of a team coming from several churches and widely differing parts of PNG. I found it challenging to act as main intermediary between Asians and Melanesians, but also interesting to participate in a Melanesian reaction to Indonesia as well as forming my own impressions. Overcrowding, homelessness, lack of land and food shortages are still relatively unfamiliar here, or else covered up partly by massive food imports of rice and tinned goods.

After two weeks of constant travelling through Sulawesi and Java, visiting farmer training centres, community health programmes and many different village industries, we really appreciated the one week stay at the Motivator Training Centre taking part in their training programme, designed to equip their students to be initiators of change in their home villages.

I was especially aware of the strong sense of purpose underlying all their activities.

## **Life at C.T.C. and living in our own Home**

### **General newsletter to friends and supporters: March 1976**

We are now well settled into our new house and very much enjoying it.

As I sit writing at the table I can look through our double front doors opening wide onto the veranda, so that it is easy to see any passing visitors wanting to attract our attention.

I am often caught unprepared for a surprise 'tour of inspection' by visiting villagers interested to see some of our work, but their attention is drawn far more to the design of the roof trusses and the use of local timber than to any cluttered table or scattered toys.

By now we have been able to turn our attention specifically to preparation for the village development work we are concerned with and are delighted that Lionel has come to join us.

We had known Lionel already during our time at Martyrs, and have now met his parents and local people in his home village about 40 miles up the road towards Kokoda.

Lionel is spending his first months here with Tony at CTC, before setting up his own centre in his local area. He was delighted to discover our growing research library where he was free to browse and a well equipped workshop to try out his ideas and inventions alongside Tony.

For our part, we are very encouraged to have such an enthusiastic and capable member of our team.

We can also see enormous potential in furthering the links between our CCC department and the conference centre itself. We had killed one of the steers in preparation for the W.C.C. conference in January and so were able to supply the bulk of the meat. We also made use of fresh local fruit and vegetables wherever possible, a fact which our visitors seemed to appreciate.

Another initiative is our growing collection of simple, cheap or easy to construct machines and devices like our own sugarcane crusher designed by Tony a little like a clothes wringer. Our home made but effective coffee roaster is simply a recycled dried milk tin with a metal rod through it as a handle, rotated over the fire.

I also use our versatile hand grinding mill to experiment with processing local food and hold a weekly cookery session with all the other ladies on the staff who are free to join me for jam or biscuit making. We have great fun too!

### **Belated newsletter to friends and supporters: December 1976**

It is quite a challenge to condense in a few words some picture of our life and activities here this past year, for few of our days end in the structured way we had planned them.

A woman in labour to be taken to the hospital; the cow's foot to be treated for an infection; the water supply to be checked when the pipes inexplicably run dry in the middle of a conference; our neighbouring farmer to be advised that his errant cattle have eaten all our best grass and most of the staff vegetables - such events have long ceased to be regarded as interruptions but have become an integral part of our range of activities here at the centre.

As for our house, we continue to love living here, and over the months have acquired hand-woven pandanus mats for the floor, a beautiful tapa cloth bedspread for the guest room, a spherical clay cooking pot, all made by people we know whose traditional skills have blended in so well with the design of the house. Now my mother is staying with us over Christmas this year, our first resident guest in the new house.

Her greatest ambitions while here, she says, are to drink the juice from a green coconut and to paddle in a canoe. Maybe the entire family should go on the next village patrol!

Much of our effort over the past months has of necessity been focused on developing the resources we have here at the main Centre.

We have found a far readier response amongst interested local people when we can show them a concrete example of the kinds of village improvements we are thinking of, e.g. the hand mill almost permanently set up in my kitchen to demonstrate products like cornmeal and ground roast coffee drink and peanut butter, and see Tony's hand made wooden sugarcane crusher at work.

We always try to have available sufficient seed and food crops, poultry and equipment, tools and library books to stimulate and encourage interest where possible, and which can be of immediate and practical use in their villages.

My favourite is a jug full of freshly squeezed sipora (lemon) juice diluted and sweetened with pure sugarcane juice that has just been crushed from the cane, which I think serves as the best illustration to any party of onlookers of our themes of good health and self reliance.

# Rural Outreach

## **March 1976: General newsletter to friends and supporters**

### **Tony's report on village sawmilling**

Our sawmill operator John began our first village project on home ground at his wife's village not far from Agenehambo, talking things through with the village leaders there first of all. They had cleared a rough track for the Landrover through the forest and cut down some heavy trees in readiness for our arrival with the saw and equipment.

Carrying the heavy petrol engine through the bush with ropes slung on stout poles and shouldered by four men brought forth tales from the older men about the days before the road when they had worked as carriers from Buna on the coast right up to Kokoda at the foot of the Owen Stanley range. For us younger men this trip of 500 yards or so gave an idea of what a trek like that would have been like!

It was really quite exciting to be involved in our first village project and within a week to see the whole village community become drawn into it with such enthusiasm. Koipa village was almost deserted for everyone had set up camp around the saw in the jungle, each family with its own shelter, the women in charge of the food gardens and cooking over small fires in the clearing they had made, the children loving to play in the sawdust. It took three and a half weeks altogether to prepare about 300 lengths of timber for their village workshop. The women have also asked for an area with table and chairs where they can set up a sewing machine and resurrect an old abandoned wood burning stove. ( from wartime or the eruption, maybe?)

This first building project illustrates in many ways what we are trying to achieve here, helping people make fuller use of the resources and skills they already possess and providing further ideas and practical assistance where necessary.

We are finding a real desire amongst potential leaders to 'lift up' their own village and community but not always an idea about how to go about it without formal education or job training.

## **December 1976: belated newsletter to friends and supporters**

The list of friends who will be receiving this letter seems to have grown over the past months, particularly amongst visitors to this Centre who have asked to maintain contact on their return home.

What are now becoming frequent are requests to visit villages ourselves, sometimes as 'guest speakers' at village council meetings, more usually to give some equipment demonstration to local villagers to stimulate some interest and activity within the community.

For example, I have attended weekly cookery demonstrations for the women's club in a coastal village nearby, equipped with my corn-grinding mill and a frying pan. The arrangement is that they provide the ingredients and I provide the utensils. The whole afternoon is a very sociable, informal occasion where we invent together recipes containing a selection of peanuts, coconut, dried fish, corn meal, bananas, pawpaw, pineapple, sweet potato - not altogether of course but any combination they happen to provide on that day.

Whatever we cook is guaranteed to disappear in a flash once the husbands appear at the end of the day!

## Our family visit to Tufi and Sefoa

In July we had the chance to combine work and family holiday very pleasantly when we were invited to the coastal Tufi area, with the brief for Tony to speak of our activities with the local youth groups and villagers, and for me to demonstrate some new ideas in cooking to the women.

We stayed in a small local style guest house with an open veranda looking out onto the sea. No tourist brochure could improve on the setting of our accommodation, located at the furthest point of a long spur of land jutting out into the sea from the steep-sided fjords around Tufi, with fresh sea breezes, waving coconut palms, sparkling clear warm water for bathing, and our own secluded sandy beach.

For Sunday service we were taken early in the morning by dugout canoe around the point and across the fjord to Sefoa, gliding over fascinating coral reefs just below the surface, where tiny darting blue and gold fishes swam amongst the sea anemones. Then half an hour's clamber up the steep side of a hill to the church overlooking the point.

From there Tony, Anna and I went on further up the mountain to the only village in the area with any sort of oven, made out of an old oil drum. Here we found another ex-M.M.S. student, now back in his village and a member of the youth group, who had erected a home-made table and an awning right in the middle of the village, in honour of our arrival and the great cooking demonstration!

So while the women joined my group around the cooking fire, the rest of the youth group met with Tony to discuss their plans for a community chicken project and Anna as always, found other children to play with.

Our favourite memory of that trip was the time when a startled hen, disturbed by my sudden entry into our guest house bedroom, flew off the bed where she had been nesting and left a fresh laid egg on my pillow, just when I needed one for my next cookery session!

Next week Tony and Thomas have been invited to visit a coastal village to discuss ideas about setting up a community activities centre and workshop, with a particular interest in making their own sugar, so he is now trying to make a more portable version of his sugarcane crusher that they can dismantle, to take with them on the canoe.

*(I now recall one other episode of a cookery demonstration in a coastal village.*

*We had been concocting a sweet potato and ground peanut soup.*

*The ladies then asked me for advice on better ways to cook fish.*

*I was quite non-plussed as they had been serving us the most delicate and delicious fresh caught and traditionally cooked local fish for several days there and already had all that knowledge and skills at their fingertips, far more than I had and needed persuading that they already knew what to do.*

*It was much the same with Tony's trial and error approach to his many experiments with technical maintenance and design, and just as important for others to see that we have no prior special knowledge.*

*Sometimes it was no bad thing for other people to discover that there was no particular mystique in all these different things we were attempting, and there was no such thing as a guaranteed 'right answer'.)*

# Evolution: 1977 - 78

## Church and National Governance

1977 marked the year of the Queen's silver jubilee, and she chose to include PNG in her grand itinerary of Commonwealth countries. This would involve meticulous planning and attention to detail in our local corner of the country and was an event not to be missed, (even happily coinciding with a visit from my mother!)

This was also the year when the Anglican Church here gained its independence from the Australian church and our Bishop David became an Archbishop in his own right with a newly formed Province and five separate Dioceses.

By late 1978 the country had already been independent for over three years and disparities were starting to become more evident. This was no longer being seen in terms of colour, with white versus brown and Administration versus indigenous population.

Disaffection with traditional constraints and expectations of the 'wantok' community was already happening in the growing townships springing up around the key towns, alongside the increasing disparity of the cost of living between urban development and rural deprivation, of which our own work served as a pertinent illustration.

In our own province the impact of the newly established Higaturu Oil Palm development run by the Commonwealth Development Corporation (known locally as CDC) was already being seen in the large swathes of land in the Popondetta locality now being cleared of trees and then planted up with more unfamiliar oil palms.

There were already noticeably more newcomers in the town and surrounding area. The school population at the grandly titled 'International School' (attended by Anna) had a significant intake of Philippino children, many of whose parents were employed in government positions.

### **December 1977: General newsletter to friends and supporters**

It was seven years ago when Tony and I first set foot in Papua New Guinea, recently married and starting in our first teaching post. Just thinking back makes us realise the tremendous pace at which changes have taken place in almost every aspect of life during that time.

Less than five years ago Australian politicians were still debating the possibility of self-government for PNG before 1980, and now the government has been independent for almost two years and is establishing quite a lead in South Pacific affairs.

Students we taught at Martyrs are now in responsible positions, particularly in provincial government, as secondary school teachers, lawyers, government officers.

Familiar faces greet us at the customs and immigration counter, at the bank, on patrol in the villages and at the airline shed on an isolated airstrip, and the currency has evolved from the early pounds, shillings and pence to dollars and cents, and now kina and toea, the names for traditionally traded seashells.

The rambling cluttered general store, selling zips at the same counter as the aspirins, has now been transformed into Popondetta's well-ventilated, modern Steamships Supermarket; the pitted and corrugated dirt roads that were accepted in 1970, have now been sealed as far as the airstrip ten miles out of town; and our ears are gradually becoming attuned to the regular roar of massive freight trucks coming up from the new wharf at Oro Bay, laden with imported rice, sugar and tinned fish, and depressing quantities of locally brewed beer.

1977 has also become quite a significant year in several other ways. Within the space of four weeks we had the opportunity to see both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Queen drive right past the entrance to CTC and through our modest town of Popondetta, with all the decorations, dancing and ceremony that make up a traditional welcome and all the very best displays the town could muster.

We were even able to meet the Archbishop and his wife when they were introduced to several of the Anglican Church staff here before moving on to Dogura for the grand inauguration of the new Province.

## **Our Life at R.L.D., on the Farm, and further Networking**

Because the Church had been encouraged by the work here in general, it had been suggested we should also take over the management of the adjacent church farmland.

The fact that the land was known as the Dennis Taylor Farm had meant less to me at the time than it does now, when I realise how very apposite the name of that former missionary was to the kind of food production work Tony had in mind.

(When Fr. Dennis Taylor had moved from Wanigela after the war he had been particularly focused on encouraging and training Papuans to make full use of their own land, so with that in mind had acquired for the Mission some land near Jejerata primarily to grow subsistence vegetables.)

After his tragic death from the dreadful burns he had received from the volcanic eruption, came Virco Cook a trained agriculturist, who focused on growing rice in the early 1950s, but unfortunately his early trials came to nothing.

Some of the land had later become used as food gardens for students at the nearby Anglican training college, and as a cattle project.

### **June 1977: general newsletter to friends and supporters**

Because the work here is becoming much better known nowadays, we decided in January to change its name from the earlier Christian Community Centres to

RURAL LIFE DEVELOPMENT (RLD)

We want the work to be concerned above all with the development of the lives of local people, especially those living in rural areas, but we see ourselves still as an integral part of C.T.C.

Indeed we are becoming increasingly engaged here with running different local courses and practical demonstrations for all kinds of visitors, as well as being a main point of contact for the provision of various government departments for this region, such as the District Youth Guidance committee and the departments of Primary Industry, Health and Social Welfare, and Agriculture, and the involvement of our residential conference centre is a wonderful way to link up all our work.

### **July 1977: Official Church Report on RLD work**

Since taking over the running of the Dennis Taylor Farm this past year, a lot of our activities have been by nature of an experiment. We want to develop the land in a way consistent with the aims of the rest of RLD, rather than using it as previously as a 'cattle project' similar to many in the area to provide some cash income for the villages. We have kept a few of the best steers to train for work on the farm, and are developing legume crops as a regular source of protein. We also grow our own source of poultry feed.

A new member of staff, a blacksmith called Yapok from Morobe in New Guinea, has joined the team to teach techniques to the other RLD staff and interested village groups. Staff have run several outreach courses including agriculture, food and nutrition, chicken keeping and sugar making, and Tony and Gay Watts have taken an active role in some national conferences and seminars. The conference centre bookings provide an excellent opportunity to link seminar discussions with practical catering to illustrate RLD's outreach programme.

John Heki and the building team have completed a further local material staff house over the past six months, with all timber milled with the Dolmar chain saw.

### **August 1977: magazine article to explain RLD approach to rural development**

The RLD Centre is not a formal training institution.

We maintain a working farm and resource centre where visitors are always welcome to look around and staff are on hand to respond to needs, requests and initiatives within the Province. All crops grown on the farm are for food, and in addition to the small chicks reared for sale, hens are kept for their fresh eggs, and one dairy cow for fresh milk. In this way the farm can provide most of the ingredients necessary for any cooking demonstration or nutrition programme.

A visitor to the centre soon sees how all the various parts are integrated and relate to each other. He may find the building team making a cooking hearth out of compressed earth bricks in readiness for a cooking demonstration to promote cooking with mung beans. These beans are grown on the farm, and after they have been harvested and threshed, the empty pods are thrown into the chicken house for deep litter. This will eventually be turned into compost to fertilise the farm soil.

The purpose of the centre is precisely this: to help people become aware of the many different ways they can develop their own skills and make fuller use of the resources available to them. and to give support to those who seek to become creatively involved in the building up of their own self-reliant village community.

## September 1977: Letter home

We recently had a visit from the extension lecturer from PATI (Popondetta Agricultural Training Institute) who is really unhappy about the Appropriate Technology part of their course, saying it deals with equipment that is far too sophisticated for a village context.

So now it's been agreed that a group of their second year students will come round our centre each week, just to take a look at what is going on here week by week.

When the PATI principal came out himself, he got really excited by what he saw, especially our style of blacksmithing and the new design for our chicken house. Lastly he arrived at our own house. He then became very thoughtful and said how lucky we are to live in such a "beautifully simple" way, with the freedom to initiate and respond to needs as they arise and work without a constant flow of directives from 'Head Office'. It is true, we have so many things to give thanks for.....

We have recently had two weeks of a blacksmithing course so the participants could take back a simple set of tools like a pair of tongs and a bush knife and learn how to make their own forge and bellows. Meanwhile Tony was also trying to get the new chicken house ready for the 400 new chicks that were due to arrive next day.....

After a whole sequence of non-stop courses here, when no one came for the following week's sugar making course we had to admit we were so relieved. It was all becoming a bit too rushed!!

## December 1977: Christmas newsletter to friends and supporters

In July the Archbishop asked Tony to submit his report on the farm and RLD. to the first Provincial Synod, so he was able to 'hold the floor' for quite a while. Bishop Bevan in particular got quite excited about it all and said Tony had given them much food for thought.

We all took a short break in October to visit Mt. Hagen when Tony was invited to give a talk about RLD work to the Christian Medical Council whose theme this year is 'Health Education in Community Development'. We had never been so far into the Highlands before and we'll be going to the Highlands again next month for him to give a paper on the Church and rural development for the Melanesian Institute (M.I.) - there's nothing like a working holiday!

The farm itself is going well, with trials of different varieties of beans. We are aiming to grow sufficient quantities that we will always have a supply available for demonstration and cooking, and enough to distribute more widely for seed. Now half an acre of peanuts is ready to harvest, so Tony is busy making a new solar dryer for this much larger crop. Eggs from the chickens we are particularly promoting as another source of protein, as people do not seem to eat many from their own hens, perhaps seeing them more as tomorrow's chickens rather than tonight's dinner!

Our choice of farm equipment has been influenced by the changing patterns of land use in PNG at present, and the way we anticipate that farming may need to develop in the future.

Land is increasingly being used for other purposes than growing subsistence vegetables, like cash crop plantations (especially the major oil palm development round here), or else precious timber rights are being sold off to overseas sawmilling companies. At the same time the population is growing rapidly, all of which points to the need for a more intensive system of food production.

As the farm work has developed alongside our other activities, so have our ideas about the function of a demonstration village workshop. Earlier Tony and Yapok constructed some ingenious bellows out of old inner tubes, a few pieces of plywood and timber, a length of old water pipe and the steel bands from old packing crates, following a design by an engineering friend. It has cost us less than £3.00 and is spectacularly effective, so much so that a piece of steel has actually melted in the forge.

We have made it an important condition of our work here that the centre should be open to visitors at all times and as a result we have received many more visits than before. As a family, our own life is very much linked up with the life of the Centre, and it was lovely that my mother was able to share in it for a good five months, getting to know her tall long-legged granddaughter and enjoy her in her own home.

### **Letter home from Ukarumpa, January 1978**

I am having a holiday at the SIL guest house, all organised by Tony!

You may well wonder what I am doing here all on my own for once. Well, when we were at that conference in Mt. Hagen I mentioned, we met Sr Pauline Gruztner, a very high powered intellectual sociologist concerned particularly with the role of the Church in human development. She took an immediate interest in our approach and came to visit us the next month, following that visit with a request for us to lead the development section of the next orientation course for new missionaries at M.I. In Goroka.

This has involved both of us writing a paper describing the whys and wherefores of our work, which we spent absolutely days over! If it has served no other purpose it has certainly helped to deepen our convictions.

After much prevarication we finally decided that I should go by myself to give the paper as there are just so many things for Tony to oversee at RLD, and then he went and got malaria in any case, so he couldn't have gone after all.

After all my initial apprehension I was given a wonderfully friendly reception and Pauline was thrilled with the reaction. This has led me to do a lot of thinking about the different roles that Tony and I have at RLD. Maybe it is in public communications (i.e. writing and talking) that I have the greatest role - he so much prefers to get on and DO, and speak through his actions, whereas I do feel there is a part to play in setting people thinking and reappraising their own attitudes.

This break that Tony organised for me has been wonderful and I now feel rested and ready to return, for I well know that he too is working to the limit of his strength.

It is not that we are discouraged or despondent, it is just that we are being given too many opportunities!

### **Letter home, February 1978**

The most colourful event on the farm has been the new ox-cart which Tony and the team have finally finished. John milled the boards for it and all the metalwork was crafted in the forge. It's painted blue outside, orange inside, and it's a real thrill to see the handsome white steer pulling it along down the farm track past our house.

Anna of course couldn't resist going for a drive in it, and sat up in front waving to me as she went by! Tony wants to go and visit the Brothers down at the Friary in it one day, just for fun.

Apparently the introduction of Tony's Agriculture and Food crops section of the A.P.O. (Aid Post Orderly) syllabus is quite an innovation, and their curriculum has now been recommended for all APO training schools throughout PNG. This pleases Nancy no end, for she has now taken over as the principal of the Church's APO Training school at St Margaret's in Oro Bay.

Nutrition is at last being taken seriously as a vital contributing factor in health promotion and the government health dept actually has a resident (Philippino) nutritionist in Popondetta. We now have a Northern Province Nutrition committee and at the first meeting I found myself elected as Chairperson (dreadful word!) so there's something else for me to get my teeth into!

I had some fun with one of my regular cooking sessions with staff wives recently, trying out some ideas on how best to make use of peanuts. They are usually bought just for nibbling, without any roasting or salting or anything. I mentioned it at our regular baby clinic held at CTC, and the nurses were so keen they asked if they could come too. I was amazed; I never intended my informal little session to be so overweighed with professional nursing staff!

(I am seeing more and more that there is far too much talk and theorising going on in this country as a coverup for no-one being quite sure what they are meant to be doing or how they are meant to go about it. I think that explains a bit of our growing reputation as a place where people are actually 'doing' something and appear to have a good reason for doing it.)

First letter home after leave, August 1978

We arrived back unannounced at lunchtime a day earlier than expected, but the combination of relief and delight on the men's faces when they saw us was welcome enough. The bread bin is a great success, and one of the first things we did in true Watts style when we arrived back was to grind up some of our wheat and make a couple of loaves in our new bread tins.

We could start quite a stamp collection with the pile of correspondence awaiting us on our return, with letters from contacts or enquiries from the Solomons, Botswana, Iran, Geneva and the U.S. as well as two publications with articles either about or from us! It rather took our breath away to realise how far reaching some of our activities have been, before we have even got back into harness as it were.

Since our return we have more than once been brought back to the motto 'Development is People' which in the long term is far more significant than the latest enthusiasm for Appropriate Technology that is currently being talked about.

### **September 1978: official Church report on RLD and Farm activities**

For three months (June to August) farm staff had to cope with the depressing problem of feral cattle breaking fences and badly damaging most of the food crops. It remains an ongoing problem nationwide, with over 2,000 feral cattle in this Province alone.

In addition to farm crops, we have recently begun a small, intensive vegetable garden, in order to

- demonstrate more intensive use of land, where land is becoming limited;
- display the wide range of nourishing food crops available to grow in this area;
- provide a source of fresh vegetables for staff and the Conference Centre catering.

Work on building the new workshop is now complete and we will shortly be setting up the blacksmithing and carpentry sections. It is now stocked with a basic set of hand tools such as would be appropriate in the village.

We continue to take in interested local people for 'on the job' training, involving them in all aspects of the farm and workshop and then helping them to develop knowledge and skills in the specific areas they have chosen.

### **Letter home, September 1978**

It is by now becoming quite a tradition for RLD to enter a float illustrating whatever our current project is for the Independence Anniversary celebrations, so our team were delighted to win joint first prize this time.

We had entered two decorated floats on the theme of self-reliance: one to illustrate chicken keeping in the village, showing our chicken house in miniature with three hens inside (one of them actually laid an egg during the procession!) Then grinding up some home-grown chicken feed and a large trayful of big, brown eggs as the end result.

The second float was the little tractor and trailer following behind, decorated with fresh dug sweet corn, beans, sugar cane and rice, and the message in Orokaiva, "Use your land to grow good food".

Tony and I are very enthusiastic about the prospect of a new Director/Chaplain for C.T.C. in the new year, as there has been an enormous number of staff changes here recently.

When John Williamson came up here on spec. from New Zealand with his wife Margaret, we took to their realistic, adaptable approach immediately. He openly stated that it was what he had heard about RLD that had motivated him to come and find out in the first place.....

### **Letter home, November 1978**

I am so sorry I haven't written for such a long time, it's hard to know where to begin!

When Tony went away on that very hectic and full deputation visit to Melbourne earlier on, sponsored by the Australian Board of Missions (ABM), including 28 different speaking engagements in 8 days, (rather him than me!) he took with him a whole collection of slides about RLD activities he had specially prepared. I am sure these will be really useful as future teaching aids.

Then just two weeks later, we were all off again, Anna included, to SIL Ukarumpa to help run another course there. We were originally asked to help run the course for some Northern Province men, on village technology and nutrition.

When we arrived however it didn't turn out quite how we had anticipated. They had been hoping we would take an active role in planning the whole course!

Apparently the odd ideas and suggestions we had made turned the whole course content on its head and helped reshape the whole approach into something far more interconnected and integrated, with much greater emphasis on community leadership training.

Anyway, they've asked us to go back again next year, so I suppose that's a good sign!

We've come to the decision that it really is so much more complicated and difficult if we both leave the Centre and go away together, that we won't do it again unless it is really necessary (not counting family holidays of course!)

By now we have lived a quarter of our lives in the humid tropics and I am so acclimatised to it that I found even the cool of the Highlands quite miserable. When we got off the plane at Popondetta and the familiar steamy heat wrapped itself around us we felt really at home.

Almost immediately on our return I took on the total responsibility for catering for a large church conference, when the Conference Centre had a major staffing crisis and I ill-advisably volunteered to help out for the week. I then found out with a vengeance what Tony had been trying to tell me for days: namely that a 14 hour day for a 7 day week was more than I could manage on top of my normal routine!

Yet working in the conference centre for that time has shown us there can be enormous potential linkups between the RLD Farm and the conference centre kitchen, for everyone was most complimentary about our homemade bread and the fresh eggs and vegetables.

We both emerged from what must be reckoned the longest week of our married life, with a far clearer understanding that I too have a job to do at RLD, just in being the background support person. There are so many little bits of jobs that I usually do which don't seem to add up to much until there is no-one around to do them.

Anyway, I'm back to the account books and the report writing and the 'just being there in the house to talk about things' with renewed vigour and a new-found sense of purpose, so my rash diversion into catering did do some good after all!

Anna meanwhile thoroughly enjoys her time at school, continues to grow ever taller and enters into everything with enthusiasm.

### **December 1978: Christmas newsletter for friends and supporters**

During the first months of the year Tony was occupied mainly with making sure the RLD centre was in good working order for the two local foremen to carry on in charge in our absence.

By the time we went on leave in April, the main structure of the communal workshop was already completed with attractive split shingle roofing that shone golden brown in the sunlight.

We had an amazing coincidence on the way home at our stopover in Hongkong, staying at the Holy Carpenter Settlement in the heart of dockside Kowloon. Returning from an early morning walk amidst the crowds of street vendors, fish merchants, cyclists with baskets of birds balanced precariously on their handlebars, all of us feeling very foreign and lost in such a vast city, we were astonished to find the familiar face of Martin Chittleborough who was sitting alone in the dining room for breakfast.

So that chance encounter with Martin enabled us to spend the rest of the day most pleasantly, visiting people and places in the hinterland of Hongkong we would never have been able to on our own, and catching up on all the news over more than two years since he left.

By August I think John and Justus were glad to see us safely back again!

The new workshop is now up and running, with one section for blacksmithing, one for woodwork and one for general crop processing and drying.

One new piece of equipment that will definitely have pride of place will be the communally owned hand-driven grinding wheel that is in daily use by all the staff to sharpen their various knives, axes and fishing spears.

It was bought with the prize money of K30.00 in this year's Independence procession and proved an interesting purchase, for opinions were clearly divided about how best to make use of the money.

The majority of staff saw only an amount of cash to be distributed amongst those who had taken part. Tony and I saw the collective use of the staff's prize money to purchase something communal for the new workshop as a real opportunity to contribute something positive and permanent that each individual could never achieve alone.

We have noticed time and again that this prevalent desire for money and 'making bisnis' as such, is a direct reflection on the way that development has been presented and understood.

It is not so much that an alternative is unacceptable, it is seldom presented.

# Rural Outreach and Extension Work

## Letter home, September 1977

I recently advertised over the local radio a short open workshop on 'Dried Beans in Village Nutrition' and was astonished when 35 turned up: nurses from as far up as Kokoda right down to Oro Bay on the coast, and now I am booked up with the govt. Welfare dept. to do the same for their In-Service training week.

It seems we have planted a few seeds of enthusiasm for mung beans. I only hope the real seeds propagate as well!

We have also had a group of primary school teachers and some of the Martyrs staff looking around here and it all developed into a very lively Q and A session. Now a few of them have asked privately if they could stay here over Christmas instead of going home.

This has led us to consider putting on a short course specifically oriented towards community leadership involvement in rural development. We were certainly very encouraged by the teachers' interest in it all.

## Christmas newsletter 1977 to friends and supporters

Even though it appears we are very much tied to the centre, we still see extension and support work as a very necessary part of R.L.D.

Correspondence is increasing as people hear what is on offer through the local radio, but we are sure the most effective extension work is done by the people themselves in their home areas and language groups. We now have two such people living here for several months and we encourage them to try out for themselves what they think is most appropriate for their area. Tony and I then give extra teaching and discussion on topics like nutrition and soil improvement.

In August we held a major demonstration day in a small village right up beyond the Kumusi river, where the big Landrover had to ford across three stony, fast-flowing creeks.

The village day was exhausting, but I think the villagers enjoyed it for we had loaded up with not just the forge and bellows, but the bamboo splitter, the sugar cane crusher and the grinding mill for their own roasted coffee beans.

It took only a few moments of watching our blacksmith Yapok at work on a knife before they went off in search of old broken bush knife blades. During our rest time at lunch, we spotted a group of young lads hard at work around the forge, heating and cutting and fixing their own knives.

It was all very informal, but so many different activities in one day was a bit much for some of the older generation, who were content to sit back in their rest houses and watch from a safe distance.

*We noticed whenever we had gone out into the villages with Anna,  
that if the local people there wanted to show their appreciation to us in any way,  
they always offered their gift specifically to Anna,  
(a huge pineapple or a length of tapa cloth for example),  
as according to local custom,  
no child is ever expected to reciprocate in gift exchange or in honour indebtedness  
in the traditional cashless economy of rural Papua.*

# DIVERSIFICATION:1979 - 81

## National and Provincial Governance

Over the years since independence, the role of individual provincial governments was growing more diverse and separate from that of the national government still led by Michael Somare's Pangu Pati.

In our province we had noted the great influx of Philipinos to take up available posts. However, by 1980, Julius Chan and the People's Progress Party had taken over nationally with a greater drive towards larger scale projects in mining, logging and agriculture. The relationship between sometimes competing national and provincial governments was still being tested, for it to be incorporated into national policy.

In 1979, the Oro Provincial Government was exploring small scale sugar production while elsewhere in PNG research was ongoing to find the most appropriate location for a much larger scale scheme of sugar production as an agribusiness.

By 1981, yields of large scale sugar production had already skyrocketed in the fertile Markham Valley of the Morobe Province, and the Oro Provincial Government had by then turned its attention to the major agricultural development of Higaturu Oil Palm and the promise of greater collaboration with multinational Kumusi Timber.

*(In fact, the logging company did not last long beyond the time we left, with local landowners gaining none of the promised infrastructure benefits such as a major bridge over the Kumusi river and a better road network, nor a realistic rate on the royalties received for the irreplaceable assets of their ravaged native rain forests.*

*There was absolutely no provision made for any regeneration of the native forest.)*

### Letter home, February 1979

Tony was invited once again to give a talk to the Melanesian Institute and then we were asked both to design and run a village leadership course here by the govt. Office of Village Development (OVD) for some key people from the National Council of Women. I ended up taking an absolute age preparing the teaching materials for it though we had understood at first that all they had wanted was to make use of the conference centre facilities here.

Still, it turned out a valuable experience for us as we had never done anything quite like it before, focusing on the issues involved with development and the way they as leaders can help others in their community become aware of the choices available to them.

Now that Tony is also attending a fairly high level community development workshop at Ukarumpa run by SIL headquarters staff, we should be much better equipped to know what to aim for next time we go there!

*(From the SIL workshop came a working definition of 'Community Development':  
The basis of any successful programme  
is a change of heart on the part of members of the community,  
with a real desire to build each other up and to grow as people and as a community.)*

## **Letter home, November 1979**

There are plans afoot to set up a small scale sugar processing industry here in the Northern Province, backed by the provincial government, and they have their eye on this land to supply the bulk of the sugar cane required. Tony is to go on an exploratory trip of small scale sugar production to Queensland shortly at the provincial government's invitation.

It is no coincidence we have had several eminent visitors recently, including the Provincial Minister for Primary Industry and a research agronomist who was most impressed with the quality of the soil here and even invited us out to the Lamington Hotel with the Premier and his wife - the first time in nine years we have eaten out in Popondetta!

We quite enjoyed the meal for the novelty of it, but I still came away thinking that the fresh eggs and vegetables I had served them for lunch were far preferable to the tinned carrots and asparagus we were served with our steak in the evening!

Within the next month or so there might even be a take-away Chinese restaurant in town to cater for all the Chinese and Malaysians working for Higaturu Oil Palm, so that again will be a new experience.

## **Christmas newsletter to friends and supporters: December 1979**

One of my 'perks' as chairman of the Provincial Nutrition Committee has been to accompany the provincial nutritionist, a young Philippina called Ophelia, on several interesting trips, even one in a little bubble helicopter to a very isolated S.D.A. mission station set in a clearing in thick forest high up beyond Kokoda, on the lower slopes of the Owen Stanley range. We had been asked to investigate a report of severe malnutrition in the area, and to see whether the school needed to be closed down until the food supply situation improved.

The place is two days' hard walk from the nearest supply centre but most of the precious food gardens, already rather sparse from the effects of the previous dry season, had been destroyed by wild pigs and cattle. Why, I asked myself again and again as we flew over endless acres of treetops and deep ravines, were cattle being introduced into such a dense jungle area anyway, with the only grass in sight being enticingly on the mission station itself.

I felt uneasy, swooping in and out with such ease and speed, diagnosing the complaint accurately enough but able to give so little in the way of real, positive help; only a bright, cheerful talk to the few who were still attending school about the foods that would have been good for them to eat, if they hadn't been destroyed.....

(I learned later that the people there had received a consignment of brown rice and tinned fish, but the cattle problem is with them still.)

## **Letter home, May 1980**

Tony has had quite a week as he was interviewed by the NBC 'Man on the Land' producer about the Oil Palm scheme and our own 'small scale sugar industry' in Oro Province.

Tony was way down on the farm when the producer called unexpectedly the first time, so I filled him in a bit on the fact that it wasn't just sugar but the farm included many other aspects too, like food crops, pigs and poultry and blacksmithing. He became immediately more interested when he heard of our more integrated approach and gave Tony a really thorough interview later on.

It was broadcast over the national radio last night, and listened to at the start of Provincial Council when everyone was assembled in the Conference Centre dining room to hear it, but we had made a discreet getaway by then and listened to it in the privacy of our own home!

### **Letter home, October 1980**

One entirely new introduction onto the farm has the potential for something completely different. We recently had a visit from the Wildlife Officer from the local Dept. of Primary Industry who was particularly concerned about the possible extinction of the world famous Queen Alexandra birdwing butterfly, reputed to be largest in the world but found uniquely in the Popondetta region. The significant consequence of literally hundreds of hectares of bush being cleared for the Oil Palm project means that this exotic butterfly's natural habitat is being systematically destroyed as the vine leaf which it uniquely feeds on, is being cut down.

Their plan therefore is to grow more cuttings of this particular vine in this very locality. Would we be willing to participate in this project? I think it's a lovely idea, having huge emerald green butterflies fluttering around on our river banks, so we are more than willing to comply with this request.

### **December 1980: General newsletter to friends and supporters**

Last night's rain storm is over and the sun is shining in a deep blue sky again. Two government 'Wildlife' officers have just driven down the farm track with their cuttings of a unique vine to plant along the farm river bank. They have plans to make this area a site of special interest, - a really positive piece of conservation in which we are delighted to have a share.

## **Living at CTC and on the Farm and our Wider Outreach**

*Self reliance was becoming a critical issue by 1979 in the Anglican Church of PNG.*

*The severe shortage of Anglican funds in general  
was leading to significant staff cuts, especially amongst overseas staff,  
and this would also affect the work of CTC as a whole.*

*By the end of our time the issue was being compounded by  
the negative impact of overseas rates of exchange.*

*This had a detrimental effect on the generosity of overseas donors  
so that actual amounts received centrally were already dwindling.*

*At CTC the regular source of funding from EZE for the original RLD work  
had come to an end,*

*and the Church was hoping that the Dennis Taylor Farm  
would be at least self-supporting, if not yet income generating.*

*Christian Aid, via its block grant to MCC, thankfully continued its support  
for our work throughout our time at CTC and on the farm,  
and support from PNGCP continued for us as a family personally  
until our final return to England and indeed beyond.*

### **Letter home, February 1979**

It would be lovely to have you staying with us again for Christmas. Anna keeps well and is loving school.

There are still many people here who remember you well, but by now there are also several more I'm sure you'd enjoy meeting, especially Sister Patience down at Hetune who has taken over from Sister Valmai, and our new Chaplain and his wife from New Zealand, John and Margaret Williamson.

After barely a month here, their mere presence has had a remarkably stabilising influence on the whole place, for at last we feel there is someone officially 'in charge' at CTC and by next week there should even be a full complement of staff in all the various departments.

*My mother did meet Sr. Patience and they got on extremely well together.  
We heard at first hand her own account and some eyewitness details  
of the volcanic eruption.*

*What I was not aware of at the time was that this gentle unassuming 'Holy Sister'  
was in fact the selfsame nursing sister Pat Durdin who had played such a heroic role  
in the immediate aftermath of the volcano at Isivita station that Jan. 1951  
and then gone on to set up her own medical centre not far from Saiho  
to continue caring for the injured.*

Since Christmas we've been so booked up with all sorts of things and I'm really looking forward to Tony getting back from Ukarumpa next Monday. Then we should at last be able to settle down to some much needed work here at the centre, to expand the farm into more wholehearted food production.

One useful thing we have done is to buy a little blue 4WD Suzuki with two seats at the front (and space for Anna to squeeze between us!) and an open tray behind, bought with carefully saved up RLD funds. We use it mainly for the 101 quick trips to town and back or to the airstrip for which we were using the big, cumbersome Landrover before. This one is so much lighter and more economical to drive, Tony said it was worth getting just for the extra years it must have added on to my life! So far in its seven week life, it's already clocked up over 2,000 kms so it has already proved its worth.

#### **April 1979: official Church Report on RLD and Farm Activities**

The RLD Centre now has a permanent staff of nine, under the direction of Tony Watts.

We are conducting trials on different varieties of food crops and different methods of food production to monitor variations in yield and general efficiency and cost effectiveness.

We have expanded our farming equipment to be more versatile and have now replaced the one trained steer with our own two-year old steer (born during the Queen's visit in 1977).

*(Sadly that was a project of ours that never did really take off.  
While the local people certainly enjoyed seeing our bullock cart in action,  
no one ever wanted to learn how to train their own cattle. Never mind, we enjoyed it!)*

We plan to expand both poultry and pig production and provide a regular supply of fresh vegetables for the needs of the conference centre and the resident staff. The workshop is in full use, with sections for blacksmithing, carpentry and farm equipment. It is used primarily as a farm workshop and provides multiple training opportunities.

We are currently cutting timber on local land, using our new, much more portable, four foot chainsaw with a power head at both ends, which speeds up sawmilling considerably. This is a joint project with a local villager, sharing the timber equally. He is planning to build a new cattle yard with his share of the timber.

## **Letter home, May 1979**

CTC had its festival day recently. It makes such a difference having someone to get the place going again. We bought half a side of beef from PATI and cooked it in a mumu in the traditional way with the hot stones covered in banana leaves, with chunks of meat and bucketfuls of peeled vegetables covered tightly over and steaming away gently for the next few hours, enough for about 200 people we reckoned. Needless to say, it all just disappeared in a flash!

I am so thankful we have a full-time conference centre person now, with two full-time assistants to help her. I'm still helping out a bit now they are so busy, but there's a world of difference between helping out and being the one in charge!

We have Bishop Bevan staying here for Provincial Council this week anyway. He is very entertaining and has some quite unorthodox views on the various happenings at Council.

Letter home, August 1979

Great excitement the other night. Those wretched cattle were around again, with Julie yapping her high pitched bark as she tried to chase them from the area of the food garden behind our house and Tony out there with his torch trying to catch them.....

One young heifer went so wild when she saw Tony in the daylight next day she went quite berserk with fright and smashed herself against the fence posts. She ended up with a fatal twisted neck, so I finished up feeling sorry for her, rather than cross.

## **Sept. 1979: official Church report of RLD and Farm Activities**

In all the activities at the Centre i.e. farming, poultry, food garden, pig keeping, tree planting, sawmilling and building, and the workshop, we are trying to develop three elements using an integrated approach as a fundamental basis for the work:

- demonstration and training, both at the centre and in the villages;
- self-support for the RLD Centre, and supplying the conference centre;
- supplying seed, livestock and appropriate equipment to the villages;

Over the first nine months of this year, 59% of funds for RLD work has come from outside sources, 41% has been generated by the Centre and Farm.

The farm has received many serious setbacks over the past 18 months due to the growing number of feral cattle in the area. We have not yet been able to establish a continuous supply of food crops because of this crop damage, but the potential market for fresh food supplies is very high. Priority is now being given to feral cattle-proofing the available farmland.

## **Letter home, November 1979**

We will really appreciate your coming at this moment, as it is a fairly crucial time for the development of the farm and of our work here, and we are trying to decide how long we will be staying at this place.

## **Christmas 1979: annual newsletter to friends and supporters**

This is now the fifth year we have lived and worked at CTC and 1979 has made a tremendous difference to this place with almost a full complement of staff here. Our house is built right beside the main track in from the road and it is so encouraging to observe all the comings and goings of visitors and to feel the Centre as a whole is truly coming into its own again.

The one acre vegetable garden plot alongside our own garden has increased in scope and size tremendously and is responding well to organic gardening methods. It now integrates Tony's own methods of mobile pig keeping so that passersby frequently stop and ponder the sight of four healthy, contented pigs contained in a moveable fence within a few feet of some juicy, tantalising taro plants - a challenge to pig husbandry in PNG if ever there was one!

(Soapy water still seems the best remedy for the ubiquitous aphids! Although derris is a local bush plant round here and we would have liked to process our own derris dust from the roots as an organic pesticide, we decided against it. The plant is so closely bound up with traditional social customs and taboos we thought the sight of it actually growing in the food garden might well create unnecessary suspicion.)

January seems the time for courses. Tony and I will both be taking part in different courses in the Highlands next month, combining them with a family holiday now my mother is also with us, but after that Tony is firmly retiring from teaching and becoming a full time farmer.

Down on the still forested areas of the farmland the two complementary activities of timber milling and tree planting are going along well together. Wherever the milling team goes tree felling, especially the long established hardwood trees, they search around the base of the tree trunk for any likely seeds or seedlings for our newly established tree nursery. When the seedlings are sufficiently established they are planted out on the river banks and in the more inaccessible parts of the farm which can't be used for cultivation.

The building team has just finished the magnificently solid shingle making machine which Tony invented from all sorts of bits and pieces, a lot of the scrap metal having been cut and shaped in the workshop forge. With an old tractor tyre filled with concrete as a huge flywheel and our little tractor chugging away, the recycled plane blade slides rhythmically back and forth with stately precision, producing between 60 and 100 shingles a minute. It looks like a veritable Heath Robinson exhibition entry for the Science Museum in Kensington!

Perhaps it's no surprise that the men chose 'The Village Workshop' as their theme for this year's Independence Day float, displaying our beautifully made and practical tools all forged out of scrap metal. They used a trailer for the blacksmithing section with the anvil, bellows and forge complete with glowing charcoal, while the tray of the Landrover served for the carpentry section with workbench and the display of tools. (I had my loyalties divided this year as the Nutrition committee had also entered a float, but as neither of them won, it didn't really matter!)

Our own plans for next year promise to be very exciting, with expansion into full scale vegetable and sugar cane production and a new pig breeding and fattening project.

Anna too has her own plans for school, she just loves every part of it with friends of so many nationalities. We are thankful that she enters so fully into school life and involves us in other things than work! Sometimes I find it hard to believe she is still only six years old! Now all her talk is about Christmas, with the preparations for making the Christmas pudding with Grandma who is staying with us once again and enjoying the warmth very much!

### **January 1980: Farm Development Plan for 1980**

About half the farmland is covered with tall elephant and kunai grass. The remaining farmland is covered with secondary forest which has regrown since the land was gardened 15 to 20 years ago. There are small plantings of teak and coconut.

It is clear that to develop sugar cane as a commercial farm crop is going to require some years of work. Although native varieties have been grown locally for many generations, there is very little research or information here in the Oro Province.

It would therefore be wise to spend some time initially in trials, observations and information gathering before making a fuller commitment of land and finance to commercial sugar production. We therefore plan to develop vegetable production, particularly sweet potato and sweet corn, to provide an immediate income for the farm and cover some of these initial research costs. We have already established supply contracts with the APO training centre at Oro Bay and with Popondetta High School and are looking for further markets for our crops.

After the crops are harvested, pigs will be ranged over the land with moveable fences. Other livestock will include broiler chicks for village sales and a further flock of hens for egg production.

With such severe soil erosion already experienced on cultivated farmland, soil conservation will be given a high priority in any future development.

### **Letter home, March 1980**

Thank you for your most enjoyable letter about your adventures on the way home, which I have duly shared with all and sundry. When Sr. Patience read it aloud to the other sisters they apparently clicked their tongues and aahed in all the right places! She will be returning to Australia next week and we shall miss her. Dennis Hill (the one we got a letter about the day you left) seems definitely to be coming.

The farm team are using the new tractor to pull out old roots and tree stumps to clear more farmland ready for ploughing, and John has just completed the new shingle roof on the second chicken house in less than a week and it's looking really good now.

### **Letter home, May 1980**

.... we too were able to watch the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury from the back of Wing Hay's store, via a coloured videotape on loan from Archbishop David. It all seemed so very English to me somehow, especially the crowds waiting around in the gusty wind outside the cathedral!

Brother Philip has asked Tony to preach down at Hetune for Whitsunday, a request that quite took him by surprise, but he's been working hard on it these past few days. Anna is not at all sure about it. She doesn't approve of such public speaking when it's not Daddy's 'job'.

Dennis Hill has now arrived and seems keen to get out and about. Everyone seems to think he will fit in well with the team and he has already had quite a few discussions with Tony on farming matters, which bodes well.

I have just been appointed the secretary for Anna's school Board so now I have taken on this additional work I've phased out of the Chairmanship of the provincial Nutrition Committee. In reality I am still about as much involved as I ever was but I still feel relieved of being ultimately responsible for its success or failure.

With these two 'extra' activities I find myself nowadays being far more content in a support role on the farm, especially now that Dennis is here.

### **Letter home, July 1980**

At long last I have a brilliant enthusiastic young girl as my regular 'home help' once again. She is happy and interested in everything and just loves working here. I have a hard time of it telling her she can go home now, she keeps finding other things to do and is utterly thorough in everything she does.

It is such a relief to me and makes life so much more pleasant for Tony too, coming back to a neat house and a secretarial wife who is up to date on most of the things she said she was going to do!  
*(She actually left the very next day, but another girl was highly recommended shortly afterwards, and she and I got on very well.)*

Tony is currently away at the Food Crops Conference in Goroka, chairing one session and presenting RLD work at another. He always finds the contacts he makes there extremely useful.

Income from the farm is slowly starting to come in, which is encouraging. Now that we have a good-sized area permanently fenced against the marauding cattle, the farm team have been busy planting sweet potato and peanuts to sell. I have never let myself be worried by lack of money before, and I don't intend to start now!

### **Letter home, September 1980**

Anna has just dashed in out of the rain en route to the Hekis' house. I think it is good the way she slips so easily from one group of school friends to another of local friends without any adverse criticism and seems to accept the different lifestyles quite easily.

Tony had an unexpected bonus when he was looking for a suitable site for the new piggery down on the farm. While the men were clearing the ground there with their bush knives, they discovered a large area of concreted floor, still in reasonable condition under several inches of undergrowth. According to the village elders nearby they had unearthed Virco Cook's original farmhouse site from the 1950s, just alongside the old road from Popondetta to the coast.

It will be ideal as the floor of the new piggery, needing very little extra work. Now Tony reckons he could make quite a convincing farm museum from all the bits of farm scrap and abandoned relics they have unearthed down there and all about the place, including that ancient pit saw they discovered way back when we first arrived.

His latest slogan for the farm is "Production without Destruction" and he certainly tries to make use of absolutely everything he finds. His mind is always running about six months ahead of where he actually is, and there seems no end to the things that could be done!

Dennis and he are seriously thinking about going into poultry and egg production in a big way next year, possibly kickstarted with a Development Bank loan, as there is enormous demand in Popondetta alone, with the vast majority of stock being imported from overseas. (We know that eggs can be up to six weeks old from a store there).

### **October 1980: RLD Farm Manager's Report to Provincial Council**

Under the conditions of heavy seasonal rainfall on ploughed farmland, soil conservation has been given a high priority, and contour banks are being introduced across the more open fields to deter soil erosion.

*I actually came across exactly the same contour bank system while I was on a Christian Aid related visit to a very arid area of South India, but on that occasion it was for water conservation rather than soil erosion.*

The purpose of planting different varieties of sugarcane is to multiply our seed stock for bigger trial plantings next year. These trials will then be thoroughly assessed before any further commitment is made as to the scheme's viability in the longer term.

We hope to increase our number of breeding sows and our poultry distribution network. While pig meat is an already accepted part of the local diet, there is no doubt that both eggs and chicken meat are becoming more acceptable in the local diet, and can make a significant contribution to improved nutrition within the province.

With regard to marketing, it is important that the farm develop a clear policy on how it may combine the dual role of being a commercial enterprise and a resource/extension centre for rural development.

The local markets are at present quite well supplied by villagers and the oil palm block holders. Rather than being seen in competition with the local community, we wish to continue supplying young piglets, chickens and seed and assisting with the setting up of local, small scale projects to encourage an increased trade in fresh food supplies in the local markets.

### **Dec. 1980: annual newsletter to friends and supporters**

Even after ten years in this country we still find it hard to associate hot sultry days and summer flowers with Christmas time. In retrospect this past year seems to have just flown by.....

Tony found July's Food and Crops Conference useful in giving a wider national perspective on the urgent need for increased domestic food production. This was really helpful in clarifying his own ideas of our own dual role as a commercial enterprise and as a rural development resource.

Another way to get a fresh perspective on our work here is quite simply to go away and then come back again! We were delighted to accept a rare invitation for a weekend break off-site.

So all three of us stayed with some newly-made friends on their remote cardamon plantation high up in the Managalas mountains, about 70 kms away.

The rough track got steeper and more rugged the higher we went, the truck bouncing from boulder to boulder, seemingly climbing up some rough hewn stairway. Quite scary!

One outcome of that lively time away is that we are going to exchange, in true cashless economy, rural Papuan style, a young goat kid of theirs for the loan of one of our chainsaws; one more to add to the growing family of kittens, ducklings, chicks and piglets!

Tony's electric fencing is starting to get noticed quite a lot. The sight of several fully grown pigs held in check merely by two thin strands of innocent-looking wire and surrounded by a wealth of corn and sweet potato has great appeal in this country where the stories of ruined food gardens are universal, accepted as an unwanted but inevitable part of village life.

Now the rainy season is upon us once again, the rivers are swollen by flood and the track down to the farm is at times ankle deep in swirling water. So it's become easier to understand how these newly developed contoured areas are able to check the tremendous runoff of water in a rainy season downpour.

# Changing Approach to Extension Work

## **April 1979: General report on RLD activities**

Two conflicting reports from ex-RLD trainees have highlighted our chief weakness at present: the difficulty of providing ongoing support, encouragement and motivation to people once they have left the Centre here.

## **September 1979: General report on RLD activities**

There is a steady demand for planting material, some distributed through the Dept of Primary Industry (DPI) extension programme. By far the greatest demand however is for the sale of young chicks, and increasing interest in setting up commercial chicken projects. Some active interest is also shown in sawmilling and making fuller use of local hardwoods.

## **Christmas 1979: General newsletter to friends and supporters**

There is no doubt that as the farm has expanded and diversified it has become increasingly a full time occupation, and we have found we have had neither the time, staff nor resources to do as much village visiting and extension work as we would have liked.

## **July 1980: Letter home**

When Tony took on the overall management of the farm at the end of last year we realised there would need to be more full-time extension staff to balance the expansion of the Centre.

We have now bought a further Suzuki truck, mainly for Dennis to get out and about in. He is already doing so well and it is such a relief for Tony to have him take over all the extension aspects of the work. He's been making endless contacts on his market visits, especially at the Oil Palm, with a truck load of small chicks for sale. He then gets invited back to interested villagers or block holders for further advice on housing or management or whatever.

## **October 1980: Official report on Extension Work by Dennis Hill**

Since my arrival until now the extension programme has dealt almost exclusively with poultry, with most extension visits carried out by truck or motorbike. They generally concern the setting up of an appropriate size and style chicken project.

The value of locally grown materials and foodstuffs has to be stressed as the farmers' expectations of the benefits of bought items like chicken wire and imported feed are often over rated.

The key common issue in local poultry production is seeing the ownership of any livestock as a symbol of status rather than concern for the viability or health of the flock.

We try to get over problems as they arrive by making regular backup visits, pointing out difficulties and offering relevant advice and assistance. We are already finding no limit to the number of requests for help, often for a variety of agricultural problems. We do our best to help, either directly or by referring on to others for assistance.

## **December 1980: Christmas newsletter to friends and supporters**

Since Dennis's arrival there has been a dramatic increase in demand for young chicks and we have now increased our order up to 600 at a time of the day-olds which we order regularly from Lae. Dennis then looks after them here for the next six weeks or so before taking them out to sell directly to the villagers. He is now working out a regulated system with the local government councils to visit all main villages in each council area to offer advice.

We are pleased that the main interest is coming from those wishing to buy just a few chickens for their own domestic use, for an egg a day will do much to improve the diet of the young children.

# **Creating a new Home on the Farm**

## **Letter home, May 1980**

Now that Dennis has arrived and is needing accommodation in any case, we have decided we might just as well get on with building the new farmhouse this year rather than next while funds are still available. The men can then use a lot of the timber being cleared right now from the farmland directly as building material for the house.

Tony and I are having a lot of fun designing this house, as we want it to be quite a bit more spacious than the present one, and he is determined to have a proper bathroom at last!

They have already cut down the first teak trees to make the stumps and are thankful we now have a proper machine for all the thousands of shingles we are going to need.

## **Letter home, July 1980**

Work on the farmhouse is progressing rather slowly, but at least all the holes are dug and foundation posts are in. One disappointment is that we will no longer be using shingles as building material. After they had cut down a huge kwila tree, the timber proved simply too hard and time consuming for the thousands of shingles that were going to be needed., and we couldn't really justify the cost in staff wages alone.

John Heki is now busy milling timber in readiness, so they will be able to really go ahead once all the building materials are prepared. The redundant kwila has now been used for foundation posts.

John and the team cut down a huge 90ft. hoijawa (aka mahogany) tree yesterday down by the river bank. It took them all day, but they reckon it gives them enough timber for all the framework of the house in one go! All the timber cut so far has come off our own farmland anyway, so it is 'free,' as it were.

I'm so looking forward to living there, we've gone over the design again and again until we seem to be satisfied. No doubt there will still be some more modifications along the way, but that makes it more fun!

## **Letter home, October 1980**

The house is taking shape gradually, and Tony is enjoying the building of it, if only he didn't have so many other things to oversee at the same time. We walk down the farm track so often nowadays it doesn't seem so far away after all. We are so impatient to get on and into the house!

It promises to be quite spectacular, with solid beams of hoijawa planed smooth to show up the mahogany style grain, and with inset panels of red cedar all round the living room walls. There is a wide, open veranda at the front, looking directly up the farm to Mount Lamington in the distance, and all the land around the house on the other side of the gully is now under cultivation.

We are having some problems finding a water supply; Dave Gillan came down from Awala (a recent outreach plantation from Martyrs used to train the students in rubber production) with his team of water drillers to look for a suitable site, but no luck after a whole day, it was still as dry as a bone. Why didn't we think of using your latent water-divining gifts while you were here? Who knows, if we had chosen a spot maybe only a few feet from where we did, we might easily have struck water! The trouble is now, there's no guarantee they will be any more successful next time!

### **December 1980: annual newsletter to friends and supporters**

Back in February we took my mother on a Landrover trek to explore the new farm area, making our own tracks through tall elephant grass to point out the limits of the boundary and the flat area by a gully which would make an ideal site for the proposed farmhouse.

Now by the end of this year much of that earlier planning is starting to take shape. The new farmhouse is no longer wishful thinking but a solid reality, with roof complete and floorboards laid, the veranda rail painted and maybe another month's work to finish the interior.

The view from the veranda is one of my favourites. On clear days we can look across at the peaks of Mt. Lamington in all its different moods and colours, and as the house is raised 4 feet off the ground and sited right at the heart of the farmland, all around we can see the curving lines of sweetcorn and peanuts, sweet potato and tapioca, with the contour banks already established with banana and pawpaw trees.

### **Letter home, February 1981**

The house is by now truly magnificent, but Tony is simply incapable of just slapping something up and making do, so the finishing touches are certainly taking much longer than we had originally anticipated! We have now reached the exciting phase of bathroom fittings and kitchen cupboard units, so I am beginning to believe the end is in sight!

The first of his mighty teak slab veranda doors was finally hung yesterday evening. The windows are intricate and Chinesy, slightly different from our present ones, but just as fiddly to paint! This time we have a 'proper' floor with tongue and groove boards from the sawmill, and with two coats of varnish and no wall partitions yet, the place looks like a ballroom! And we have a real bathroom and so much more room to move around. I have always admired Tony's skill with wood, and the way he takes some rough-sawn lengths of timber and transforms them into a window or a door that is both well-built and of an original and attractive design.

Some of the church staff seem a bit overwhelmed with the size and grandeur of the whole enterprise, but what they don't seem to appreciate is that financially the cost is extremely reasonable (less than £5,000 for a 3-bedroom house) and the luxury look is almost all due to Tony's own skill and ingenuity, which has cost him in effort but nothing else.

### **Letter home, March 1981**

We have now been in our new house for a whole month, finally moving a year almost to the day from when you left. Do you remember how we toured around in the Landrover the evening before, and pointed out the area near that stand of teak, the other side of a little gully, where we thought one day our new house might be? I don't think anyone at that time dreamed that we would actually be living here one year later.

Tony made a great effort to make the house secure and lockable, but it wasn't really finished off at all and we have gone on putting finishing touches ever since! Anna is delighted with the novel experience of being able to stretch out in an actual bath, and although the solar water heating isn't yet sorted out, the 50 gallon header tank itself gets comfortably warm on a sunny day.

As an extra and unexpected touch of luxury we have been 'loaned' a sophisticated tape recorder and stereo speakers, plus 60 prerecorded tapes, so now we can sit out on our veranda on a moonlit night with the big doors wide open and listen to some mighty orchestral pieces in full stereophonic sound, with no fear of disturbing anyone else's peace and quiet - quite a privilege nowadays! (We still haven't got very far with furniture though!)

Now we live down here so near Hetune, we see the Sisters far more often, and I go there once a week to help the novices with their English. It's quite fun, and makes a change from office work all the time. We have also had some of Anna's friends to stay, which they have all seemed to enjoy.

Last Monday we had our biggest crowd of visitors with a retired Major-General from the Australian army and another Australian government delegate who came to see RLD work as an example of 'small scale rural development', one of their only two stop-overs in PNG apparently. So Tony and Dennis duly gave them the full RLD experience, both here and in the villages.

That evening Major-General Cullen was tremendous company, telling stories about army life during the Kokoda campaign in WWII in which he had been involved, and how he had navigated by the stars in the desert and the evacuation of Crete. Anna especially was very taken with him. He sat her on his lap like a real grandfather and told her stories, which she just loved.

### **Letter home, September 1981**

We have discovered a really nice little swimming hole in the Bungaho creek just a few turns further up the river than we had been going before and only a few minutes' walk from the farmhouse.

We now have more furniture! Tony made us some armchairs from locally purchased hoijawa wood, and Popondetta Village Development Centre made the cushion covers as part of their training course in Upholstery. They always appreciate the work he puts in as their chairman and we were very grateful for their help.

He has also made two long benches to go with his kwila refectory style dining table, (the one he had started making the first time you were here, do you remember?)

One bench is made with a slab of teak and one of cedar, fastened against the cedar panelling so that it looks all of a piece. I reckon the house will be just about finished by the time we leave it!

### **Letter home, January 1982**

We had a very friendly Christmas, 16 of us up at John and Margaret's before they go on leave, but we had already decorated the farmhouse down here festively, so then had no one to share it with. We promptly had the idea of inviting everyone for an ad-hoc open house tea party on Boxing Day. The others seemed to appreciate the afternoon as much as we did, and it gave us a happy memory for our last Christmas here.

# Where next for RLD?

## Letter home, February 1981

You must surely know how much we both love this work and this place, and how we have a real attachment to many of the people here, especially the staff who have worked with us for so many years now. There is so much about the farm work and extension effort that makes sense and is worth trying to make a go of, and that in itself gives us quite a lot of motivation.

## Letter home, July 1981

Work on the farm continues and the farm finances have taken a real turn for the better. The new crops are proving very successful and we now have lettuce, green beans, Chinese cabbage and capsicums in abundance and the pullets have moved into their brand-new deep litter house all set to produce multiple eggs in a few weeks' time.

## Letter home, September 1981

After going through rather a lean period financially the last few weeks, things are starting to look up a bit now and the men wanted to put in a float for Independence Day again, on the theme of 'Growing Food for a Growing Nation'. They decorated the tractor and trailer with one side set up as a market garden and the other side as a market stand, with sugar cane, taro, German taro and banana trees planted in half oil drums on each corner, and won third prize eventually.

## Letter home, October 1981

Dennis has become really keen on establishing the layer project successfully and would like to stay on here after all and become the full time poultry manager, as he manages the whole project entirely on his own by now. The first batch of hens have already started to lay too.

From our own point of view, we are delighted and relieved that this side of the work is going so well, for sadly, the crop growing side has not proved so successful, in spite of all the huge amount of time and effort spent and all the ingenious innovations that Tony has introduced, making it all so disappointing personally. It has been really difficult too to guarantee reliable markets and also to provide time-specific targets for our fresh vegetables.

In the end we have had to face squarely up to the fact that Popondetta's lifestyle is costly and that today's urban economy is incompatible with the bartering lifestyle of a rural economy. Also any money coming in to RLD would probably never be sufficient to cover all its necessary expenses such as current staff wages and fuel etc. This has been quite a bitter pill to swallow!

I reckon we probably reached our peak on the farm in July and August, (just when we had a series of visits from High School students to show around the vegetable farm!) At that time we were sending a carton of fresh vegetables down to the hotel at Tufi every week, but as the season grew wetter we could no longer maintain a regular supply and have had to phase out that aspect of the farm altogether now.

It now seems the most sensible course is to put most of RLD effort into poultry, at least for the next year or so, and scale down the crop side into more of a subsidiary activity for the poultry farm, rather than the other way round.

## **December 1981: final Christmas newsletter to friends and supporters**

Looking back on our life at the Centre over the past six years, the scope of the work has certainly evolved since the early days of Independence when we began and learned to adapt to so many different needs as they arose.

Many of the earlier activities like blacksmithing, cooking and nutrition work are now being covered by Popondetta's government run Village Development Centre with which we have been closely involved from the very beginning.

For the past three years Tony has chaired their management committee and it was really encouraging to attend one of their Open Days recently. We saw some really excellent furniture design and craft work that different village groups had on display and then recognised some familiar faces from one of our own courses several years ago!

In the last 18 months since Dennis joined us from Melbourne, the extension duo of Dennis with Orokaiva-speaking Thomas have taken on all extension work and village patrols and have sold over 5,000 young chicks to villagers, school and youth group projects all over the province. This is by far the project that has had the most long term impact locally.

Half a dozen of our distinctive black Australorps with their handsome green tinged tail feathers have become quite a familiar sight nowadays strutting around the village houses, even in some of the most isolated areas.

Eggs and chicken meat are now far more frequently eaten in rural areas than ever before.

The other major development over this past year has been to set up a large deep litter project for 15,000 layers, providing daily fresh eggs to the expanding number of town outlets. Dennis has already done wonders with this, and is now managing all that sector of the farm. He has already expressed interest in taking over the entire poultry management, both the layer project and the village poultry distribution scheme.

While Dennis has been busy with the poultry at the top end of the farm and is living in our former house, we have now moved further down into the new farmhouse. We have valued this house a great deal, both from the pleasure derived from building and furnishing it, but also for the open view of mountain and farm that surrounds it and for the peace and tranquility we have found here.

After so many years of involvement with rural development and in the day-to-day running of an agricultural project such as this, it will be a tremendous change for us to return again to urban England.

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VALEDICTION: 1981 - 82

Decision Time for Us

By mid 1981

we had already been back on the farm virtually non-stop for three years without a real break since our 'English Summer' leave of 1978.

By now we were growing more physically tired and mentally restive with the thought of our future here.

Our next leave was now due, and the main questions remaining were "Should we 'go on leave' and then return - to what exactly ?" or "Should we 'go finish', in order to train further for what exactly?"

Eight-year-old Anna too was providing us both with ample evidence not just through her school reports,

of her well above average ability and strong social maturity.

She was already showing signs of wanting to flex her wings and seek wider, more challenging horizons.

There was without doubt a drive to consider the best path for her future too.

Letter from Tony to my mother, his mother-in-law, July 1981

No doubt you will be surprised to receive this letter from your son-in-law but I wanted to let you know, myself, of my decision to offer for ordination.

Looking back over the past few months Gay and I can now see what our feelings of unsettledness have been all about.

When the Sisters asked me to preach at their special Festival (July 5th) I found I enjoyed the preparation for it very much and was genuinely surprised at the positive response from such a variety of people, both High Church and evangelical.

Still it didn't dawn on me until about a week later, when the penny suddenly dropped. Once it had of course, everything started to fall into place, and all those 'prods' and 'nudges' made sense.

Gay is 100% with me and assures me she is thoroughly familiar with the role of a vicar's wife!

Letter home, July 1981

The pattern of events was not particularly remarkable that led us to the decision to leave PNG, but rather a series of little incidents all pointing in the same direction.

We tried to get the Provincial Council to face up squarely to the future of the farm at their last meeting, but it seems that as long as we are here, they are content to let things be, even though Tony is without agricultural qualifications and was wondering if that should be the way forward.

When he was asked to preach for the Sisters I was astonished how much time and effort he put into it, but from the comments afterwards it was obviously greatly appreciated.

Then quite suddenly it dawned upon him what the next step should be. Why not gain further experience in the field in which he was already qualified, rather than search elsewhere? Why not simply consider becoming ordained?

As soon as that idea came into our minds, it just seemed to make so much sense and everything else seemed to fit. In fact, since the idea has been put to others, no one has been particularly taken by surprise at the possibility!

So now once that major decision has been made, to leave PNG and return to England to prepare for ordination, all the other decisions seem fairly straightforward.

It's not at all that we haven't enjoyed our time here and learned a huge amount from it, but once we have allowed our minds to dwell a bit on home and family and returning to all those familiar English customs and habits, we find the whole prospect quite exciting, Anna too of course!

Now, having once accepted the idea, we are sure there will be no going back on it.

Letter home, September 1981

We have received one letter from a mutual friend who has interpreted our proposed return as being an indication that we had decided our work here had been so successful we could now plan to leave it to those we had trained. (Now I wonder where that idea came from!!?)

Far, far from it. There are times nowadays when we reflect on all the years spent here and wonder what we have actually achieved in real terms. So many of the projects attempted here have not been adopted by the people themselves, and I suspect it would be eye-opening for us to find out what things have in fact been most significant in their lives.

We spoke to the Archbishop again last week, and he has come to accept our decision with rather a heavy heart I'm afraid, particularly as the responsibility for finding our replacement rests ultimately with him. He had previously admitted though that he thought Tony would make a 'splendid' priest!

It is doubly a relief that Dennis is willing to stay on further to manage the whole project.

Letter home, October 1981

Tony and I have been so encouraged by the warmth and positive help we have received from people in England, especially as we have found even the idea that we might need to lay off so many loyal staff here, a hard thing to come to terms with.

We did not want to feel that we are ending our time here on a note of 'failure', but we have now come to see it in a far more positive light. We can now see how tremendously Dennis has come into the picture and taken up the work in his own way.

We always said to ourselves we would never want to leave PNG for a negative reason and the more we reflect on it the more sure we are that this is the right time to make the break. Now we have come to terms with our decision about the farm it has taken a great load off our minds, we realise.

Letter home, January 1982

Hooray! I can at last date my letters 1982, and now it is only twelve weeks until we actually start our journey home! It is hard for us not to feel like that when the end is so nearly in sight and we are so longing for a break and a HOLIDAY!!

Right now we are finding the oppressive heat and humidity very tiring indeed during this wet season, so we gave ourselves a picnic down at Oro Bay for the New Year.

It did us all so much good to get away for the day, with Anna enjoying a bathe in the incredibly warm sea, so much so that she was quite reluctant to leave it!

We drove up into the hills behind Oro Bay for our picnic and then went down near the wharf to watch a giant freighter being unloaded. We finished the afternoon by visiting Nancy at St. Margaret's hospital where you once stayed, do you remember?

We intend to leave all the furniture for the house, but Tony wants to make up a few kits that he can assemble when we get back. Right now he's designing some dining chairs out of kwila.....

We give thanks for Dennis, for his energy and enthusiasm that wants to see things through, and also for Fr. Isaac, the strong dynamic Papuan priest who is coming soon to be the new Director for CTC. to replace John Williamson who is moving to Lae

It is surely the right time for us to go...

Last available letter home, February 1982

I have forsaken the typewriter for once as Tony and I are down at Oro Bay for the day, as this is Tony's last session on Agriculture and Community Development with the APOs (Aid Post Orderlies). He thought I might like to come for the ride, as our last chance to visit Nancy and Aileen and have a bit of a break before tackling all the cleaning and packing.

*Bishop David had followed our path in PNG since our arrival in 1970.
Now at the time of our departure in 1982
we had no idea that the Archbishop was to retire
the following year (the same year that Archbishop Strong died),
after having spent virtually a third of the century as a bishop in PNG.*

*At the time of independence Bishop David had been
amongst the first eligible expatriates to take PNG citizenship,
and so spent much of his retirement in his adopted country,
where he died in 2006.*

Final Farewells

*When we had first arrived at Martyrs over eleven years previously,
it was very much a time of transition for the country,
with talk of self-reliance and self government just around the corner.*

*For ourselves as newly weds it was also a time of readjustment and transition,
setting out on a new adventure with little idea of what the future would hold.*

*Now we would be finally leaving,
no longer as newlyweds but as a close-knit family of three*

Farewell card from Sr. Patience CHN, Retreat House, S. Australia

It is hard to realise that you will be leaving so soon. It would be nice to think we might meet again some time, but I don't suppose that would be very likely! However I shall always value your friendship during the time I spent at Hetune.

I can imagine what a hard thing it will be to say goodbye to PNG after all your years of living here. You have made such an enormous contribution to the life of the church and the people there, through your efforts to identify so closely with them and enable them to develop in ways which are vitally important for the progress of the country as a whole.

PNG society is so dependent on its development at the village level and I myself was always very impressed at what you were encouraging the people to do, and at their response. I hope there will be others to carry on what you have begun, most importantly Papua New Guineans themselves who can do so much towards encouraging and influencing their own people.

Farewell card from 'RLD STAFFS' written in Orokaiva then translated by Charles

From all of us staff we wish you, your wife and daughter the best wishes. You have been with us a long time, through good and bad. In those days you have passed on your ideas to us. When you go we will try to do what you have taught us.

We are all happy to thank you. We are saying to you when you go don't forget us. We think you will carry on the work of God in your new job and we hope that we will meet you again if you ever come back to Papua New Guinea.

During the momentous decade of the 70s

our own path and that of PNG itself had become closely entwined.

By April 1982 those paths would take their separate ways

but the recollections of those years still remain

and are much to be treasured and preserved.

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and of course the bottomless depths of the World Wide Web to give answers to so many queries