



## Warnock Trophy 2023 Theme: A Childhood Memory

**A**rgyllshire, one of my favourite places in Scotland. I spent part of my childhood there at the beginning of World War II. I was eight when war was declared, and living with my parents, two sisters and brother on our dairy farm in Taynuilt where we worked the farm and garden.

The countryside fascinates me and nowhere else have I seen such an abundance of wildflowers which my parents taught us all the names of. Father walked the fields with us seeing to the sheep and cattle. He made walking sticks and showed us how to find young trees with suitable roots for a handle. The woods were full of hazelnut trees. We gathered the nuts in Autumn, dried them then ate them.

Father delivered the milk every morning in Taynuilt. My sister and I took each day about taking milk to a castle half a mile away. In those days a child could walk safely alone, unlike today when things are so different. We planted potatoes, with bags round our waist to hold them, turned the hay and built into coils. Children don't see these jobs now on farms as everything is mechanised.

Evacuees arrived from Glasgow and joined our local school, so different from the huge Glasgow schools. Father was a helper who met children off the train and took them to the various houses. They resented being transported from their homes and I'm sure they were homesick.

A ship which was anchored in Loch Etive near Oban was bombed by the Germans

who thought it was a troop ship but it actually had a cargo of horses aboard.

Some horses managed ashore, being shot at by the local Home Guard who thought Germans were landing. One horse was rescued and nursed back to health by the postman's sister. To her surprise it belonged to the Aga Khan who was grateful and suitably rewarded her. Apart from this we were remote from the dangers of war. German bombers of ten dumped unused bombs on the towns and hills to lighten their load on return journeys.

Our teacher Mrs McArthur, who I still remember with affection, taught the class how to sign *Ho No my nut Brow Maiden* in Gaelic which I can still do. At home we had a big wooden horse left by a previous tenant and had great times on our trusty steed. We enjoyed rabbit stew, venison, and mushrooms the size of saucers from the fields. Mother took us rambling for wild strawberries to make homemade jam. Fruit was rare during the war so mother cut marrows into cubes and steeped them in pineapple essence. They tasted great. My first banana was from the doctor when he lanced my poisoned thumb to distract me.

Farm living made it easier foodwise as we kept hens, ducks, and geese for eggs as well as using dried egg too.

We moved to another farm in Perthshire in the middle of the war but I'll always remember those years in Bonnie Argyll.

**Agnes Morrison, Milton of Campsie,  
SC&WP Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023 Theme: A Childhood Memory

**S**ometimes, I forget what I did last week or I open a cupboard door and wonder why, but I can remember every detail of my Granny and her house.

It's as if my 'mind's camera' can zoom in on the details. For the first seven years of my life, we, (Mum and Dad and I) lived with Granny and Grandpa.

I can remember the lobby with numerous coats and jackets in a large dark cupboard, so dark I never dared enter this abyss. The kitchen was a modest room with table and chairs – not like today's kitchens – filled with matching cupboards and modern appliances. It also boasted two inset beds, recesses probably 6' by 6' which were draped by two green curtains. These had been made by Granny on an old-fashioned Singer sewing machine which stood between the beds.

This sewing machine was a constant source

of amusement for me. When the belt was disengaged, I could pedal with all my might and make the wheel spin. There was also a little table on which sat the radio. At dinner time when Dad and Grandpa came home from work we listened to *Worker's Playtime*.

I remember singing the chorus of 'Money is the Root of all Evil' *Take it away! Take it away! Take it away!*

In the evening there was Scottish country dance music and whatever music was played Granny and I danced *the Gay Gordons*. In the corner, a cupboard, which was Granny's pride and joy. I watched her paint it with some thick varnish and then with a metal comb draw wavy lines on the panels.

Off the kitchen was the little scullery, complete with a large white sink, deep enough to do a washing.

**Maureen Agnes Ambler McKee,  
Alloway SWI, Ayrshire Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023

### Theme: A Childhood Memory

**A**t 3.45pm on the school day the 'home bell' rang and everyone raced to get on the school buses for the best seats, upstairs at the front where the windows could open.

Bus full we headed down to Greenock Esplanade and turned east where keeping the River Clyde on our left we headed for home.

Passing Princes Pier we noticed the Paddle Steamer Waverley waiting to board passengers for an evening cruise to the Kyles of Bute.

Next came the Great Harbour and the James Watt Dock full of working boats. Tugs, puffers, the Pilot boat and the Torch which maintained the buoyage system on the River Clyde.

On up the road past the Kingston Shipyard where our bus was stopped to let 4000 men pour out the gates with their wages, some to go home, some to the pub!!

Next came the banana boats docked to discharge their cargo of small sweet yellow bananas from the Canaries and the sugar boats releasing their cargo of West Indian

raw cane sugar directly into waiting lorries. We got caught behind one of those lorries as it was taking its load to the Tate and Lyle sugar refinery and the sweet sticky contents blew in the windows of the bus and stuck to our hair, eyelashes, lips, and blazers but it was a lovely taste and smell. We wrinkled our noses for the next smell as we approached the turning for the glue factory. Fumes from the slaughtered animals which were brought here for processing into glue – not so nice as the sugar.

We then changed buses at the Inchinnan Bus depot and yet more smells, oil, diesel, cigarettes where all around but bleach, leather cleaner and chrome polish on a newly serviced bus encouraged us to get on board.

The newest of the dry docks came into view. The new QEII was fitted out here before has sea trials on the 'measured mile' just off Arran. At last, we entered Port Glasgow, my home town, past the replica of *The Comet*, the first commercial steamship in the world and built here.

**Alison Smellie, Ruskie SWI,  
Stirling, Clackmannan and  
West Perth Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023 Theme: A Childhood Memory

**N**ot many people living in Scotland today can remember carrying a bag containing a gas mask to school. Our small country school in the village of Coylton in Ayrshire seemed far removed from the Second World War. However, the Clydebank raids, which happened on two nights in March 1941, did impact on life in our village – situated five miles from Ayr.

I was nearly eight but I still have a clear memory of these events.

My dad was a Volunteer at the Royal Observer Corps Post – a building perched on top of a small bing near the A70. The bing was a relic of past coalmining.

As the eldest child in a family of five, I was 'the message girl'. I frequently did the grocery shopping in the local KECS – 'the store' – we called it!

My father was occasionally asked 'to stand in' and do another shift, so I was delegated to 'take a piece' to the ROC Post for him. I enjoyed doing that, as Dad and his companion would encourage me to look through the large telescope on the upper observation deck.

The Clydebank raids' devastation was discussed at home. I did not fully understand the implications of that disaster, but I can still remember my parents' sorrow while they listened to the wireless.

Dad was not on duty on the two evenings, 13th and 14th March 1941, but Mum and Dad did hear the drones of the Luftwaffe as they flew overhead on their return to Germany. They said that the sound was

different then, as the planes had dropped their loads of bombs.

As the Messerschmitts flew back to Europe, the crew of the planes off-loaded any remaining bombs. These landed erratically in the fields in the countryside near Coylton. There was a deep crater in a nearby farmers' field. Another crater could be seen outside the byre door of another farm.

Those unexploded bombs were detonated by soldiers a few days later. The craters remained for a time, and we children would go to have a look at them.

The Clydebank Blitz largely destroyed the town, which suffered the worst destruction and loss of life in all of Scotland. 1,200 people died and 1,000 people were seriously injured. Hundreds more were injured by blast debris. Families were left homeless and bereft.

Evacuation was the result. Coylton residents welcomed many evacuees. The school roll increased. We had new playmates who had never seen a cow or did they know that those creatures were our source of milk! Hens were also strange – "so that's where eggs come from!". They called fields 'parks', and were surprised that we played there often, and also paddled in the River Coyle.

After a time, many evacuees returned home. They missed city life. I remember one family who stayed and made their lives in the village.

More than 80 years have passed since then, but the memories of that event remain with me still.

**Amy Kinnaird, Ochiltree SWI,  
Ayrshire Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023

### Theme: A Childhood Memory

I was born in the beautiful grey granite city of Aberdeen. My mother and I lived in Lilybank Place.

At the tender age of two, my mother and I moved to live with my grandparents on my grandfather's farm near Strichen in the Buchan area of Aberdeenshire.

We moved to live with my grandparents as Mum, unfortunately, was a single parent through no fault of her own. My dad had died of cancer just a few weeks before I was born.

During this time my mother and her family were very supportive and helpful through this difficult time.

Not only was my grandfather a farmer, but he had a threshing mill business, going round local farms after the harvest, threshing and baling their crops. My mother became his bookkeeper.

I loved living on the farm, helping Granny make cheese and butter from the milk from her cows. What a lot of freedom I had running about the farm enjoying the fresh air.

I started school in August 1954 at the age of 4½, being a February baby. The school I went to was a small rural primary school, Kininmonth. Unlike schools today, we sat in rows and there was a solid fire stove in the classroom. The school had no electricity.

Back then, because the school was less than three miles away, I had to walk. My friends and I had great fun on our way to school and on our homeward journey. I'm not sure if some farmers realised that

some of their carrots had been picked, cleaned on the grass verge, and eaten on our way home.

At morning break, we got milk in a third of pint bottle which always seemed to come in smelly milk crates.

Our lunches were cooked in another school, Rora, and delivered in metal containers. If my memory serves me correctly, they were not that good, but memory can play tricks.

In wintertime, if it was too snowy and stormy to deliver the meals, we had food which had been delivered before winter. We had emergency supplies which consisted of corned beef, Ryvita and pickled beetroot and for pudding we got tinned fruit and evaporated milk. For some strange reason we found this quite exciting.

Electricity eventually came to the school in 1955 and as I was the youngest pupil in the school, I was given the honour of pulling down the switch and there was light.

My most prominent memory of this, is being helped up a ladder and supported at the top by the Primary 6/7 teacher, Mr Grant.

It is strange to think back then I had no idea my mother was to marry Mr Grant when I was seven. He was an excellent stepdad. However, my reaction to the news was a source of humour. My reply was to ask, did I call him Mr Grant or please sir? His name was Richard, so it was decided I should call him Dick.

**Andrina Taylor, Fochabers SWI,  
Moray & Nairn Federation**



## **Warnock Trophy 2023**

### **Theme: A Childhood Memory**

It was a dull day in February when our teacher came into the classroom and announced that King George had died. We all stood up quietly and prayed for the repose of his soul, and then for Princess Elizabeth who was to be our new Queen. We all knew her, the lovely lady who was always in the newspapers and who had two children, Charles and Anne.

It was the start of an exciting year. Suddenly all talk was of the Coronation which was to be held on Saturday 2nd June 1953. It seemed a long time to wait but it was explained that there were lots of preparations to be made. Everything now seemed to be red, white, and blue. We all got new ribbons and had bands sewn onto our dresses and hats. We made flags and learnt to sing the National Anthem. And – joy of joys – sweets came off the ration!

There was another development too. The local electrical shop had a new machine in the window. It showed moving pictures just like in the cinema. It was called a television and people stared at it in wonder and disbelief. My father was an ardent Royalist and he began to prepare for a trip to London to see the Coronation, when he saw the 'magic box' in the shop. It was then announced that the Coronation was to be televised, so he decided that instead of going to London he would buy a television

and we would then be able to see inside the Abbey and enjoy the whole ceremony.

We awaited the delivery of the TV with great anticipation. It arrived on a Friday; a 12" Bush set which was balanced on a table while father adjusted the aerial. We watched our first programme in awe and wonder. Soon afterwards we began to prepare for the great day. The news was relayed to friends and relations, the house cleaned and tidied. Mother prepared lots of food and the place was decorated with flags. We got ready for an invasion! That began early when far distant relatives arrived at 8am. Chairs were set out around the TV and rugs put on the floor for children.

The ceremony was long, and for the children rather boring. But we all enjoyed seeing the golden coach and watched spellbound as the crown was placed on The Queen's head. The processions and pageantry were wonderful. Later we saw the whole family on the balcony of Buckingham Palace and cheered loudly.

It was truly a long day but one never to be forgotten and especially poignant as we watched the Coronation of King Charles in May this year!

**Ann Strahle, Georgetown SWI,  
Dumfriesshire Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023

### Theme: A Childhood Memory

#### **Skinny Tatties**

I would be of pre-school age at the time. Life was life. Was I happy? I think so, but I knew nothing else.

The house was home, I loved my mother, I loved my big brother (most of the time), but I was wary of Faither. He was fickle. He would scoop me up for cuddles sometimes but could walk over the top of me without any attention if the mood took him. I obviously did not know that alcohol was the cause of his rejection.

The memory most vivid in my mind from that time is the enthusiasm that mother tried to instil in our childhood lives at times when she must have been in despair – no food in the cupboards, no money in her purse and a drunken husband sapping joy from her life and family.

My brother coming in from school calls out "What's for tea, Mammy?" "We'll eat a wee bit later pet," she answers cheerily. "Away and bring in a pickle of coal for the fire, that's a good boy!"

"I'll just put the tea on the Rayburn and it'll be nice and ready when we come back from a lovely walk together," she chatters on. "Is it sausages or are we having ham tonight?" my brother asks – a growing boy is always hungry. Mother does not answer, instead saying to him, "Get Celia's trike out and we'll have a wee walk down to the harbour son."

"Come on weans, let's go!" she rushes us

out happily. "Come on now, let's see how fast you can pedal!"

I trundled the wee tricycle as fast as my legs could go. Mother talked with us all the time. We counted things as we walked. Blue house doors, white gates, cats, dogs, plant pots, anything that took our fancy! My limited counting skills not letting me get to more than five of anything! After reaching the harbour wall and counting lobster pots, fishing cobbles and gulls on the water, mother decided it was time to turn for home and tea.

"We're having 'skinny tatties' tonight. I just love 'skinny tatties' – yummy with a wee bit of butter and some salt – they are just the best thing ever," she whispers enthusiastically. "Let's get home quickly now. They are just going to be so tasty. Keep pedalling pet."

Back in the kitchen, in the warm, Mother drains the pan and sets it back on the stove to dry off the remaining water, the steam rising from the pot. With all the exuberance and theatre of a magician she spoons out the potatoes onto our plates, steaming hot. "There you go pet, a lovely skinny tatty – I'll open it up for you. A wee bit of butter in the middle and what a feast for us all."

Was I deprived? No! I knew no other life. When there was enough in the cupboard we ate well and when not our tummies were filled with "skinny tatties."

**Celia Davidson, Crosshill SWI,  
Ayrshire Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023

### Theme: A Childhood Memory

#### Under-things

It was the summer of 1979. From what I've been told I was a headstrong three-year-old, independent, and not yet any good at sharing. It's fair to say that life was good, and I had it pretty much my way.

I smile remembering these times; it felt like endless summer, having Mum all to myself, blissfully unaware of any future responsibilities or... 'constraints'.

Around this time, my grandmother came to stay. She was a robust lady, but considerably shorter in stature than my other grandmother, so she became Little Gran. She kept Mum on her toes: constant cups of tea, and everyone seemed to believe that she needed to be kept busy. My Father, a keen fisherman, used to go out to his shed for tangled fishing line (or perhaps knot some up...) for her to untangle.

I remember trying to impress her with the contents of my pockets (usually a collection of desiccated worms), but she wasn't interested in my treasures. It was during one of these visits to her bedroom that I first encountered her corset. It was lying like abandoned armour, slumped on a chair. It was the colour of the tea that she was fuelled by, and my eyes were drawn to the rubbery little buttons of the dangly suspender elastics. I can still recall the compulsion to touch them and feel their rubbery-ness with my little fingers; but as I moved closer Little Gran boomed, "Don't touch! I can't go anywhere without that!!!", and I left the room, silently untangling my confusion and fascination.

A girls' shopping trip was planned. A chance for spoiling and treats, and I definitely didn't want to share the day with Little Gran. So, after much tantrum throwing the night before, I came up with what I thought was a foolproof plan.

The next morning, during breakfast, I swung into action, wrestling the cumbersome corset off its chair, and ramming it with all my might into the small gap under the bed. The little rubbery buttons wanting to grip the wooden floor like grasping fingers, but my perseverance was rewarded, and the tea-coloured contraption was no longer visible. I skipped back to the kitchen, eager for a Gran-less day out.

My joy was short lived. On returning to her bedroom, Gran had noted the missing undergarment, briefly interrogated Mum, accusing her of taking it to wash, firing instructions on how it should be laundered. I stood in the doorway as she proceeded to pull ANOTHER, identical article, from her suitcase! My tears must have given me up as I recall being lifted up onto the kitchen counter and asked if I knew anything about the missing apparatus, when Dad walked in, dangling an extremely dusty under garment high in the air, desperately trying to stifle a laugh.

A lot of years later, on a shopping trip with Mum, I purchased my own (slightly less industrial-looking) shapewear. It was then that I understood – you should always buy more than one!

**Claire Totton, Monquhitter SWI,  
Aberdeenshire Federation**





## **Warnock Trophy 2023**

### Theme: A Childhood Memory

#### **Bonfire night**

It was the 5th of November, and the evening was cold, crisp, and clear. Suddenly, it was as if the Tour de France had taken a wrong turning as the men who worked in the Wire Mill arrived home on their bikes.

Excitement began to build among the bairns in the street. Forty minutes later, although it felt like hours to us, my dad's coal lorry arrived with its precious load of old railway sleepers. Dad disappeared into the house to get a wash and have his dinner. The rest of the dads then appeared laden with stuff to burn. Some began unloading the lorry while others started building the old sleepers into a huge pyramid in the middle of the wasteland opposite our houses. It was like military manoeuvres, but then most of them had been in the army during the war.

We had spent all week making the Guy when we got home from school. He was magnificent. Mr Scott climbed up and fixed our Guy on the very top of the pyramid.

Next to appear were our mums carrying the food and drinks, followed by Mr McClure who had the huge box of fireworks and an empty lemonade bottle for the rockets. He was a miner and knew all about explosives. There was a massive square stone half buried in the middle of the wasteland and it served as the table. Normally we used it as our base. Mr McClure set up his area nearby and

we were warned not to go near it. All we needed now was someone to light the fire. It was freezing. Adults and kids alike were snugly wrapped in warm coats, knitted toorries, gloves – on a length of elastic threaded through our coats – and woolly scarves.

Eventually, my dad appeared clutching a box of matches. He had the honour of lighting the fire. With a great crackle the fire took hold and the flames leapt high into the dark sky. We were mesmerised. The heat built up and we had to step back a bit.

Mrs Primrose took our dog home in case she panicked at the noise. Mr McClure lit the first fuse and stood back. It seemed to take ages but suddenly it whooshed up and the sky was lit up in an array of colours. There were rockets and Catherine wheels and bangers and fountains and sparklers that burned holes in our gloves. It was a wondrous sight. The empty lemonade bottle was used time and time again to prop up the rockets. When it was all over, we saw mums putting potatoes in the ashes at the side of the fire and we knew what we were having for supper with our Horlicks.

Next morning the fire was still smouldering. As the dads cycled past on their way to work, they told us to stay away, but we wanted to re-enact the fabulous spectacle again and again.

**Diane Holme, Bridge of Earn SWI,  
Perth & Kinross Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023 Theme: A Childhood Memory

### An adventure in the playground

**T**he bell had rung. It was playtime! The girls and the infants hurried into their yard, the boys into theirs. It was considered safer for the infant boys to be in with the girls rather than with the "big boys", but this turned out to be not entirely true.

Games were limited to hopscotch, skipping and tig. So, in general there wasn't much opportunity for adventure except for THE COKE PILE!!!

The coke was not a heap of cans filled with fizzy drink, or a pile of a well-known drug, but a derivative of coal used to heat the water in the radiators which kept the school warm. When the coke was delivered it was emptied on to the girls' playground over an opening into the cellar, where the boiler was housed. An inviting mountain to climb for imaginative little boys and maybe little girls.

Health and safety regulations were unknown in the 1950s. The only safety measure employed was the instruction "DO NOT CLIMB ON THE COKE PILE". Usually, offenders were brought to book by a sharp tap on the staff room window where the member of staff on duty glanced out intermittently.

On the day a small boy named Arthur began his adventure on the coke pile. No one was looking, so he climbed onto what was now a small hill rather than a mountain,

completely unaware that when the pile was low it was at its most dangerous. He didn't realise that rather than reaching the top of a mountain he might be exploring deep underground caves.

We girls were playing our usual games and it was only when we heard screams and desperate cries for help that we realised Arthur's plight. There wasn't enough coke over the opening into the cellar to support Arthur's weight. We could no longer see his feet or legs. He was disappearing before our very eyes! We dashed to try and rescue the distressed boy but were not strong enough, although, by holding onto his arms, we prevented him from descending further. One of our number realised that an adult was needed and ran off to tell the teachers what was happening.

Help arrived in the form of an angry teacher and Arthur was pulled to safety. Some of us thought that the coke fed directly into the boiler and that Arthur had been in danger of being burnt alive! So instead of ending up in the boiler, or falling onto the boiler room floor, Arthur got a dreadful fright, a good scolding and a clean set of clothes.

To this very day I can still visualise that tearful, frightened little boy visible from the waist up, and remember how we all learnt that you "DO NOT CLIMB ON THE COKE PILE!!!

**Diane Ryan, Eassie & Nevay SWI,  
Angus Federation**



## **Warnock Trophy 2023**

### **Theme: A Childhood Memory**

It's funny how smell can conjure up so many memories. A walk in the garden on a summer's day with the smell of honeysuckle and sweet peas take me right back to my childhood and summers spent with my nan.

She was a dinner lady at the local school. She had a milking cow and hens to make some extra income. I loved watching her make farmhouse cheese which was very popular with her customers. Her cow was named "Lady Duffus" by her neighbour. She would come into the byre and Nan would sit on a creepie and milk her. I can still hear the plink, plink rhythmic sound of the milk spurting into the pail.

I loved to watch the cheese being made. First, she put the milk into a big pot, put in some rennet and heated it up to the right temperature. She had no thermometer; she just knew how long to heat it to get the milk to turn to curds. I used to always think about Little Miss Muffet sitting eating her curds and whey. Nan would take a pallet knife and cut the curds into small squares. I can still see them glistening like white opaque jelly. The curds were then strained and put into a large piece of cheese cloth, drawn up and tied with string. This was hung from a hook and left to strain the whey to leave the curds.

Using a large enamel bowl, the curds would be broken up by Nan's hands and salt added from a stone jar, then a taste

to check the seasoning. The curds were then pressed into a cheese cloth lined metal cheese press which would be left to compact the curds into cheese. When removed they could be eaten straight away if you liked 'squeaky' cheese, but most people liked them dried to give a skin and more crumbly texture. The cheese was put into a press (cupboard) with mesh sides and put on the garden dyke to dry in good weather, much like drying your clothes on a good drying day.

Many cheeses were ordered in the summer. All cheese was weighed on old fashioned scales and wrapped neatly in greaseproof paper. When she had spare cheese, she would put them in her wicker basket, and we would take the bus to town and sell them to a fishmonger shop near the harbour. She did this for many years - no pasteurisation, no food hygiene certificate, no council inspections, no protective clothing or health and safety - it was all done by hand, and she never heard any complaints, only the opposite, many compliments.

Nan was my hero and taught me many skills in cooking, baking, gardening, knitting and crochet. She lived to the grand old age of 99 and could still have told you how to make cheese as she never lost her memory or her sense of humour!

**Doreen Peace, Holm SWI,  
Orkney Federation**



## **Warnock Trophy 2023**

### Theme: A Childhood Memory

**A** childhood memory takes me back to the early sixties when I was a young teenager living in the village of Brachead in South Lanarkshire. I attended Lanark Grammar school.

It was December, and although we had heavy snow the roads were still open. Why do I still remember this after all these years?

My father was in the Southern General Hospital in Glasgow having major surgery. On Christmas day, my mother and I walked two miles to the village of Forth to get a bus to Lanark where we got the bus to Glasgow followed by another bus to the hospital on the south side of Glasgow. We probably had an hour's visit before setting off on the journey home.

I think my father got home shortly after that. The snow continued to fall, the wind blew, and the temperature dropped. We lived in a cottage with a coal fire in the living room. The fire had a back boiler to heat the water but no central heating. No duvets, just cosy blankets, and a hot water bottle. By now the road was completely blocked and the village was cut off.

I remember walking through the fields to a neighbouring farm with an empty lemonade bottle to get milk.

We kept hens and ducks. We didn't have a fridge or a freezer but back then my mother would have a well-stocked store cupboard. She would also have plenty of baking ingredients. We were well fed. I remember the Sunblest bread van reaching our house but got stuck and couldn't get up the hill to the village. My dad gave them ropes to make a sledge out of bread boards in order to get bread and cakes to the village shop. By now the road was solid with snow and even the snow plough couldn't get up.

When the storm started to abate, men and boys from the village, armed with spades and shovels, came and dug a path which allowed the snowplough to get through. We were all out watching them — what excitement! We didn't have helicopters dropping supplies, but I can't remember ever missing a meal or feeling hungry. Maybe we were made of stronger stuff then and we were happy and content!

**Elizabeth McDonald, Carwood SWI,  
Lanarkshire Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023

### Theme: A Childhood Memory

**W**hen, in November 1948, my parents emigrated to Cameroon in Equatorial Africa, I was nearly eight years old. My brother was six and my sister three. Among memorable events of my early years in Cameroon, the following tale is second to none.

Father was a smoker. He smoked very pungent French Gauloises cigarettes and small cheroots cigars. Mother, who smoked only on special occasions – to look like a film star – had tins of 50 Craven A cigarettes which she kept in her wardrobe. Our parents would sometimes be away for hours at a time either to go shopping or attend various engagements. We stayed in, under the supervision of the servants. Our favourite game was to play “Shop” on the large veranda. One of us would be the shopkeeper and the other two the customers.

We built our shop using an unfinished bookcase and an old blanket which gave us good cover. We had to be resourceful to stock it. I do not know who thought of selling cigarettes, but it was an irresistible idea. We would get the tins of cigarettes from mother’s wardrobe, and we would display loose cigarettes for sale. The currency could be anything at all, from stones to buttons to imaginary money. Whatever came to hand on the day.

Not satisfied with our mercantile adventure, we decided that since we had the cigarettes we might just as well smoke, just like the grown-ups. Matches were readily available.

We did not inhale the smoke, just puffed in and out. This went on for weeks. We were oblivious to the fact that we must have left sufficient traces for our parents to become suspicious. One day they went off as usual and we got the shop going. My brother and I were puffing hard on our fags when mum and dad returned quietly and unexpectedly. You can imagine our surprise and fright. What was going to happen to us? We had been caught red-handed.

Our parents sat us down and talked to us about the dangers of smoking for children. Did we realise the harm we were doing to ourselves? Did we understand that we had been naughty? And we had “stolen” mother’s cigarettes! Scared, I caved in at once. My punishment was to write a complete exercise book with lines saying I would never steal and smoke again. It took me weeks to finish the task.

My brother made a stand for male independence and asserted he would certainly do it again. Father said to him, “It is all right, my boy. Let us start as you mean to carry on.” He lit a cigarette and gave it to my brother. As soon as my brother had finished one cigarette, father would light another one and give it to him. I do not recall how long it took for my brother to turn green and vomit but turn green and vomit he did.

It was decades before either of us touched another cigarette.

**Françoise Robertson, Cranstoun SWI,  
Midlothian Federation**



## **Warnock Trophy 2023**

### Theme: A Childhood Memory

**M**y mother stood at the sink, expertly balancing the huge saucepan and poured the excess boiling water off, disappearing momentarily amidst clouds of steam. The family sat round the scrubbed, wooden table full of palpable anticipation. After drying off on the range, the new season's potatoes were poured into an enormous dish and the fun began.

We recalled how they'd been planted just a few months before... wizened spheres with buds protruding, the buds the promise of new life. The plants had been tended, with the soil shovelled upwards as the potatoes emerged. There had been a watchful eye for any tell-tale signs of dreaded blight. Then at last the delicate flowers, in hues of pink and white, had appeared, a sure indication that digging could soon commence.

But now, the conversation focused on size, colour, variety and of course flavour!

I loved the names: Queens, Dukes of York, Rooster, Pentland Javelin. They sounded so exotic, and everyone had their favourite!

The moment had arrived – our plates were piled high and with knives poised the skins were deftly removed. Then the hard work began, as the potatoes were mashed and shaped into a smooth, conical mound, the sides swept upwards with our forks. A tantalising dish of golden butter was passed round, and a generous knob was inserted into the crater at the top of the potatoes, the top was sealed, and we watched and waited a few moments to allow the butter to melt. Then, we all dug carefully into our spud volcanoes and watched spellbound as the melted butter lava flowed freely down the sides and merged with the fluffy mash. At last, we could tuck in! That first mouthful was cherished... delicious!

**Gillian Dorothy Coulter, Elsrickle SWI,  
Lanarkshire Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023 Theme: A Childhood Memory

### The Covering

**W**inter was not my favourite season. At eight years old it meant chilblains and tonsillitis. My two sisters had their tonsils removed but the family doctor had decided, that in my case' it wasn't necessary. Every winter I seemed to spend several spells off school with feverish throat and cold symptoms.

On one such occasion a friend of the family appeared in my bedroom.

"Your mother thinks you're bored. She's asked me if I could teach you to crochet?"

"Yes! Please!" I said, sitting up. Mrs. Bennett had come prepared with a ball of thick grey wool and a crochet hook. She was a patient teacher and within three lessons I was able to crochet a little square. I was thrilled with this new achievement and proceeded to beg or borrow any length of wool any adult could spare. There was no colour co-ordination or consistency of ply. The square grew in size and the sisters soon joined the crochet gang. This new skill meant that we could claim a space on the bench in the bike shed in the school playground. There, a row of those who could wield a crochet hook, sat and crocheted. We crocheted at playtimes and after our lunch, and the squares grew so that they spilled over our skinny knees. All handiwork was grey, black, navy blue or any other drab colour. We called them "Beddies", probably a Dundee nickname.

By this time a baby sister had arrived. Mother asked us, "How would you like to crochet a pram cover? I'll buy wool and you each can crochet three squares." We were

thrilled with the idea and were even more excited when mother brought home three skeins of soft white, pink and blue wool.

There was no stopping our busy fingers. Although forbidden, I smuggled an unfinished square into my school bag and proceeded to work round the square under the slope of my desk. I was totally oblivious to the lesson when I was aware of a silence as Mrs Skinner strode up the passage.

"Out of your seat and bring out what you've been playing with under your desk," she said icily.

Gathering the square and hook I slunk out to her desk. She took it from me and spread it out on her table. My greatest fear was that she would rip it down, or worse still, confiscate it.

"It's for a pram cover for my baby sister!" I wailed.

Mrs Skinner paid me no attention but walked towards Miss Stuart, the student teacher who was sitting in a chair facing the class. She was young and beautiful, and we loved when she was left in charge of us. Miss Stuart was being shown my square just adding to my humiliation.

Mrs Skinner was exclaiming to Miss Stuart, "Could you believe that a child of eight could produce such excellent work?"

"Take Baby Sister's cover home," she said gently to me. "It'll only get spoilt here at school."

**Isobel Mary McGuire, Ruskie SWI,  
SC&WP Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023 Theme: A Childhood Memory

### My dad

**W**e didn't see much of him when we were small. He left for the office (suit, briefcase) to walk round the corner to catch the Midland Red 107 into Birmingham (the car only came out of the garage at the weekend).

By the time he was home I was in bed reading Enid Blyton's latest Famous Five book. But he came into his own at weekends and for our annual summer holidays. After work on a Saturday morning (this was the fifties after all) he went to the pay the papers and came back with little bags of sweets, carefully divided on the breakfast room table between us children, our sweet ration for the week. We also received our pocket money. Dad was an accountant. If you were six you received sixpence, seven, seven pence etc!

Sunday lunch was his forte, with all of us installed at the table, the wireless behind me, we waited for two things – the arrival of the joint of roast beef and the start of the Billy Cotton Band Show "Wakey, Wakey"! Let lunch begin. Dad brandishing the carving knife and ceremoniously serving the joint with all the trimmings. After the dessert (Queen's Pudding) it was on with our best coats and off to Sunday School ("You in your small corner and I in mine").

However, most memorable of all were our annual holidays. The whole of Birmingham must have shut down for the first two weeks of August, families would stream out of the city to Somerset, Devon, and North Wales. Our destination Cornwall.

The car was packed up the night before,

beach towels, rugs, picnic set and primus stove, small wooden surf boards and the water wings! Grey rubberised canvas, (ex-army) with which each year he valiantly tried to teach me to swim.

At about 3am we were unceremoniously removed from our beds, still in pyjamas, and placed in the back of the car – and then we were off.

I don't remember too much about these journeys apart from the sight, as we drew closer to our destination, of cars parked up along the side of the road, bonnets up, steam rising as radiators boiled over.

There were always traffic jams at the crossroads at Indian Queens. By this time, impatient for the start of our holidays, the familiar cry of "Are we there yet?" rose from the back seat.

Finally, Dad would pronounce those most memorable of words: "First one to see the sea".

It wasn't long before we were unpacking and off to the beach to explore its many cave – just like the Famous Five!

All too soon the annual holidays came to an end, we had indulged in Dad's favourite cream teas, whizzed round the lake at Trenance Gardens in a pedalo and shopped for our souvenir ornaments in Newquay.

Eventually I did learn to swim, not in the sea but in the swimming baths in Birmingham!

**Jean Cook, Kingsmuir SWI,  
Angus Federation**





## Warnock Trophy 2023 Theme: A Childhood Memory

### 8 Paynter Street

peep in. The room is dark, the curtains closed against the weak morning sun. I'm scared but I enter and close the door quietly behind me.

The day seems to hold its breath.

There is a mustiness in the air like a blanket pulled from summer storage. The sheet on the narrow bed barely registers the body beneath. I shiver and tell myself it is because of the chilly stillness.

I am thirteen. My granny has died in the night. Mum says I am to get ready for school as nothing has changed. Everything has changed.

The clock, no longer relevant, measures the passing minutes. It is her clock. It carries memories.

I have been going to granny's every Saturday since I was nine, on the bus after netball and homework, to stay until Sunday afternoon.

I love the narrow terraced house with its huge black cooking range and the cold, unused, immaculate 'best' room, delicately perfumed with lavender polish.

No bathroom, so I wash at the Belfast sink in the scullery, standing on the freezing stone floor. The open fire warms the soft water, and the creamy soap turns it to milk. Luxury.

The outside toilet is a challenge. I leave the heavy wooden door ajar for a quick escape and hover over the pan, shrinking away from the spidery walls.

Granny teaches me dozens of card games

and we play at the oak table, betting with enormous pennies from a round earthenware jar. In the absence of television and radio, the loud wall clock ticks down the seconds oh so slowly in the warm silence.

I read until my eyes become gritty before the dying fire and so to bed, up the stairs so steep they stretch above me like a climbing wall.

We are soon asleep in the squishy double bed with its thick counterpane and feather pillows 'snug as a bug', Granny always says.

Sunday dinner is pork with delicious crackling, apple sauce and rich gravy. We fill a plate for next door and the old lady thanks me with a wink and a sunny smile. I return later for the empty dish. My granny is so kind.

Granny had rosy cheeks and the small round glasses gave her cheery face a mischievous air like a naughty schoolboy. She often wore a cotton wrap-around apron stretched across her generous bosom.

It was Granny who told me it wasn't ladylike to whistle in the street, to climb trees and wear my long school socks around my ankles and never to do handstands with my skirt tucked into my knickers. I listened but I paid no heed – I liked being a tomboy.

Granny was heaven. She was short and comfortably round; warm, soft as a pillow and cuddly as a puppy. Her ready bear hugs carried the aroma of rosemary, apple and mint.

I loved her so much. Some mornings, I see her brown eyes in my mirror.

**Jean Freeman, Sandhead SWI,  
Wigtownshire Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023

### Theme: A Childhood Memory

**M**y hands were stinging but "You've got to be cruel to be kind" were Grandma's words as she applied her method of thawing my frozen fingers by plunging them into a basin of hot water when I came home from school.

It was the winter of 1950 when I was eight years old and staying temporarily with my grandparents. My father had recently changed his job and my family was staying in a remote cottage which meant I had to walk three miles in all kinds of weather to meet the school car. It was decided, therefore, that I would lodge during the winter with Grandad and Grandma who lived further down the glen, and I would have only one mile to walk to get my transport. I was overjoyed about this arrangement as I had always been very close to my grandparents.

Their house was a little wooden bungalow with only cold water, gas lighting and an outside dry toilet. but nevertheless, it was a snug, comfortable, little dwelling. Every morning after breakfast, which usually consisted of porridge followed by thick slices of plain bread, toasted at the coal fire, and oozing with melted butter, Grandma walked down the road with me, often through quite deep snow to put me on the school car. She always made sure that I was well wrapped up with scarf, hat, and gloves and after she had donned her fur-lined suede boots, zipped up the front which were very fashionable at that time, we set off.

At the end of the school day, the car

dropped me off and I walked home by myself and after being thawed out by the hot water treatment, came the best part of the day. I sat on the fender at the front of the fire while Grandma prepared tea.

After we had eaten, I had to wash while the water in the kettle was still hot. Grandad then helped me with my homework, sometimes long division or tables and always spelling while Grandma an avid knitter, got on with her work.

We also played lots of games. Grandad taught me various card games and the rules of draughts and dominoes while bagatelle was another favourite. He also kept us entertained by singing bothy ballads and testing me with riddles. Then Grandma would get out the rag curlers, thin strips of cloth which she wound into my hair so I would have nice curls in the morning.

After that, we had supper, Grandma and I enjoying a cup of cocoa while Grandad drank Camp coffee, and so to bed, a big brass bed with a soft comfortable mattress which I just sank into for a good night's sleep before facing the wintry weather the next morning.

I have many happy childhood memories, but the winter of 1950 spent with my dear grandparents remains vividly and affectionately in my mind. I felt so happy, secure, and much loved in my ideal little world.

**Kathleen Davidson, Glenisla SWI,  
Angus Federation**



## **Warnock Trophy 2023**

### Theme: A Childhood Memory

I was brought up on a dairy farm in central Scotland and every summer my sister and I went to Edinburgh for a week's holiday to stay with our aunt and uncle.

I can remember the excitement mounting as the time got near for our big adventure of going to the city. Our case was packed with all our 'good' clothes and every year Mum bought us a new cotton skirt, elasticated waist, we thought we were the bees' knees. Edinburgh seemed to be miles away, it was before the time of motorways, and this added to the anticipation.

My aunt had a cleaner who played the piano and she would amuse us with Scottish Tunes, we did not have a piano at home and we thought this was great. We slept in a double bed with silk sheets, we slid around a bit! Mid-morning, we had snack called 'Elevenses' and this was usually a milk shake.

Out and about in Edinburgh was also a great treat.

I remember catching the 42 bus down to Princes Street. It was a double decker and we always went upstairs. We did not go on a bus very often at home, and definitely not a double decker. We got off at the bottom of The Mound and tried to time it so we could see the movement at the 'Flower Clock' at the entrance to Princes Street Gardens. We thought the birds coming out of their wee house was exciting.

There was a children's show at 11am in the

gardens and we would watch it. I don't remember watching the shows in the rain, or maybe I remember only the bits I want to. We would be taken to Hendersons for lunch, it's still a favourite restaurant of mine.

If it was dry my aunt would take us to a park with slides etc. The slides seemed very high to us, much higher than our local village. My aunt would give us encouragement from the bottom – we sometimes went head-first and sometimes legs first. It was great fun. We also went to Blackford Hill and slid down on bits of cardboard; I remember really enjoying that activity.

Another holiday treat was going to Goldbergs and going up and down on the escalator. We thought this was absolutely brilliant – didn't take much to amuse us!

My aunt also treated my whole family to the Pantomime at Christmas at the King's Theatre. We were allowed to use the small binoculars if we were high up. We also had ice-cream at the interval. My aunt then made us all a lovely meal back at her house. We all sat in the 'posh' dining room – quite a change from the kitchen at home.

I have really enjoyed looking back over my holidays and many happy times spent in Edinburgh as a young girl. My aunt was a very special lady and she made our visits to Edinburgh very memorable.

**Liz Black, Ruskie SWI, Stirling, Clackmannan and West Perth Federation Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023 Theme: A Childhood Memory

“Happy New Year!” You could hear the hopes and dreams in their voices and sometimes the relief that a difficult year had passed. New Year’s Eve is my favourite childhood memory. Our family would gather at my Uncle Ernie’s house near the docks in Liverpool. They lived in a terraced house, where there was a real sense of community within the street.

The grown-ups would go out to the pub while my older cousins would look after all the excited kids, looking back I didn’t envy them their task. My mum and two aunts would come back about 11.30 and get the pea and ham soup on (this was served as it was a little salty and made people want to drink). The buffet would look fabulous with lots of tasty butties, pastries, and cakes but, “You mustn’t touch it until after midnight!” we were warned.

The men along with family and friends would come back to the house and just before midnight my Auntie Gwen would push everyone out onto the street. That is where you had to be to greet in the New Year.

Uncle Ernie would have the mojo, a handkerchief with salt, a piece of coal and a sixpence all tied up with a ribbon. (I still use one, it’s supposed to bring food, warmth, and wealth into the house). He would be first to cross the threshold after midnight.

Everyone would join hands in a big circle, other families would join in or form their own circles and we would wait. This wasn’t just our family who did this, all of

Liverpool celebrated in the same way.

Midnight came and all the ships on the docks would sound their horns and church bells rang out. Everyone cheered and there was a lot of hugging and kissing as people wished each other “Happy New Year!” Everyone would then form the circles again and sing *Auld Lang Syne*. There was a lot of celebrating in the street and all the houses were open for friends and neighbours to come and go, and there was food and drink for everyone.

Grandad, Uncle Ernie and my dad were members of Bootle Pipe Band, they were in big demand to pipe in the New Year in people’s houses, I remember them coming back looking very merry. The parties would go on well into the morning and it would take a day or so to recover from them.

Life goes on and we moved up to Wigan, New Year’s Eve arrived, and Mum and Auntie Rose carried on as they knew how and when midnight approached everyone was on the street waiting. Something was wrong, where was everybody? Midnight arrived (no bells or whistles) and we all burst into *Auld Lang Syne*, nobody came out but there was a lot of curtain twitching going on. I couldn’t believe that people didn’t celebrate New Year and that a lot of people went to bed!!!

Eventually over the years the celebration did spread down the street.

**Margaret Wilson, Mennock SWI,  
Dumfriesshire Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023 Theme: A Childhood Memory

### The Kilmarnock Fair Holiday

Oh the excitement! We are finally heading south to see my Gran and Papa Dix way down in Norfolk. I'm about 5 years old and Dad has saved up to buy a green car to take us to Snettisham. The cases are packed, and I'm sent off to bed but I canny sleep as we are to get up at 4am. Dad says we need to get on the road at first light for the journey of 12 hours. I must've fallen over as Mum comes in to wake me, a quick wash, tea and toast and we are off!

I'm sitting in the back listening to Mum and Dad deciding on the route we will take. Mum has a huge map on her lap to guide us through the cities and beyond. But soon I'm not feeling so great, so we stop at a lay-by to let me out for some air. Mum thinks I might travel better in the front. It's a long seat with an arm rest so that's where I'm put and it's great sitting there, seeing the road ahead, singing songs with Mum, Dad telling stories and very bad jokes but soon the car *stutters*... out Dad goes and cleans – what I learn later – is the points and plugs.

Back on the road... but going through a big town the same thing happens, so out Dad goes again to clean the points and plugs. It's raining now and he gets soaked.

We stop near Scotch Corner (I find that funny

as we are nowhere near Scotland) for our picnic...sandwiches like doorsteps – so Dad must've made them – and a cup of tea a spoon could stand up in! Delicious!

We press on, but Dad is out again cleaning those points and plugs! Will we make it to Elm Cottage without stopping..? Oh I do hope so! I can see the Campbell's soup factory so we must be near... not long now. *Stutter stutter stutter*... we stop again... I hear my dad mutter something... but we are so close he is smiling!

We go over the wee hump backed bridge, left turn, down the Station Road and there it is – Elm Cottage – and my Gran, Papa, and Scamp all waiting for us under the old apple tree. We all stumble out the car sore from sitting for so long but laughing and hugging. We have two weeks of beaches, picnics, fruit picking, jam making, peaches from Titches shop next door, aunties, uncles, cousins and fun ahead of us – but not thinking of the 12-hour return journey. It was a childhood full of love and happy memories... priceless.

It just proves that for all the distance between us in Scotland and my dad's family in Norfolk and Bedfordshire it didn't matter as those precious two weeks kept the bond alive and it lives on today.

**Margo O'Brien, Crosshill SWI,  
Ayrshire Federation**



## **Warnock Trophy 2023**

### **Theme: A Childhood Memory**

#### **Meat balls in the mince**

It can be quite difficult to be sure of your earliest memory, something that no one has told you, something that you haven't seen in the family photographs.

Mine came when I was three and a half years old. That was when Mum went into hospital to give birth to my brother. In those days, as all new mothers stayed in hospital for at least 10 days – not like it is nowadays – it was a significant occasion for a wee lassie.

My granny helped out while my Mum was away, but I stayed at home with Dad in our little prefab with its own garden. My dad was a shopkeeper, selling ladies' and gents' clothing, and it was easy for me to go to work with him now and again during that period. I can still remember the layout of the shop but, as I was a regular visitor there for many years, this wasn't my first real memory.

Dad took good care of me and involved me in the day-to-day tasks in the house. I particularly remember him doing the cooking, which was the source of my first true memory. I can still see it to this day, 73 years later. He was cooking mince, but he made it special by rolling the beef into little meat balls. I had never seen anything like it – and they tasted wonderful.

We never had meat balls in the mince again. Dad went back to work when Mum

came home with our newborn infant. The day-to-day tasks changed, and Mum was careful about still involving me in them. I realised that she just didn't have the time to make meat balls and I never said anything about them.

I didn't even tell my parents about the meat ball episode until, about 50 years later, we were talking about memory. My parents were tickled pink by the revelation. Dad actually remembered cooking them and we enjoyed one of those lovely warm family moments talking about it.

The exchange made me think about memory. I have never forgotten that event, a pleasurable childhood moment but of no real significance to my life. What must it be like for children who have suffered unpleasant experiences, such as being abused by members of their own family or living in desperate poverty?

Right into her nineties, my mother often spoke about her early childhood, describing the daily struggle to make ends meet and the things she did to help out, fully aware that her family was the poorest in an already poor street. Time can soften the damage, but the memories will always be there.

Isn't memory a strange thing.

**Mary Hogg, Crosshill SWI,  
Ayrshire Federation**



## Warnock Trophy 2023

### Theme: A Childhood Memory

I remember growing up with a mother who had middle class aspirations. Brought up surrounded by the working-class poverty of the East End of London, mother and father were proud to be buying their house not renting, and in a tree-lined road in the suburbs. The net curtained terraced houses all had competitively tended front gardens. The milkman and baker delivered to their doors, whilst tradesmen's horses wandered along consuming the shrubbery. The man who rang his bell and shouted 'any old rags or lumber' would doff his cap to Mother, to her delight.

We were socially 'on the up' if financially on our uppers. Through tough frugality they managed a whole week's holiday – very middle class. Mother never worked outside the home since it would suggest we were short of money, and it just wasn't done! We had hot water and a proper bathroom, but we washed in the butler sink in the kitchen because the bathroom, like all the other rooms, was freezing. The 'best' room was only opened and heated if guests were expected.

There was a plethora of undesirable things called 'common': smoking in public, eating in the street, going to a public house, and allowing children to play in the street. Living together without being married and, even worse, having a child out of wedlock was not to be spoken of. Proper dress and address reigned and even after living in the same road for years, like-minded neighbours referred to each other as Mr and Mrs...

When my father wanted to take his bucket and shovel out to collect what the tradesman's horse had deposited, mother would open the door with the plea that he "try not to be seen". To mother's undying shame, father did the pools and a man came to the door to collect the money just like a rent man – "what must people think?"

We were so posh that we had proper toilet paper in the lavatory just for show, the cut-up newspaper for use hung on a hook hidden behind the pan. Apparently, one could lower the tone of the neighbourhood by putting out washing on a Sunday or being employed in manual labour not a white-collar job regardless of how well it paid. Mother was so proud when we had a TV aerial stuck up on the roof and a telephone wire going down our wall.

The doctor, who had an envied detached house three doors along, had a car and a fridge – which mother saved hard to acquire and polished to within an inch of its life. She had a definite hierarchy of suitable husbands for me, starting with the then Prince of Wales but we never quite moved that far up her social ladder. I did once date the rag and bone man's son, which caused her to need her smelling bottle! Yes, she was a snob, but she did it to give her bairns a better chance in life, so thanks Mum.

**Wendy Nganasurian,  
Resolis SWI, Ross-shire & Sutherland**



## Warnock Trophy 2023 Theme: A Childhood Memory

“Jump, girlie, jump.” The day had started by getting ready for school: having breakfast, getting dressed in my school uniform and taking a bag containing my swimsuit, a towel, and a pair of pyjamas along with the usual satchel, as this was the last chance to do the Gold Survival badge whilst still in primary school.

There was an air of excitement and nerves. For my part the latter was uppermost. I knew that once I got into the water I could do all the tasks that we needed to do – make floats from our clothing (pyjamas) and pull a floundering swimmer to safety, swim through submerged hoops, pick up a brick from the bottom of the pool, that sort of thing – but getting into the water was the problem.

I had learnt to swim in this pool when I was eight and had seen many people jumping and diving off the five-metre board during diving lessons. Whilst I had been swimming in the shallow end, I had made up my mind that it was definitely far too high and I would never willingly jump from that height; and here was the day that I never had wanted to come, except I really wanted another badge to go with all the others that my mum had neatly sewn onto my tracksuit top using blanket stitch.

I had only recently got the Silver Survival badge at the second attempt. That was annoying but having had a bout of asthma just before the first attempt I found I was

unable to hold my breath long enough to dive down four feet, if I remember correctly, along four feet and back up to the surface. A day or so later I had another chance of taking the badge test at the swimming club, and now I was back on track for the Gold attempt.

I had climbed the steps up to the five-metre board somewhere in the middle of the queue, but when it got to my turn I chickened out and let the ones behind me jump first. Now there was only me with my swimming club coach shouting at me to jump.

“Oh God,” I thought, “I can’t do this.”

And suddenly there was a hand between my shoulders. The next thing I knew I was already in the water and coming up for air.

Back at school, sitting at our desk of four, I asked my friends who else was up on the five-metre board with me.

“No-one,” they said. “You were the last one up there.”

That’s what I thought, I said to myself.

“Why do you ask?” they continued.

I replied: “Because I was pushed.”

**Rosalind Stuart-Menteth,  
Innerleithen & District SWI,  
Peeblesshire Federation**