

Mrs Mod's Blog 14

December to January

This was a quieter time thank goodness. Russell especially was in need of time to draw breath and to prepare for future events.

Wednesday, 7 December

We had the Moderator elect, Derek Browning, with one of his chaplains, Anne Mulligan, and two past Moderators, Angus Morrison and John Chalmers, and their wives, Marion and Liz, for dinner. We appreciated advice from past Moderators so it was important for us to do the same for Derek.

Friday, 9 December

We were at the New College Carol Concert where Russell gave a short address and I met another ex Boroughmuir pupil who was singing in the choir.

Sunday, 11 December

And we were back where we started 38 years ago in Garthamlock and Craighend East. Everything was different with many of the council houses knocked down and replaced with owner occupied homes. The church had also been knocked down and rebuilt at a ninety degree angle to the original but the streets still had the same names.

Inside, the sanctuary was light and airy with chairs making it a much more flexible space. There were other rooms and halls that could also be used by the wider community and an entrance area that had café style tables and chairs creating a very welcoming space.



The congregation still had some members that we remembered such as Margaret Paterson who is now the Session Clerk, Margaret Porter, Marion Scott and a few others. Anne and Danny McQuillan had returned for the occasion and Anne read the lesson. It was just like old times. I didn't stay in to listen to Russell's sermon but went out with the Sunday school. They had over 16 children of all ages and they were all busy making stars, candy canes, angels etc to put on their felt Christmas tree. Many churches would be delighted to have so many young people. The Sunday school went back into the sanctuary for the end of the service and shared with the congregation what they had been up to. The children then led the singing for the end of the service.



I was very close to tears when Marion Buchanan, the Deacon, presented me with a prayer shawl which had been knitted by members of the Cranhill and Garthamlock congregations. I will treasure it along with all my memories of a very happy time.

We had to leave Garthamlock in plenty time to get to Edinburgh Airport for me to catch a plane to Brussels so that I could do some babysitting. I flew back on Friday 16th and on ...

Saturday, 17 – Sunday, 18 December

We attended the Lord Provost's Christmas Reception in Edinburgh City Chambers. We could only stay for a short time as we had to drive up to Aberdeen so that the following morning Russell could re-dedicate the refurbished Mannofield Church in Great Junction Street. Interestingly the Press and Journal had an article about the event and described Russell as 'The Moderator General', I wonder if the army know about this!

The refurbishment took 8 years to complete and cost £1.5 million but the result is well worth all the inconvenience and cost because the congregation now have an excellent facility fit for the 21st century, a building that can be used by the community as well as the congregation.



The congregation were very welcoming and there was a lovely atmosphere in the church with good singing. We then had a beautiful meal back at the manse prepared by Keith Blackwood, the minister and his wife and family – a wonderful choice of puddings. Some of the office bearers involved in the refurbishment were also present.

We then drove down to St. Andrews to stay overnight with my sister and husband so that Russell could have a well-deserved game of golf on Monday.

Wednesday, 21 December

and we had the General Assembly departmental Christmas Lunch at Rothesay Terrace. Our caterer, Judith Stewart of Butterflies, again did us proud with a wonderful meal. A Secret Santa had been organised. Unfortunately the host playing Santa didn't quite understand what was meant by 'secret' but once that was explained everything went well. Some people are excellent at choosing the most appropriate presents for individuals.

Thursday, 22 December

and Russell and I attended the Rotary Club's Christmas Lunch at the Hilton Hotel, Grosvenor Street and on Saturday evening we attended a reception given by Eric Milligan at Prestonfield House before attending the Watchnight Service at St Andrews and St Georges West on George Street. Russell had earlier recorded the Watchnight service which was broadcast on Radio Scotland.

Christmas Day & Hogmanay

Christmas was an unusual time for us, as Russell had no services to take on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, the first time in 38 years! Also, I didn't have a family meal to prepare for on Christmas Day as we had the meal on Boxing Day instead.

On Hogmanay we had a dinner with some friends in Rothesay Terrace and were able to enjoy Edinburgh's spectacular fireworks from the front door.

Sunday, 8 January

Russell was back to taking services as we were at Morningside Parish Church where the Moderator Designate, Derek Browning, is the minister. We attended both services and Russell preached at the 11 am service where he also handed out long service certificates, one to Gordon Hendry for 66 years service as an elder, now that is impressive. Mr Hendry tried to kid on that he was only 12 when he was ordained!



Here, as at all the other churches we have attended, the congregation was very welcoming and I managed to introduce a prospective member, who sat down next to me, to an elder of the congregation!

The order of service was slightly different from most other services we've seen during the year and it allowed the children to take a bigger role, leading prayers and gathering the offering – something to ponder, I think.

Derek Browning then welcomed us back to his manse for a beautiful lunch.