



SID-0010X0001M0

Date: 15 January 2014

Interviewer: Isabel Smyth

Respondent: Anne Hepburn

So it's Isabel Smyth interviewing Anne Hepburn (0:00:06.2) Stepping into Diversity on Tuesday, 15th January at Anne's home in (0:00:19.5). Anne, could you just tell me when you were born and where...first of all I ask you could if you could just spell your name for me.

Anne with an e Hepburn.

Right Anne.

Yes.

H-e-p.

... b-u-r-n.

Thank. Could you just tell me when and where you were born and a little bit about your upbringing?

I was born in August 1925 in the village of Dailly which is in the Girvan Valley in South Ayrshire. I went to public school in Dailly then high school in Girvan and from there I went to Glasgow University with an ordinary MA. Then I did a year at Jordan Hall and because the education authority in Ayrshire had been very generous to me in supporting me financially. I felt an obligation to them to be willing to go and teach where teachers were not all that keen to go.

So I went to the little village of Barr not far from my own village, tucked away in the hills very isolated no regular bus service. Four miles up and two miles down going there or two miles and four miles down going back to Girvan and I taught there for three years until I got my parchment. But Dailly parish church was my home church and I was very involved in the life of the church my father had been a really devout elder.

Although by this time he was dead I would go on my bicycle over to Dailly Church in the Sunday school fellowship and we had a very good minister, Stuart [ph. Lydon 0:02:10:0] who came to Greyfriars eventually who put the whole world church awareness in to my consciousness and I became increasingly wishing to serve the church more fully. So I offered to what was then called the woman's foreign mission committee and they accepted me and I had an open offer. I knew more about India than Africa but it was an open offer as a teacher with the church of Scotland. So I came to St Colm's in 1949 for a year's missionary training.



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Could you tell me a little bit about what St Colm's is?

St Colm's was the women's missionary college which was founded in '09 that building was built in '09 and one of the very, very famous wonderful principals had been Annie Small an ecu-maniac if you like! [laughter]; a wonderful woman who had high standards academically and oh - wide, wide, wide horizons involved with students at the 1910 conference. So I came in 1949 by which time the principal was Helen Macnicol she had been a missionary in Poona as her father had been before her. But she had quite serious ill health as was off a considerable amount of the time. And Olive Wyon the great Olive Wyon came. So to have known a woman of that great academic standard was a great privilege to me and of course my whole ecumenism took a great leap forward in awareness.

You've said that 2010 conference.

1910.

1910 - 2010 was of course...

The centenary.

Could you just tell us for the sake of the interview what that 2010 ... 1910 conference was?

1910 was a date an event which was very much part of me from my St Colm's day on. It was the World Missionary Conference. Africa wasn't represented at all hardly, India was women were not all that prominent at it although Annie Small was there with the St Colm's students singing and it meant a great deal to me. And it happened here in Edinburgh in the assembly hall because I was so aware of it. When the SCM in Edinburgh ran a conference picking up the final words of a prayer from 1910 that we were to go in search of a larger Christ.

The SCM had this big conference 85 or 75. 85 I think and I attended it as a visitor and here were the fruits of the 1910 Missionary Conference. Theologians from Africa, India, Sri Lanka and Japan I found it absolutely wonderful.

Now just again for the sake of the tape. What is SCM?

Student Christian Movement.

Right and were you involved in that.

No I hadn't been at university when I went to university I was very much a kind of village recluse the whole Glasgow scenario was a culture shock for me and I didn't have the self confidence to go to these things. Although in later years I became very sympathetic and involved with the SCM folk.

So how did you live when you were in Glasgow?



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I was in digs in [ph. Eyebrooks 0:06:24:1] next door to the (ph. Reacher's Park) [laughs] and I was there not in my first year, but from...and became very friendly with my landlady she came to my dedication service as a missionary. So in that day they trained deaconesses for the church of Scotland and foreign mission. Now there were not many foreign mission students there. There were two nurses who went to Pakistan and Stella who also went to Pakistan and myself and I appointed to what was then called Nyasaland in Africa. So the overseas people did one year, the deaconesses did two years' training and a lot came over from the Presbyterian church in Ireland they have been lifelong friends.

So Stella my star as I called her. When they all went out to Pakistan together the three of them. Stella to do women's work and two nurses to work in church hospitals. We didn't correspondent all that closely and regularly but we were very aware of each other and because there was a monthly prayer cycle called holy Christ and each field had its own day and the names of the people you remembered them in that way. Now when Stella was not an academic as Helen Macnicol wrote once wrote to me to about Stella having had a letter from her from Pakistan.

I don't know that she learnt the language all that easily but Helen Macnicol said that didn't matter because she had the language of the heart on the hand, that was Stella. So when she came back to Scotland and was in the flat we still had contact I think I exchanged Christmas cards with her all the time and I stayed with her one night in the flat. How could she refuse when I requested a bed overnight [laughs] and the next morning we were in [Cookebury 0:09:01:3] my husband was one of the parishioners in Cookebury and I was going for a train at central station and she insisted on taking me.

It was between 8.30 and 9.00 in the morning so we are motoring through the West End all the little Pakistani children were going to school and each one had to stop the car and speak to her and greet her. And she had to roll down the window and speak to them all in this loving way that she had and I thought, I'm going to miss my train [laughter]. I got my train all right but I don't think I ever saw Stellar again after that. I did not get o her funeral which I wonder why I didn't make a greater effort but Cookebury is ... I didn't drive, transport wasn't easy but I got to full reports of the service from Max or Craig and of the witness she was to people of other faiths and that did not surprise me at all.

Now one of the Episcopal women in Cookebury – a member of the Episcopal church - had been with Stella during the army times and had been in Belson with her and she and I used to talk together and share news and views.

Any memories of Stella that comes from those conversations?

Not really, but she just knew here as this merry caring... And you see at St [s.l. Colm's 0:10:41:0] - this was 1945/50 - it wasn't many years after the whole Belson thing became public and there was this women - this quiet, loving woman and the thought of her being in Belson - I don't think we talked to her about it, maybe we asked questions and she was reluctant to talk about it I can't...I have no memory of that. It just was for us a mind - for me personally - a mind-blowing experience to think that this person this woman that I knew as Stella my star had been in such circumstances. It was difficult to put all of that together in one [0:11:27:7] because one was young and inexperienced.



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Could you tell me a wee bit about St Colm's what was it like, it was residential wasn't it? Was it like a convent did you have a pattern to the day?

Yes morning prayers, evening prayers and bible study every week. We did not go up to New College for lectures - later on they did - but people came in and gave lectures and of course you have to do chores. And we had parties, fun, yes.

I owe St Colm's a great deal actually in the opening me up, you know? Although in our village there was nothing bigoted about my father; we had The Church of Scotland congregation and there was a free church and I remember going to the free church with him as a child, which didn't happen all over Scotland. There could be [0:12:27:0] between these two branches of Presbyterian before 1929 and the Union.

St Colm's we had a life outside as well. We went to theatres and on Friday afternoons they had social tea anybody could come, former students anybody you could have guests there social tea. And the menu was always sticky buns, do have a sticky bun. There were no men then the following year men began to be admitted to St Colm's but it was not coeducation in my day. That didn't men there were no men around [laughter] and of course now it has been sold.

Yes.

And worship in the chapel was really very special with the window. I did a meditation on that window pointing out the pagodas of Asia, the mountains of Africa and the temples of India. At the time when it was built there were students from Ireland, England and Scotland and the thistle, the rose and shamrock are all in that window. And Christ is wearing ... is it a crown of thorns or laurel leaves? I think it's kind of both. And that window is still there and the man who brought the house from the Church of Scotland allows the fellowship of St Colm's folk all girls and boys to go on Founder's Day for prayers every year. I've only been twice I wasn't able to go last year but it has put up some holy pictures in the chapel which don't add to its kind of holiness for me.

And when is Founder's Day?

October 9th and Doctor [ph. Lawes 0:14:40:5] - the great missionaries from [s.l. Livingstone 0:14:41:6] he laid the foundation stone of St Colm's he was a member of the free church, it was 1909. But there is a whole histories of St Colm's written, it was a great tradition it really was a very great tradition.

Any particular antidote or stories you remember.

Not that are tell able [laughter].

So they're interesting.

Well not really. I became very friendly with a group from Ireland and last year I was over in Belfast to go to a funeral of our former colleague and it was a friend from my St Colm's days who took we took me. We took a taxi from the ferry she took us to the service. Except that during the Easter vacation we always had a conference for missionaries on leave and we went to it later on Hamish and I. And we had to help prepare the rooms and one of the things we had to do was to go up to the attic for chamber pots [laughter]



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and put them below the bed in each 'cell' so to speak and I was making a fool of this and one of the staff said just wait til you're on your third [s.l. furrow 0:16:15:9] Anne [laughter] - how true.

We were residential there and one of the Easter conferences other ones we stayed in a house in Edinburgh and just travelled down every day. I don't often think about but there is something that bonds the old ... When they met even before it was sold, the friends of St Colm's, Edinburgh met in St. Colm's and I was the oldest of them all; I'd been there in '49/'50 – there was nobody else that had been there until much later so.

In the Malawi context I said I'm the grandmother. Colleague said no you're the godmother of the Malawi mafia but I think I was the grandmother of the St. Colm's friends.

One thing that interests me is it was Presbyterian.

Yes.

But you said it was a very sort of open mentality. It got you interested in ecumenism, why was that do you think. What was it about it that encourage this ecumenical spirit when it was quite Presbyterian in origins and the way it was run?

Well I could say real Presbyterians are ecumenical-minded. It was the heritage of Annie Small I think and the principal when I was there as I say was Helen McNichol even though she was off a lot. Olive Wyon wasn't a Presbyterian was she; she translated [pause] somebody ... was it [s.l. Calvin's Dogmatics or Brune or something? 0:18:14:7] she was an academic and has written a lot of books. She's quite a well-known ... she wasn't a Presbyterian.

There was from the Presbyterian Church in England was a women but I never really kept up with her. And then one key person was Francis [0:18:34:8] she was a deaconess of the Church of Scotland when she finished there she went down to [0:18:44:2] Street in London as a deaconess there. And she was very...she had no problem about going in to a Roman Catholic Church in Edinburgh to pray on her own where that came from in her I don't know. It's just focused on the gospel. How could you be other than [0:19:07:3] and open to your fellow Christians.

Now Anne you talk about Annie Small and I didn't catch the name of the other person. I of course don't...I know Annie Small because I used to work with [s.l. Harry M 0:19:22:3] and they'd an office in Annie Small House but I don't know much about Annie Small. Could you very quickly just tell us...?

I would really need to look it up.

Right ok, but she was a missionary was she?

She had been but in India her health broke down she came back. I have written about her but you see my own memory is failing. One great...a person has written about her can I show you the woman's dictionary of Scotland.



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Could you maybe do that afterwards would that be ok?

Afterwards. Because Leslie Ore is a great admire a disciple of Annie Small because of her the wideness of her understanding and the depth of her sensitivity.

And was St Colm's her idea?

No it had been in existence before that but she was appointed a principal early on. I remember after I came back to Scotland I was in some of the church committee's and these men these Presbyterian men who were church leaders in their own right became moderators. They knew absolutely nothing about to St Colm's the council on more than one occasion had a residential meeting in St Colm's and they had not a clue. It was women so it couldn't have been important could it.

And yet it was years ahead of them in understanding. Now there came a time, I was already an elder in our own congregation. I think it was in the mid seventies when a working group had been set up to see whether they will keep Carberry Tower or St Colm's and the recommendation was coming. It was St Colm's it would sacrifice. I was a commissioner and I was very conscious that of all the commissioners there I was maybe the only one who was a former student so in fear and trembling I did my moderator and did my spiel on St Colm's and why it was important.

The other person who spoke for it was a minister down in Neath [0:22:01:9] who said the most devout folks in Neath were the Sikhs [laughs] so it was saved – it didn't go then. But then it changed theological education by extension it went through a lot of changes. Then it became under the education committee and of course they brought the neighbouring church which I think they over stretch. But 10 12 years ago world exchange which was an ecumenical of all the churches with Bobby Anderson as its director. They got permission to use St. Colm's from the world mission for a peppercorn rent and Bobby entered into the whole understanding and feeling of the St. Colm's legacy and he continued it.

He really did a marvellous job and we had a lovely communion service conducted by Mary Levison who was at one time on the staff of St. Colm's using the communion vessels that had been there from 1910 earlier. Lots of very very good things happened and these young people and older people going out world exchange. And then Bobby had an idea of what it from the millennium or bringing 100 women from the partner churches who were the fruit of the World Missionary Movement but that got stymied because world mission withdrew its support and world exchange. By this time there was a kind of ecumenical winter and Church Scotland did paid their dues in to world omission but not all of the others did. So it was sold sadly but things do move and the legacy is there and the fruits.

Yes. I'm going to take you back a wee bit and Annie Small and who was the other person you mentioned. Was it Olivia and could we maybe spell her name the academic who...

Olive.

Olive.

Wyon Olive Wyon.



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W-y-o-n, Olive Wyon.

She's quite an academically well respected woman.

Yes, being a Catholic of course I don't know her.

It's out with your ...

Yes, and she was the principal?

Well she was acting principal when Helen Macnicol was off ill.

Right.

Helen Macnicol's father was a missionary in Bombay again he had such a rapport with the Hindus that there was a boost for Hindu religion as well as Christians were converted. There is a beautiful hymn of his in our hymn book. One who is all unfit to count a scholar in thy school. It is a by Helen Macniol's father. So was a tradition missionary family there I was the only one in my family who became a missionary.

Before I ask you about that. Mary Levison.

Levison.

Levison was she the first woman to be ordained?

No she wasn't there's a misunderstanding she became assistant chaplain to Edinburgh University. Chaplain was a man she had as good or a better degree in him academically competent. But she wasn't ordained so she couldn't serve the [s.l. sacrament 0:26:31:1] so she petitioned the general assembly to test her calling and it only took five years from the time of her petitioning for women to be admitted to word and sacrament in '68. I think she must have petition in 63 we were in Africa at the time so I wasn't as aware closely as I would have been if I had been in Scotland.

Now by that time by the time women could be ordained to word and sacrament she had married so she wasn't seeking ordination so she was not the first but she was the woman who enabled it. She played a big part in enabling it to happen and it must have been in 93 many years after that 40 years she was invited to speak from the bar of the house at the general assembly on this whole question. Now meanwhile she had published a book entitled what did Jacob do in his dreams, what was the word used?

Wrestled with the angles.

Wrestling with the church that is the title for Mary's book and she was adamant to me that she was not...campaign was the wrong word. I am a campaigner I don't see anything wrong but Mary could be quite lady like if you know what I mean and can be wrestling with the church and she tells the whole story there of her and what happened. Well then when Fred retired from his parish.



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That is her husband.

Yes, she wasn't allowed as the minister's wife – I mean with all her ... oh! How small-minded can people be anyway. She was ordained to be the direct outreach at our church in St Andrew's and St George's going out to the outreach to the John Lewis and the businesses and firms. So she was eventually ordained. I used to be quite frightened of her because she seemed to academically so qualified and quite anyway I got to know her much better. And Hamish ministered to her husband in his last days. Yes she was quite a women yes.

When I don't know, this is just rambling. I was going to a Word Exchange Conference in St Andrews call The Fire Runs. And it was being run by Bobby Anderson The Fire Runs and on the way their I was getting picked up outside. So I went in and I brought Mary's book, *Wrestling With The Church* and that night in St Salvator's Hall I began reading it and one of the chapters is about how she did not become a moderator of the general assembly.

Now she said what happens in the room when they are choosing the moderator is confidential, doesn't leak out but she said I have to say that there was something happening in the Church of Scotland at the time that have affected the decision and she goes on to talk about the Motherhood of God controversy. And that leading churchmen had said to her this will set back the course of women by 20 years. Well it was like a knife...I never slept a wink it was like a knife going into my heart it was my fault that she didn't become moderator of the general assembly. She had been moderator of Edinburgh Presbytery and I staggered down to breakfast all white faced hadn't slept and I show this page to Alison Elliott who 20 years was the first women moderator and she said no that's not what she means.

It may not have been what she meant that it was my fault but it was a legitimate interpretation that I put on it. Then I didn't know her well enough to question her about it, to talk to her about it and by the time I could have I didn't want to because it would have hurt her to think she would have hurt me. But you see she couldn't have courted leading church men in to the Church of Scotland who would have said something very different.

Now what was the Motherhood of God controversy?

When I was on the British Council of Churches and I was on its Executive, I was invited...I was taking part in preparing worship for one of their meetings along with Brian Wren the hymn writer. And Brian when we met showed me this Christian Aid leaflet with prayers that he had prepared for Christian Aid and there was this wonderful Trinitarian prayer – oh! Only Brian now could write it – father, son and holy spirit community trinity and then there was this subsidiary prayer [laughs] which address God as mother, 'dear mother God you give birth to all life' and he showed me this and in that prayer - it was a short prayer - it was a picture of a mother loving each child. Not loving this one more than that one, because there was more you had less love for them. The more there was the more love there was and you'd give each child room to grow. Well, the theme for the following year in the guild was, 'Room to Grow'. So the holy spirit, via Brian, put these prayers right into my lap and I used these prayers at the opening worship of the annual meeting the following May April.



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Well [laughter] it seemed that these Christian women who most of them would be mothers a lot of them, or had Christian mothers could not fit the image of God as mother in to their frame of reference and I was told afterwards that sausages sizzled, this was the folk in the [0:34:33:6] it was [gasps] intake of breath but nobody ... none of the girl folk spoke to me then two letters of complaint came in to the guild and I became aware that the talk was just awful. A month later at the general assembly when I have presenting the guild report.

Because you were President?

I'm National President yes. The leader of the business committee at the guild report said I apologise I haven't discuss this with the president of the guild but I was at the annual meeting last month and heard that the prayer addressing god as mother. He said I think it's time that we looked at this issue and he brought forward a deliverance which he hadn't showed me in advance, that they...the committee that looks after the orthodox of Scotland awful.

Doctrine probably.

Yes the panel and doctrine set up a study group along with the guild to look at the theological implications of the Mother of God. I never spoke about the Motherhood of God but this was his well there am I standing there what could I do but accepts it, agreed to it because I knew all this yack was going on. So that general assembly agreed unanimously to set up this study group.

However John R. Grey bless his soul that was his bookcase, whom only saw women as sex objects for a moderator he objected to the guild being on this should be left to the panel doctrine. And the assembly didn't agree with him so voted unanimously to set this study group and the panel and doctrine appointed Alan Lewis, who was their own secretary to be on this ... and the guild set up several people [0:37:00:0]. Now the guild...one of my opponents was added on to it because she had made...hers was the first letter of complaint.

So the study group met for two years and if it started with rumblings it finished up with volcanic outbursts. Opening the Scotsman and seeing a call for my trial as a herestic ... you know [laughs] - I mean it raged for two years and when I gave my final report to the general assembly, of course it included a report on this. The moderator had to rebuke the assembly because they were not questioning the report they were attacking me personally. The whole of media were there even Parry Match had a cartoon. It is funny to think now and the BBC cameras were on the whole time that is why I was able...to a friend copied it.

At the end...one of the other things that I had been involved in from that time was the boycott of the South African fruit so one of the ministers who was very anti both said why choose South Africa why not Russia and the Assemble voted not to welcome the education material we had. I mean the previous assembly they had welcome the boycott. This assemble was not referring to the boycott I was talking about the educational materials we had videos and they agreed not. So I was able to go straight on to television in the studio and say aren't men irrational.



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So how did you feel about all of that Anne I mean that is a very significant moment in your life.

Catherine was in tears. Hamish did not...

Hamish, Catherine is your daughter.

Yes and Hamish my husband.

They were both commissioners and normally whoever is present in the report their family go up into the special seats they didn't, they wanted to be down voting or maybe Catherine was up but Hamish twice on that day he had recorded his descent once on the South Africa thing and once...well when I look at that tape of me in the TV studio with Kenneth Roy I mean the assembly made fools of themselves they did.

I said it is out it is published around the world I have had communications from Italy from Brazil saying they're using this report in their seminars but it just showed how far behind the Church of Scotland was in its world church thinking.

So do you think there was a change in the church Anne because how do you describe St Colm's was quite outward looking, and here you have got a church that is more inward looking was there a change or was it just St Colm's was a bit marginalised.

That's my door bell.

Transcript ends 0:40:52.0