

Reflection on the life of Irene Hair

Val McGavin



St James the Less Penicuik

A Scottish Episcopal Church

<http://stjamesthelesspenicuik.org/>

Outreach is now produced as a series of articles posted on the website of St James the Less Church. When there are enough articles, they will be compiled into a magazine which will be printed in limited numbers for those with no internet access. Your feedback and ideas for articles are welcome.

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OUTREACH

Irene Hair (1922 - 2018)

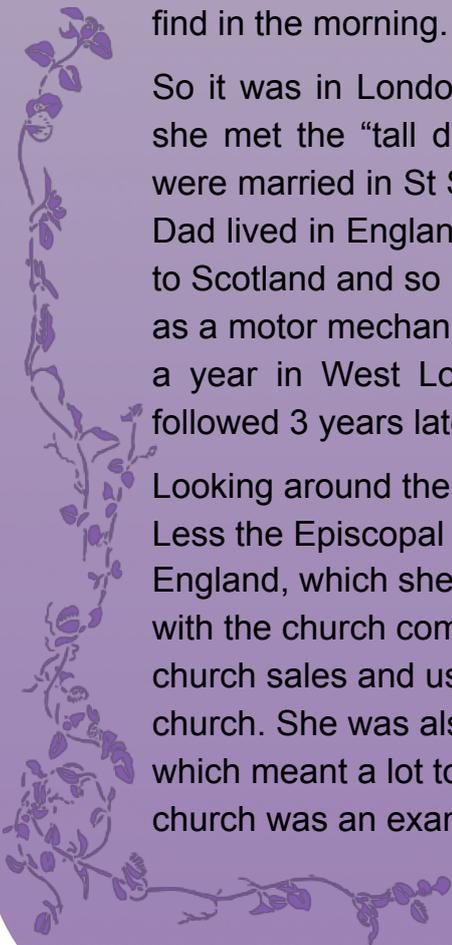
Val McGavin's reflection on the life of her mum

Irene May Bowles, known to her Mum and Dad as Rene, was born in 1922, Hounslow Middlesex, to Fred and Jessie Bowles. She had one older brother also called Fred. She had a happy childhood. She joined Brownies and Guides, she loved Guiding, the guides met in St Stephen's church hall - there mum eventually joined the church, in her teenage years despite her parents not being church goers. She was a member of a swimming club and gained medals for life saving which she was very proud of.

In her 20's Mum had a job as a clerkess, in the office of Cherry blossom shoe polish factory. When war broke out Irene was called up to the Auxiliary Training service or ATS, she decided to have a change from office work so enlisted as a cook. She lived through the Blitz, we can only imagine what that was like. She told us of the Anderson shelter they had in the garden and the underground stations where everyone fled when they heard the siren. The fear of not knowing what they might find in the morning.

So it was in London at White City, while cooking for the soldiers, that she met the "tall dark and handsome" Scot called Charlie Hair. They were married in St Stephens church on 13th September 1947. Mum and Dad lived in England for a while but Dad had a hankering to come back to Scotland and so it was in 1950 that they came north. Dad had trained as a motor mechanic but came to Scotland to join the Police force. After a year in West Lothian they relocated to Penicuik and I was born, followed 3 years later by Marion.

Looking around the local churches Mum eventually found St James the Less the Episcopal church. The services were very like the Church of England, which she was used to and she felt at home there. She joined with the church community, becoming member of vestry, baking for church sales and using her floral art skills with the flower ladies of the church. She was also a lifelong and faithful member of Mothers Union which meant a lot to her. Throughout her life her love of God and the church was an example to all the family.



As we got older Mum went to work in Hamilton Tait's photo processing laboratory, in their office. This was really convenient as it was right across the road from our house - so she could pop over for lunch and find time to peel the potatoes for our evening meal at the same time!

Eventually Mum gave up that job when Dad opened his garage repair and car hire business, and went back to office work again to help Dad with the business.

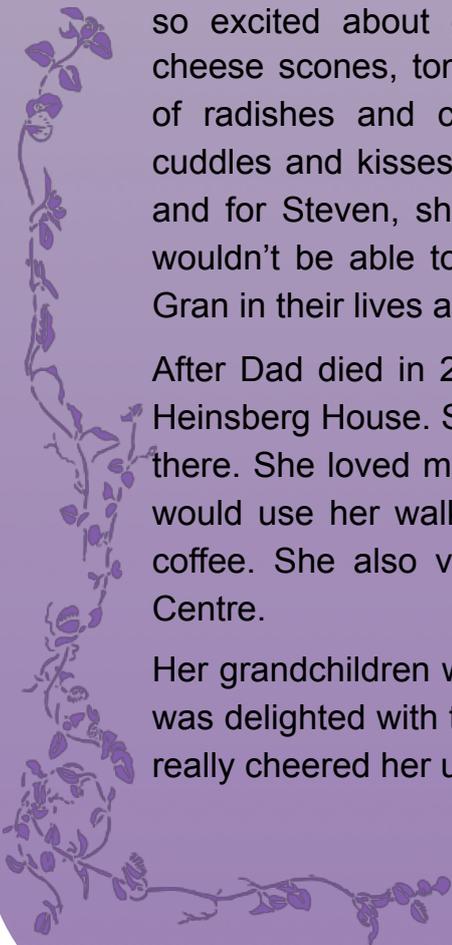
Mum enjoyed her hobbies of gardening and flower arranging, a talent she passed on to Marion (but not to me)! She was especially good at baking: pastry and cheese scones were her speciality, and there was always an apple or rhubarb tart on the go, or other goodies - as the grandchildren will remember.

Mum and Dad welcomed 3 grandchildren into the family, Julie, Kenneth and then Steven. They all have special memories of their times at Gran's.

They told me " Gran was always so nice, loving and caring and we got so excited about going there for a sleepover. Memories of crispy cheese scones, tomatoes ripening on the windowsill, sharing her love of radishes and celery! Yorkshire puddings to die for, pan drops, cuddles and kisses and the best crispy bacon rolls for breakfast, " Oh and for Steven, sharing fish and chips with Gran, knowing that Gran wouldn't be able to finish all of hers! They all feel lucky to have had Gran in their lives as long as they did.

After Dad died in 2001 Mum moved into sheltered accommodation at Heinsberg House. She had lots of friends and it was a good time for her there. She loved meeting up with others in the lounge for a cuppa and would use her walking aid to pop out to the shops or join friends for coffee. She also very much enjoyed her days out at Broomhill Day Centre.

Her grandchildren were joined by a great-grandson, Rory, in 2010. She was delighted with the news of his birth, so proud of him - and his visits really cheered her up.



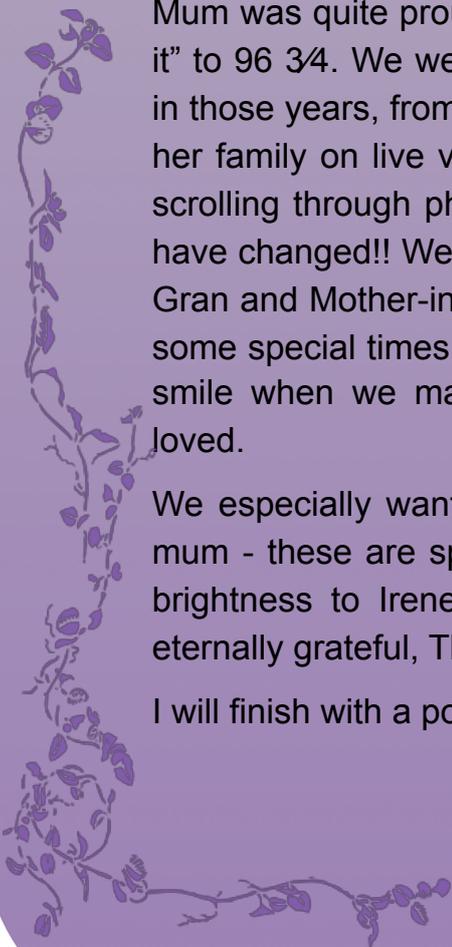
Sadly after falling and dislocating the same hip three times, she realised that she couldn't manage at home and needed some help, so went to live in Springfield Bank care home in Bonnyrigg. She also suffered from Arthritis. Despite a new knee and hip the pain continued, but Mum always had a smile, her sense of humour always there despite the aches and pains. Although a care home wasn't her preferred place to be, she grew to love her "room with a view" out to the beautiful Rowan trees and their red berries and she got great enjoyment out of watching the birds flock to the feeders at her window.

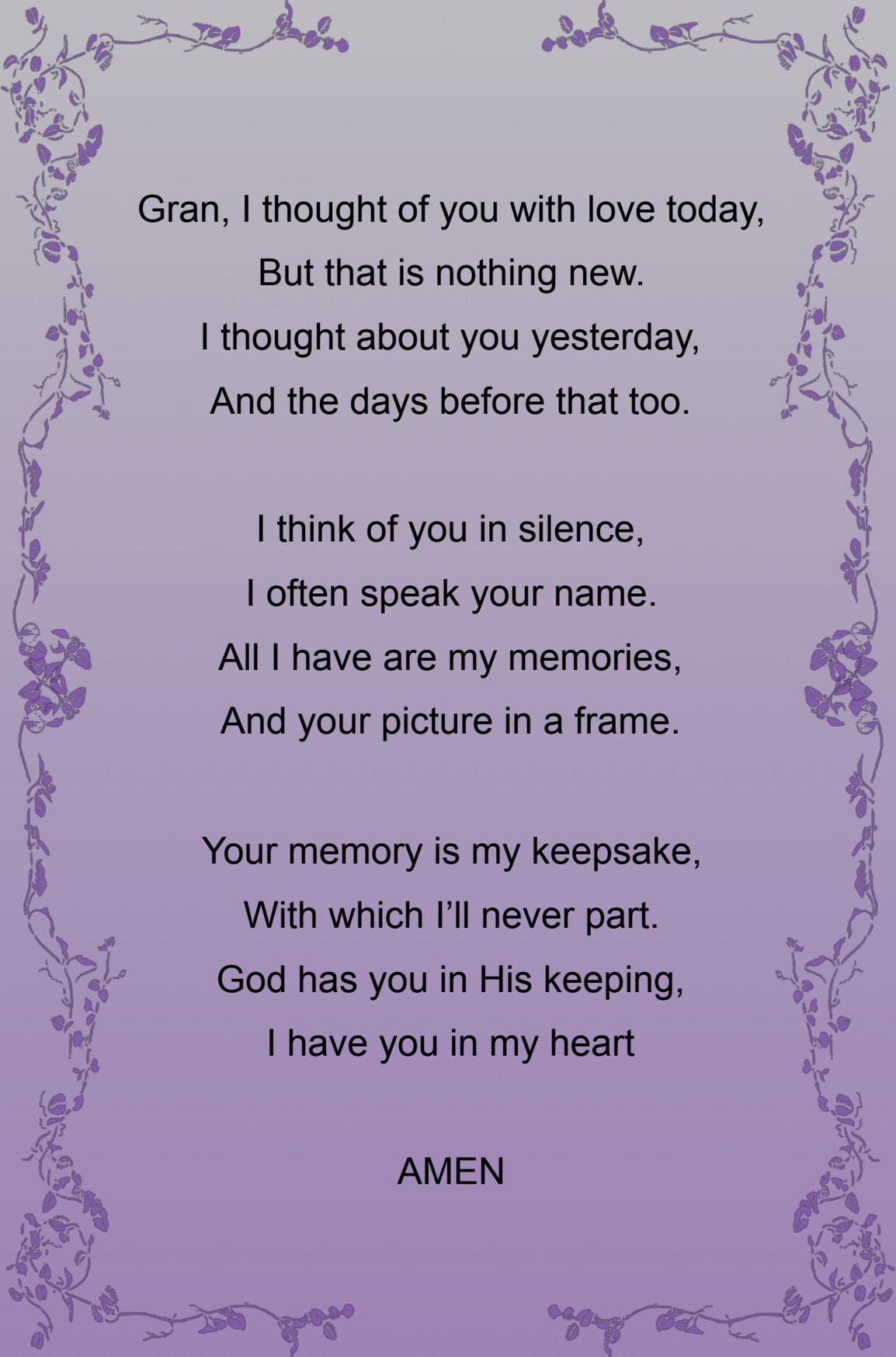
Latterly we took her for outings in the car, she loved going to garden centres to look at the plants and flowers also to see all the Christmas displays which had her enthralled. We took her to the seaside and had fish and chips in the car - it was lovely to see her tucking into her favourite food. A recent outing with Springfield Bank was on a Seagull Trust canal boat at Ratho. She wanted to wrap up warmly even though it was one of the hottest days of the year! Despite the weather, she still wore her coat and scarf while the rest of us were melting!

Mum was quite proud when she reached the age of 90, and she "made it" to 96 3/4. We were just thinking about how technology has changed in those years, from very few people having a telephone, to speaking to her family on live video on our phones while we were on holiday, and scrolling through photos on an ipad, which delighted mum. How times have changed!! We were especially blessed with our Mum, Gran, Great Gran and Mother-in-law. As we sat with her in the last few days we had some special times with her, her sense of humour was still there. A little smile when we made jokes and lots of hugs and kisses which she loved.

We especially want to thank all our friends who helped us by visiting mum - these are special people who gave up their time to give a little brightness to Irene's day or to give her communion- the family are eternally grateful, Thank you.

I will finish with a poem that Julie has found and that sums up her Gran.





Gran, I thought of you with love today,
But that is nothing new.
I thought about you yesterday,
And the days before that too.

I think of you in silence,
I often speak your name.
All I have are my memories,
And your picture in a frame.

Your memory is my keepsake,
With which I'll never part.
God has you in His keeping,
I have you in my heart

AMEN