

Scottish Hospitality

"They're comin'!" Granda said an' he took a houp o' scaldin' tae. Usually he waved his bonnet ower't tae cool it, but he was that excited, he forgot. He handit the airmail letter he'd been reading tae Granny. *"They're comin' in May,"* she said, looking at the calendar that hung on the back o' the kitchen door. Granny reached ower the table an' gied the letter tae Mam, who said quietly, *"They're comin' for twa weeks..."* Fin Dad came fae the fishin' at the West Coast at the weekine, he said, *"Ach! They're wir fowk. They kin bide as lang's they like!"* And so it wis arranged that Canadian cousin Wayne an' his wife, Sybil, wad come for a holiday in the spring o' 1961.

Ee niver saw sic elaborate preparations for the veesit. Granda whitewashed the ootside o' the hoose an' painted the gutters an' doonspoots a shiny black. Granny and Mam washed a' the beddin' an' hung it oot on the heid o' the brae. There wis a gweed drocht an' they wir a' wappit dry be denner time. Peter Reid cam' ower fae Buckpool an' paipered the hale hoose. Ivery press wis teemed oot an' a'thin' in them wis washed or polished afore bein' pitten back.

Dad hid made arrangements tae bide at hame for the twa weeks o' the veesit, e'en tho' it meant finnin' a replacement crew memmer an' lost wages. I hid tae speir the efterneen aff the squeel for the day that Sybil an' Wayne wir tae arrive. They were comin' on the aifterneen trainie fae Aiberdeen an' we a' walkit tae the station in oor Sunday claes tae meet them.

Granny wis weerin' the black stra' hat, with a black silk rose on't that she'd bocht for Grace Kelly's widdin' in 1956. A neeper hid spiered's in tae watch the ceremony on her new telly, an' Granny said she cwidna' ging tae a widdin' without a new hat. She hid it on, alang wi' her best peenie, fan we watched Grace Kelly become Princess Grace.

We lined up on the platform tae meet Wayne and Sybil. Dad roared a welcome at Wayne, a' the time shakin' 'is han' as if he'd shak' it aff. *"Fit like, ma loon?"* *"Hi, you guys!"* wis Sybil's greeting, afore turnin' roon tae mak sure a' their luggage wis aff the train. *"We're nae guys! We're FOWK!"* I responded, an' got 'the look' fae Mam.

As Dad an' Granda stairtit tae gaiter up the luggage, Mam lookit on, black affrontit, because naebody hid thocht tae order a taxi! An' here wis a lot mair luggage than Dad's sea baggie. *"It's nae far,"* Dad said. *"An' ye've been sittin' a hale day on the trainie. The walk hame'll mak ye swak."* We a' cairrit somethin' an' we struggled, stoppin' ivery twa three meenits tae chinge hans and shift the wecht.

Sybil's black stiletto heels slippit on the cobblestones. *"That's feel sheen ye've on, ma quine! Ye'll brak yer lig!"* Dad wis at least, observant, if nae sympathetic.

The win' fae the nor'ard, fult our veesitors' nostrils wi' the smells o' a workin' fishin' port.

Dad pintit oot the sights: the guttin' an' curin' yerds, brine for the heerin' barrels an' the kipperin' sheds. Larries, belchin' diesel smoke, passed, drippin' meltin' ice fae their loads o' fish boxes. Neither Wayne nor Sybil cwid mak oot fit Dad wis sayin' and Sybil wis trauchled eneuch. The win' nae only damaged her lacquered, bouffant, hairdo, bit blew her navy polka dot frock richt ower her heid, and neither she, nor onybody else, hid a free han' tae help her. Dad's explanation, "*Ach! It's the Gab o' Mey! Fit kin ye expect this time o' eer?*" wis nae consolation.

"That's Tappies! See the boatie a' ready for launchin', wi' a' the fluggies on't!" Dad pintit back tae Thompson's shipyard, as we dirded up the boolin' green brae, bit Sybil an' Wayne didna respond. Buffeted wi the strang win' that gart oor een water an' noses dreep, we a' followed wi' nae soon, ahin' Dad, as he led us a' tae the ancestral seat in the Catbow.

Hostages Tae Hospitality

"Ate up! Dad encouraged oor guests, Wayne an' Sybil, as we gaithered roon the kitchen table. "Fish n' chips!" I got a fry at the hairber this mornin'! Perfec' trate! Ye winna git fish like that in Canada!"

Bit Wayne an' Sybil didna look as though their supper wis gan' roon their herts like a hairy worm. They baith lookit in shock! They hid been forced marched fae the station tae the Catbow, cairryin' their luggage, in the face o' a strong win'. Noo, they cwidna mak oot fit onybody wis saying tae them, even tho' we were roarin' at them at the tap o' oor lungs, the better tae mak them unnerstan's. Weel meanin' we micht hae been, bit I'm sure they thocht they wir hostages tae oor hospitality. We droon't them in tae, an' stappit them wi' pieces.

Aifter we hid oor fish n' chips, Sybil said she wid affy like a bath. Weel, fit she actually said, wis, "*Gee you guys, after all I've been through today, I'd really love to soak in a tub!*" Bit we hidna a bath, an' the best we cwid offer, as Dad said, "*Ye kin sweel yer face at the kitchen sink. Fit's a' the wap about? We'll pit tee the kettle an' ye kin hae a bowlie o' het watter. We, oorsels, tak a bath in front o' the fire on Fridays, an' chinges oor shift. An' ye want tae wash yer hair an' a'? Losh be here, gin ye dee that, ma quine, ye'll be smoarin' wi' the caul' the morn!*"

So, there wis nithin' else tae be deen, bit tae ging awa' tae wir beds, aifter we hid wir horlilcks. An' far wis a'body gan' tae sleep? Granny an' Granda aye slept in the bunnan bed, ben the hoose. It hid an affy saft, feather, matrass that swalled ye up. Mam an' Dad slept in the doonmaist ine, an' I hid a shakie doon by the fire. Oor veesitors hid the gran' bedroom up the stairs, wi' a het water baggie.

"Wid ye like a po?" Mam asked, offering oor selection o' white enamel wi' blue trim an' fite china wi' reed roses. Wi' twa extra adults, oor toilet facilities, the lavy-oot-the-back

were stretched. Granda supplemented his clippings o' the Sunday Post with the Aiberdeen Press and Journal.

The wither wis mair or less the same for the hale twa weeks that they were in Buckie. "*Anither moochie day an' the glessie's fa'n doon,*" Granda telt's, as he rappit at the barometer on the wa'.

Sybil haled the cardigan she'd borrit fae Granny roon her shuthers an' watched Granda pit anither shufflie o' coal on the fire. She wis geel't.

Ivery day, Dad an' Granda took Wayne tae the hairber tae see the boaties landin' the catch. They niver cam' hame without a fry, sometimes lemon soles or a haddick.

Ae day Wayne an' Sybil said they wintit tae ging tae Elgin, an' they'd ging there on the bussie.

"Fitna wye div ye wint tae ging there? Hiv ye fowk there?" Dad spiered. *"An it's nae a Buckie Holiday!"*

We niver gied onywe if we didna hae fowk there. We'd aye drap in on them about flycup time for a cuppie o' tae, an' aye wi' a tin o' peers or fruit cocktail as a mindin'. Bit sometimes it wis a currant loafie fae McWellams. I think that the same tin o' peers jist got passed roon fae ae hoose til the neist.

Bit even tho' they didna hae fowk in Elgin, an' it wisna a Buckie Holiday, Wayne an' Sybil gied onywe. They hid a lookie roon the shoppies an' a shottie on the boaties in Cooper's Park. An' that wis about as far's they got.

Bit somewye or ither, they got the twa weeks shoved bye, an' the day cam' fin they took Jimmy Main's taxi tae the station, an' startit their wye back tae Canada.

We niver heard fae Wayne an' Sybil again. Bit a curn years aifter, we did git news that they hid gotten a divorce.

A' that Dad said about it wis, "*It wisna oor wye. We hid been hospitable.*"