

MEMORIES OF LORNA



Lorna Fisher (nee Milne)
1940 – 2017

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We asked people at Lorna's funeral on 22nd January 2018 to share a memory they had of her and where they first met her.

We have brought these together here to share them and have also included the words by David Ward and Trevor Miller from the memorial service held at the Salvation Army Hall in Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Lorna clearly had an impact on many people and these memories will be her legacy.

From Lorna's sister Julie Milne – memories of her early life

Lorna was born in 1940 and her parents John and Cicely decided to move out of London to avoid the start of the blitz. Julie recalls her mum telling her Lorna had to sleep in a drawer as cots were hard to come by. This probably ingrained Lorna's make do and mend philosophy throughout the rest of her life!

When Julie was born at home in 1949 Lorna was so excited about getting a new baby sister that she ran out of the school front gates which was forbidden by pupils but as the family just lived across the road from the school – which Lorna, and later Julie, attended – it was the quickest way to see her baby sister!

Lorna's new role as big sister included cleaning the pram after toddler Julie had devoured her favourite fig roll biscuits (given to her in place of a dummy!) – Lorna always felt hard done by and the joke lasted all of their lives together.



Her final school report in Cheltenham recalled Lorna was: "Lively and sincere with a quick sense of humour (which she never lost!). Lorna is sound and reliable in character with a tomboyish streak. She ranks a good average in academic work and shines in needlework."



After the family moved to Newcastle, Lorna worked in the famous Amos Atkinson's shoe shop and Fenwick shoe department but her heart lay elsewhere and she eventually prepared to go to the Lebanon Bible College in Berwick. Julie recalls hiding Lorna's favourite Italian leather handbag knowing she would have to come back for it – an action Julie now realises was because she didn't want Lorna to leave home.

Julie recalled Lorna meeting her future husband George at one of the early Keswick Ministry Conventions. They married in 1970 with Julie as a bridesmaid. They were married at Greystones Evangelical Church in Newcastle. George and Lorna's friends provided the wedding reception in the church hall. They were together until George's death in 1998.

Julie recalls Lorna's love of cooking from scratch – which was quite the opposite to herself with her penchant for ready meals! However this did not prevent them from having a strong bond throughout Lorna's life and gave them many opportunities to rib each other about cooking!



Other family memories

When we were staying with mam and dad in Newcastle we would have a day trip up to Berwick so Lorna and George could see the children – Robert, Chris and Tracy. They



really enjoyed playing bat and ball in the garden at Newfields – the children (now grown up) still remember the visits and their cat Tinky Woosh! I always felt George and Lorna were made for each other and one of my lasting memories of Lorna was in her George Fisher t-shirt – obviously bought at the outdoor shop of the same name in Keswick where they attended the Christian Convention where they met. – **Pete Standish, son of George's cousin Alice**

From The Berwick Stroke Club:

I met Lorna on a Stroke Club outing and will always remember her bowling expertise! We called her Dead Eye Dick on the jack during Boccia Bowls sessions at Berwick Parish Church Hall. – **Joy Lamb**

I first met Lorna in 2009 when the Stroke Club was first set up – having Lorna in my life will always be accepted as a gift from God. – **Angela**

From her neighbours at Newfields

I first met Lorna on the doorstep at her house in Newfields over 38 years ago and we stayed firm friends ever since. I will have no-one to tell me what's going on the Square as she was a bit of a net curtain twitcher and never missed anything! She would ring me with the opening sentence – 'Lorna reporting'. I will miss her very much. – **Hazel Matthews**



I will always have great memories of Lorna for being one of the kindest, loving and caring people. She never said a wrong word to anyone and she had a smile that would light up the world! I will always look up to her and remember her wise words – she's left a huge hole in our lives. – **Julie Matthews**

Lorna was part of our family for 38 years and shared many family occasions with us – weddings, anniversaries and birthdays – and whatever the occasion she always managed to make you smile and have a laugh – either over a cup of coffee or a glass of Guinness! – **June Kearton**

Lorna was always a kind, generous and cheery person. I have many happy memories of Lorna and George and was thrilled when they came to my wedding way back in 1995 where Lorna gave the Grace at our wedding reception. Since then I kept in touch with Lorna and was always delighted when we bumped into each other and we would have a 'catch up' – **John Matthews**

From early colleagues and friends

I met Lorna through her best friend Rena. She often welcomed me into her home for a lovely weekend. There was always love, laughter and lunch! I will remember her as bubbly, lovely Lorna! – **Lynn**

I worked with Lorna in the early 1970s at the Norvic Shoe Company in Newcastle upon Tyne where she was manageress. She and her husband George introduced me to the Youth for Christ movement and she was instrumental in me becoming a Christian and my two sisters some years later. – **Katrina Hurrell**

I first met Lorna in 1963. She was a dear friend and sister in the Lord. We shared much fun and laughter together. – **Ruth Meldrum**

From the Lebanon Mission Bible College

I first met Lorna back in the 1970s when I stayed with her and George in their flat in Newcastle as I attended the Bible College. Over all the years we had many lovely holidays together, loads of laughter and she was the best friend ever! – **Rena Clarke**

I first met Lorna when I was a student at the Lebanon Mission Bible College and my fellow student Katrina took me to Lorna and George's flat in 1975. Lorna was so warm and welcoming and we were reunited in 1976 when she came to the College to work. After I graduated in 1978 my and my husband joined the staff team and we became close colleagues and friends with Lorna and George. – **Margaret Ryder (nee Harrison)**

I first met Lorna at the Bible College (Highway Church). I want to say to my gorgeous, amazing Auntie Lorna thank you for being my granny, friend and comforter. Thanks for the fun, laughs and hours chatting with you and Uncle George – hope you are enjoying the party – love you lots. – **Emma Purves**



From Berwick Baptist Church

I first met Lorna at Berwick Baptist Church in 1979. I will always remember being enfolded by a Lorna hug when I told her my husband had cancer and knowing she faithfully prayed for us both. I will also remember the love she had for my children and how her and George became their adoptive grand-parents and the many times we spent together. – **Stella McLaren**

I first met Lorna through my parents who met Lorna and George at Berwick Baptist Church while Lorna and George were at the Bible College. Lorna was always a very hospitable lady – my late parents were often entertained at her and George's home and it greatly uplifted them.

Since my parents died (2001 & 2002) I have come down from Edinburgh to tend their graves and would usually pop in to see Lorna at home which she dubbed "Pit Stop 196" in her never-failing sense of humour!

She had doubts about her faith as most Christians do and we often discussed our 'journeys' through these questions and encouraged one another in our faith and our lives. Lorna was also very artistic and made some lovely craft items and as I like art too we often had mutually enjoyable conversations.

George too was a remarkable man – strong in his faith – and even until his death he and Lorna continued to help out with odd jobs and decorating for my parents as my Dad was disabled. I will remember them both with love and respect. Lorna is irreplaceable. May God richly reward and bless them both, now re-united in his eternal Kingdom. – **Daniel Sutherland**

From the Faith Mission Book/Coffee shop

Lorna was infectious – leaving humour, joy and wisdom wherever she went.

I shall always remember her stick figures at the University of the Third Age Word Games!

Lorna was 'homely' – you could talk to her about anything and know you were welcomed. She showed a lot of love. – **Gillian Daniel**

Lorna brought a ray of sunshine into the life of everyone she met. – **Roger M. Daniel**



From the Salvation Army

I first met Lorna at a Bible and Biscuits group. She was very kind and welcoming. It was very comforting to listen to her words of wisdom. – **Gail MacConnachie**

My memories of Lorna are from her later years attending the Bible and Biscuits group. As one of the leaders of the group I had the privilege of listening to Lorna's beautiful singing voice as well as her testimony. Her motto of faith was 'Forsaking all I take him.' She always had a smile and a warm hug, She told me that she prayed for me and as I am a Geordie always did the best Geordie accent impressions! – **Jason Wearmouth.**

From Hetton Hall

Twinkly eyes, wonderful chuckle, warm, servant heart, listening ear, without judgement. Loved how she used to say 'it's gone the journey' when throwing out food past its sell-by date! Lorna was a remarkable, unremarkable lady in whom the light of Christ so clearly shone. – **David and Moira Archer**

I first met Lorna at Hetton Hall. I will remember at my and Craig's wedding in June 2012 Lorna was one of our VIP guests. After much fun and dancing Lorna was waiting for her taxi when my 4-year-old son Jack ran through to Lorna giggling and shouting 'Taxi for Fisher' and this became one of our favourite sayings when we saw her! – **Ruth, Craig, Beth and Jack Wilson**

On my first visit to Hetton Hall, Lorna met me with tea and biscuits and within seconds we were laughing together and I felt so welcome and at home. – **Lizzy Herbert (nee Young)**

A lovely lady who was great fun. She had a special place in the hearts of each of our family. She was a special 'Mrs Goggins' to us. – **Marcia and Andy Colledge**

I will always see her sitting at the table in Hetton Hall with a cup of tea! – **Robin Chapman**

I will always remember Lorna's smile and encouragement when we met in Caffè Nero. It was such a joy to be with her. We last met at Berwick Maltings after watching Black Adder. I never did find out what she made of Baldrich's turnip...! – **Chris Ainsley**

So many memories. Many trips to Cocklawburne beach, Eyemouth and St Abbs. Scrambling over driftwood at Spittal and carrying back just the right piece for Lorna. Much laughter intermingled with her unique wisdom and hospitality. Life changing as she opened me up to God's healing and love and on a more practical basis gave me a warm blanket on my first visit to old Berwick! – **Ruth Barling**



I remember on the plane to Venice Lorna was really hot and ended up in just her vest! What she didn't know was that we had told the pilot that not only was it her first flight but it was also her birthday. The whole plane erupted into Happy Birthday to you! Also loved some of her funny sayings such as – 'buckets of sand and cement!' Happy days! – **Annie Hewson**



I remember Lorna's excitement at coming to stay with me in London and we went shopping together in Camden Market. She bought a very 'Lorna-style' skirt! I will always remember her wonderful presence, encompassing love and laughter. And her Christ-likeness. – **Anne Wadey**

Will always remember fun and laughter with Lorna around the dining table at Hetton Hall. – **Chris Humble**

I have never met anyone who made me feel as special and wanted as Lorna did. She was like a mum to me. I am so proud and glad to have known her. My daughter has Lorna in her name – because Lorna was so unique and special. – **Wendy Ward**



My abiding image of Lorna is her with her black lace up shoes, slightly wrinkled tights and holding up her skirt ready to do a jig! Having got the fire going in Cuthbert, she stood up saying – “Keep it going but don’t put too much coal on”! – **Norma Charlton**

I’ll never forget being greeted at Berwick Station with an enormous Lorna-hug! We used to fight over the bill in a coffee shop and there was so much laughter over the smallest things ... – **Lorely Russel**

I was privileged to be led on my first individual retreat by Lorna. Her gentle prompting and careful concern made it a life-changing experience. We then got to share several years on the Hetton Monastery team with Lorna and enjoyed her sense of humour and unique outlook on life. She once helped me persuade Norm that a denim shirt didn’t suit him – she then kept it and adapted it into one of her ‘hanging garments’! – **Ingrid and Norman Cumming**



The following pages are transcripts from Lorna's service as given by David Ward (The Road Home) and Trevor Miller (College and Community). Finally there is a contribution from Roy Searle – one of the founding leaders of The Northumbria Community.

The Road Home

Lorna Fisher...on the surface, a very ordinary woman leading an unremarkable life.

So why is it that when you were out with her in the town everybody seemed to know her, and that she made a point of relating to everyone as if they were old friends, even if she'd only just met them? Why is it that this church is packed with people... her sister Julie, friends, neighbours, people from church, ex-students of Lebanon Missionary College, work colleagues, members of the Northumbria Community... all here in their sadness wanting to demonstrate their respect and deep love for this truly remarkable lady.

Lorna was not just a person who was "religious", who "had a faith": she deeply loved Jesus and tried to live for him, and the resemblance, however slight, made her a people magnet, attracting people in as she reflected the deep love of Jesus for every man and women, boy and girl.

On the day that Lorna died, and before I'd received the news, I read these words from Tom Wright in his devotional commentary on the letter written by James in the New Testament.

"Those who follow Jesus are not simply supposed to survive. They are supposed to count, to make a difference in the world, whether through the quiet daily witness of a faithful and gentle life or the chance, given to some, to speak and act in a way which reveals the gospel to many others. For all of them we need to become strong, to face up to the challenge."

In my opinion, and I am incredibly biased, Lorna was the real deal, the whole package... faithful and gentle life and speaking and acting when the chance arose.

Much of Lorna's life has been lived in Christian community.

Most communities have a written, or unwritten, Rule of Life, a sort of framework by which life in the community is lived. Many years ago, St Benedict wrote a famous monastic Rule which became the basis of the way for living in many traditional Christian communities.

In chapter 4 of his Rule, which is about "Principles to help us live a good life", one of the principles is "Day by day remind yourself that you are going to die". This is no morbid focus, it is both a reminder to live well, making the most of every day, and a reminder that there is a spiritual dimension to life that holds out the promise of a living relationship with God which goes on beyond the doorway of death.

Living well... dying well... the two seem to go hand in hand.

Lorna will have been very aware of the stories of the Celtic saints, especially the saints of the North East... the likes of Aidan, Boisil, Ebba and Cuthbert. Many of the saints seemed to know with uncanny accuracy when their time of death was approaching.

Back in March of last year Lorna 'summoned' me to her home to talk about the time of her death. She was particularly concerned that her sister, Julie, should be supported and helped at that time. We talked about some of the things that she would like at her funeral.

As the year progressed, we noticed that Lorna had started to talk a lot more about George, about her hopes for their reunion when she went to be with Jesus.

She started to clear out things from the house, to shed some of the accumulated clutter of life, and to put together the papers that would be needed on her passing.

We were incredibly lucky to have had Lorna spend Christmas with my family this year. Some of my adult children who haven't seen Lorna since we stayed at her house for holidays or visited Northumbria Community's 'retreat house' were with us. My eldest daughter commented on how sharp and full of life and fun Lorna was.



By early evening Lorna was clearly tiring so I drove her home. On the journey home she quizzed me about some of the life decisions I've made and if I felt I'd done the right thing. When I walked her to her door, she enveloped me in a "Lorna hug" and expressed her love for "my little family", then cheerfully waved me down the path.

I believe there was an awareness that her life in this world was approaching its end, and a joy in the anticipation of being with Jesus (and George).

There is another lovely story told of St Cuthbert, back in the days when he was a young shepherd on the Lammermuirs.

One dark night at the end of August, as Cuthbert kept watch over the sheep, something made him look to the south east, where away in the distance was the Holy Island of Lindisfarne and the small community of monks under their abbot Aidan. Suddenly, as he looked at the sky, it seemed that the stars themselves started descending and the whole sky seemed to be alive with light. Then the light seemed to begin to rise again up into the sky. Cuthbert wondered if it was angels, descending and ascending as they had in the Bible story of Jacob's ladder. Perhaps they had come to earth to accompany some holy person to heaven. It was all over almost as quickly as it began.

That very night Aidan lay dying. His last words, as a strange brightness came over his face, were, "Pools of light, pools of light".

When Lorna was found at home, on the last day of 2017, she was sat on the sofa, coat and shoes on and walking stick at the ready. She was probably ready to go to Morrisons...I like to think that the angels came, found her ready to go, and invited her to go on a journey much more exciting than a trip to Morrisons.

That makes me smile, even though along with many of you, I will miss her terribly.

Lorna Fisher... a life well lived and a death died in the hope of resurrection and being with Jesus. –

David Ward, Northumbria Community



College and Community

It is a genuine privilege to be given the opportunity to say a few words at this Service of Thanksgiving for the life of such a special lady as Lorna Fisher. We will all have our own memories of events in her life that others gathered here may have little awareness or even knowledge of. I'm sure that we'll all learn something new today! This is because, over the years, we have all related uniquely to Lorna through our different relationships, be it family and friends, colleagues and neighbours, experiences and events that together form a mosaic of treasured memories.

College

Freda and I first met Lorna and George when we were introduced through mutual friends in the late autumn of 1969 at Brunswick Methodist Chapel in the centre of Newcastle. Almost 50 years ago!

It was an outreach event led by students from Lebanon Mission Bible College here in Berwick. Students were known as Cedars of Lebanon; each having an embroidered picture of a Cedar Tree on our green blazer pocket. Lorna was a past student helping out as she often did; we were new students just starting out.

In Lorna's time the college was very strict. In talking about it much later, Lorna, with a twinkle in her eye, took great delight sharing an example of this, saying that after washing their underwear, the girls could only hang it on the line, if the knickers were folded in such a way as to look like hankies!

We got to know Lorna in the ensuing years through College events and through her hospitality towards the students and her time in the Faith Mission bookshop.

In September 1976 both Lorna and George joined the Staff at the college – Lorna as Deputy Housekeeper and George as the Groundsman/handyman – living in the Lodge at the end of the drive where we had lived before them.

This date is significant because new students starting at the same time included Roy Searle and John Skinner who became key players in the founding generation of the NC (Northumbria Community) and who undoubtedly influenced Lorna as regards Northumbria spirituality in general and NC specifically. She was part of the foundational NC gatherings at Old Bewick over the winter months of 1991/92.

Community

Some years later, after George had died, Lorna joined the resident team working at Hetton Hall, the Mother House of the NC. This was in the autumn of 1998, which was a very challenging time for the NC as many of you will know.

In the many years she served on the team she was a perfect fit – known for her warmth of welcome, her ability to make people feel at ease – such an encourager, so down to earth yet coupled with a heart after God and a teachable spirit that made her an effective spiritual guide to many. Lorna experienced a new lease of life and what we saw emerge was an earthed, real, human, full of fun lady, with a mischievous sense of humour and a constant smile.

My memories include:

- Her uncontrollable giggles when sharing in the Aidan Compline liturgy, when instead of ‘may your holy angels... watch over us and hover around our beds’ there was a misprint that said ‘and Hoover around our beds’.
- Having a drink of sherry for the first time and filling a half-pint glass because she knew no other and then having to be helped back to her room.
- All kitted out in borrowed gear on the back of Rob or Jonny’s motorbikes roaring off along the twisted lanes around Hetton Hall screaming in excitement.
- Enthusiastically accepting the nickname of “Mrs Goggins” given to her affectionately for sharing a likeness to the postmistress character in Postman Pat.
- Her unique cooking skills for the guests including her legendary Purple pie (the colour of corned beef) and because she didn’t like following recipes, her saying ‘I’m just dollying up the soup with a bit of this and a bit of that’.

After her ‘retirement’, she always kept herself busy, she was very organised, serving the local church and events in the local community, an active Companion in the NC, continuing her gift of hospitality at home. She was known to so many people. It was an eye-opener to walk around Berwick with her, to see and hear so many people stopping for a chat or just saying ‘Hi Lorna, how are you? To receive the oft-used response ‘Well, I’m standing up and my eyes are open’. Sometimes we’d ask ‘Who was that? And she replied sheepishly ‘Ee, I don’t know!

This was a time of bacon and black pudding rolls, a can of Guinness, visiting coffee shops and cafés in and around Berwick. Bus pass journeys to Eyemouth for fish & chips, all in the context paradoxically, of deep discussion as well as healthy laughter. I always knew it was Lorna on the phone to Freda when I could hear the frequent, loud, raucous laughter from them both. Like many of you, we enjoyed a deep, close friend-ship. Described as a 'lovely lady' and 'one in a million', she was such good company.

Lorna had a worshipping heart – she loved singing the old hymns – it was so regular for her to burst into song that the team joked about establishing a 'song box' as the equivalent of a swear box, so that every time Lorna burst into song she had to put 50p in the box. We could have made a fortune!

Many of the songs weren't known by most and were often based on obscure biblical imagery such as "Feasting on the manna – dwelling in Beulah Land – here I raise my Ebenezer – the wormwood and the gall". I knew a lot of them and we discovered that we had the same source. She was a member of Vine St Mission in Gateshead, known for its choirs including a MVC and I was in the MVC in Baptist church in nearby Jarrow. The two choirs often met up to sing together.



Lorna had a genuine and strong faith, which is not to say (like all of us) that she was free from doubts, fears and unanswered questions of life and death. We don't give thanks for death, death is our enemy, death is not our friend – but paradoxically, it is possible to befriend death by accepting its inevitability but more especially thro' faith in the One who defeated death thro' the Resurrection from the dead – our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the Christian faith, embraced by Lorna. Xtian faith believes that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. In ways we do not fully understand this side of heaven, Lorna has joined the biggest choir of all!

One of the songs she loved to sing had very apt words for today, "When my life's work is ended and I cross the swelling tide, what a day of great rejoicing that will be. When I see my blessed Saviour to this world we'll say goodbye, his smile shall be the first to welcome me. I shall know him, I shall know him, as redeemed by his side I shall stand. I shall know him by the print of the nails in his hands". Finally, I'd like to read from a personal card we received from Annie Hewson, which for me says it all:

Dear Freda and Trevor. Such a time – what are we going to do without our dear pal – Am sure she would say "It's alright pet". But she leaves such a gap doesn't she? Funny, wise, kind, down to earth, I will miss her terribly. Am happy she left us as she would have wanted and am so glad to have known her as my friend and have such happy memories.

We can all say a big Amen to that! She was, as George MacDonald portrayed one of his characters – "a living glory of gladness".

Trevor Miller, Northumbria Community

Thanks giving for a life well lived. It was a privilege to be at the Thanksgiving Service for a long-time friend and Companion of the Community, Lorna Fisher in Berwick. A packed, standing room only service gathered friends and family from far and wide, testimony to the impact and influence of a remarkable woman of faith whose life touched so many.

Thanking God for her down to earth faith, sense of humour and infectious laughter, mischievous and adventurous personality, humility and servant heart who touched the lives of so many people through her compassion, care, thoughtfulness and encouragement to friend and stranger alike.

The service was brilliantly led by Dave Ward and Trevor Miller, close friends of Lorna and gifted ministers of God's grace, touching the right note and making the occasion such a memorable one.

Missed by so many, she lived and died well. It was like a Community Gathering; there were laughter and tears, sharing and celebrating, warmth and hospitality, friendship and companionship reaching out across ages, backgrounds and histories, bound by the love of Christ.

Together we mourned her loss but give thanks to God for the privilege of sharing something of this amazing, understated, woman's life.

Well done, good and faithful servant - enter now into the promises and presence of the Lord you so dearly loved, faithfully served and bore witness to as you lived what you believed. I raise a glass of sherry, a pint of Guinness or a washing line! (if you weren't at the service or know the story - apologies) in remembrance of a wonderful saint. "The memories of a good person are a blessing indeed".

Roy Searle, Northumbria Community

