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Early Life

Peace campaigner, feminist, philanthropist, human rights advocate: Diana Mary Unwin was born in South Canterbury on 2 June 1923 in Orari, a stop on the railway line about twenty miles north of Timaru. Her father, Cyril, was the fifth son of the well-known British publishing family. He emigrated to New Zealand in the first years of the 20th century where he joined two of his brothers who had already made the journey: William, a surgeon in Timaru, and Sidney, an orchardist. In the 1900s, Orari was a township of around 120 people, with a general store, school, and railway station that housed the post and telegraph office. It was here that Cyril established himself as an apiarist.

Diana's mother, born Grace Eugenie Curline, also came from England, where she studied nursing together with her lifelong friend Mary Klyne Mills, Diana's 'Aunty May'. After Grace's father died around 1910, the two women sailed to New Zealand and settled in Dunedin, where Grace launched herself into private nursing work, often enduring conditions—on one occasion having no choice other than to share the patient's bed—that today would be inconceivable. She was well into her thirties, so the story goes, when she answered an advertisement in the newspaper for a horticulturalist (or perhaps, one wonders, for a horticulturalist's wife). In any case, Grace moved north and in 1922 she and Cyril were married.

The little wooden house opposite the railway station at Orari was the only one the couple could find. It was old even then, and conditions were basic: two rooms each side of a central passageway, scullery at the back, water drawn by hand from a pump down the path behind the house and carried inside in buckets, cooking over a kerosene stove, lighting from kerosene lamps. Money was scarce and furnishings and other goods were unavailable. Pieces of sacking boiled and dyed and stitched together served as curtains and coverings; the wooden boxes that had held tins of kerosene

Diana with her parents and 'The Stonycrofters'—her Uncle Sidney, Aunt Grace and the cousins

were turned on their sides to make dressers and the tins themselves, cut open, became the drawers.

Grace was nearly thirty-nine when her daughter was born, and Diana remained an only child. Despite their tough financial situation, her parents held to the educational and cultural heritage of their middle-class English origins. Cyril played the cello and Grace the piano—both had brought their instruments with them from Home—and when their daughter was small they would cycle the twenty miles into Timaru to attend concerts.

'My mother was very fussy about speech,' Diana recalled, decades later, in the carefully-articulated tones of the BBC. 'She loathed Michael Joseph Savage because of the way he spoke, and was afraid I might acquire the accent of the local people. She wouldn't have a bar of the Orari primary school.' Instead, when it was time for her to begin her education, her father took her each day on his bicycle the four miles or so south to 'Stonycroft', his brother's farm at Winchester. There Diana was tutored, along with her

three cousins, by their mother, a former schoolmistress from England. Also named Grace, she demanded that Diana's mother be known by her middle name, Eugenie, to avoid confusion. Aunt Grace taught the children about the ancient civilisations of Persia: and when she deemed them to have misbehaved would send them, as punishment, out to the paddock to pick up stones.

Aunty May came to visit. We see her standing with the family on the porch at Orari, straight-backed and imperious in travelling coat and hat,

Aunty May, Diana, Grace and Cyril on the porch at Orari, late 1920s

grasping the hand of the little girl—she can scarcely be of school age—beside her. Grace, a tall, plain, angular woman of keen intelligence and wicked sense of humour, holds Diana's other hand; and Cyril, tanned, grey hair receding, shorter than his wife, standing in his lumpily buttoned-up suit with hands behind his back, already seems somehow separate from the other three.

Over the next few years the family's circumstances improved. Cyril had served with the New Zealand forces during the First World War, and thus

became eligible for a government-subsidised returned-serviceman's mortgage. He was able to buy an acre of land near Winchester, and there he and his wife designed and built a handsome brick home, 'The Red House,' as they called it. Grace polished the floors by hand and scoured the sales looking for furniture. This time there was running water and electricity, but cooking was still done on the coal range or on kerosene burners, and a refrigerator had to wait until Diana brought one back from overseas twenty years later.

Diana's small bedroom was on the southeast corner, with a peculiar little internal window through which she could be supervised from the kitchen. As an only child living in the country with no near neighbours, her pursuits were largely solitary. She spent hours dressing her dolls, devising elaborate costumes and making them out of discarded clothing—here is a little rabbit, standing on its hind legs in suit and tie, shoes and hat, all stitched by hand; someone had given her a Meccano set, an unusual gift for a girl with its nuts and bolts, wheels and girders; and, of course, she was a voracious reader. Uncle Stanley, the publisher, regularly sent packages from England—*The Hobbit* was in the post the moment it came off the press—and Diana would hide in her bedroom behind the closet door, out of sight of the spy-window to the kitchen, devouring the latest offering until she was dragged unwillingly away to attend to some task or other.

By that time the family had a car, a Baby Austin bought cheap after suffering damage in a flood. Cyril used it to get to and from his apiaries and take Diana for rides to visit Primrose, the pet lamb who munched the grass around the beehives. He taught her to swim in the creek across the paddocks, holding his hand under her chin while she struggled to master breaststroke, and tried to interest her in chess—a game that she disliked because she couldn't win. But this phase of Diana's childhood was short-lived.

Diana was nine when, at the start of 1933, she was sent to board in the preparatory department of Timaru Girl's High School, taking her dolls with her to live at the bottom of her dormitory wardrobe. Uncle Stanley dispatched money from England to help with the fees, and from then on she came home for holidays just three times each year. She had only been at the school a few months when the headmistress sent for her. 'Your father's gone,' she announced. 'Well,' rejoined Diana, confused, 'he needed

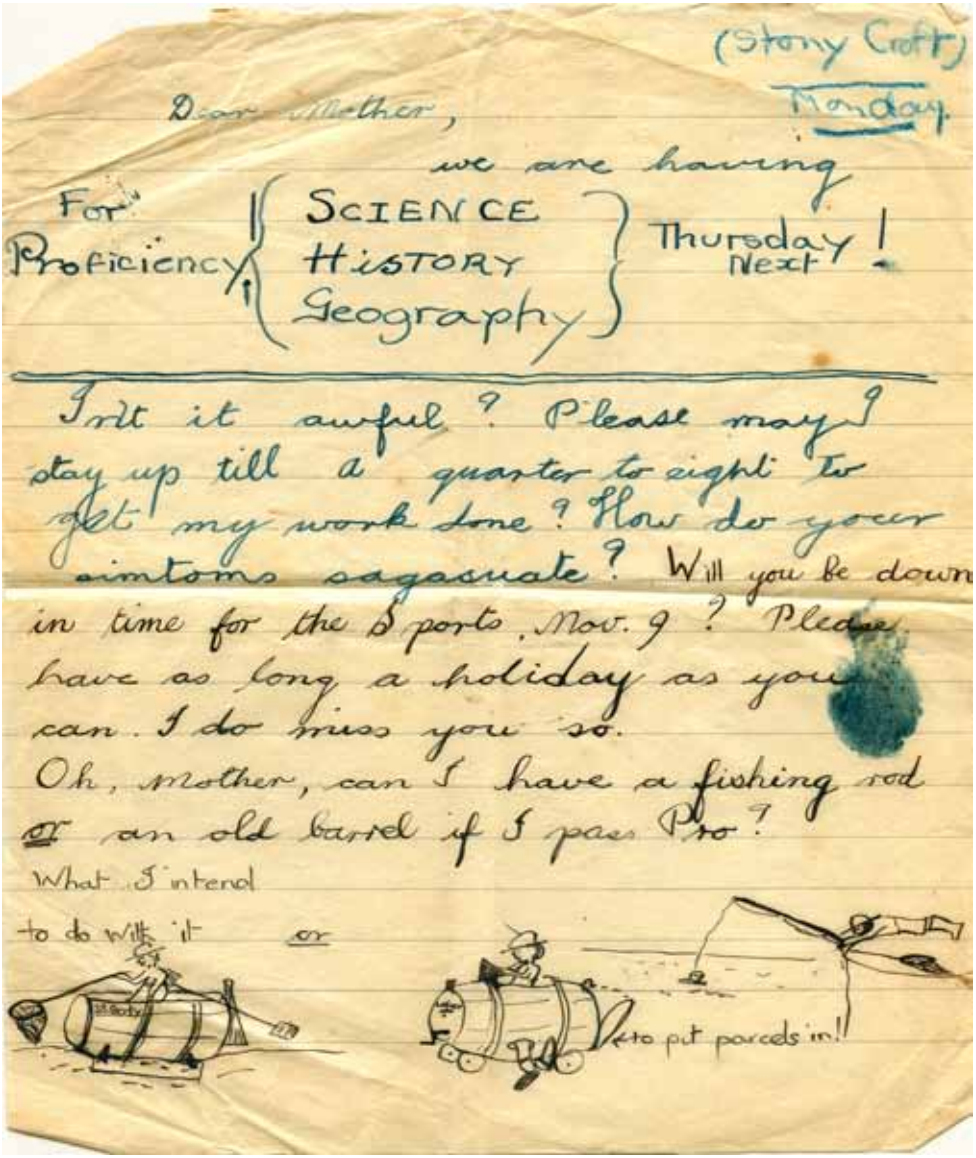
a holiday.' Later, Uncle William, the town surgeon, came bringing flowers; and it gradually dawned on her that her father was dead. He was only 54.

'My father was never robust, not even in his youth, and the heavy gear he had to carry as a rifleman in France during the First World War strained his heart,' she recounted later. 'His premature death was the direct result of that wartime experience. He'd been working at the apiary at Orari, came home, and just managed to get out of the car and into the kitchen before he collapsed. It was very hard on my mother and left her in a desperate position, but because I was away at boarding school—I wasn't involved with the funeral at all—I was relatively unaffected.'

The apiaries were sold, but Grace continued to maintain the extensive vegetable and flower gardens in the grounds of the Red House. 'Aunty May' Mills moved up to live with Diana and her mother; generous and caring, she remained part of the family until her death in 1966. Diana's holidays from school were spent helping with chores. She became the boy of the household, mending fuses, gluing the soles back on old shoes, mowing the lawn, and generally 'stirring things up and wiping things down'. When the grass got out of hand she had to take to it with a scythe. She learned to sew but not to cook, a lacuna in her education that was never filled in all her long life.

These were the years of the Great Depression, where everything that could conceivably or inconceivably have any future use was carefully hoarded: another imprint that was to last a lifetime. Always an avid correspondent, Grace never bought stationery, but wrote her letters on the back of whatever scraps of paper she could find. She was a meticulous accountant,

The 'Red House' at Winchester with the Baby Austin


(Stony Croft)

Monday.

Dear Mother,

we are having

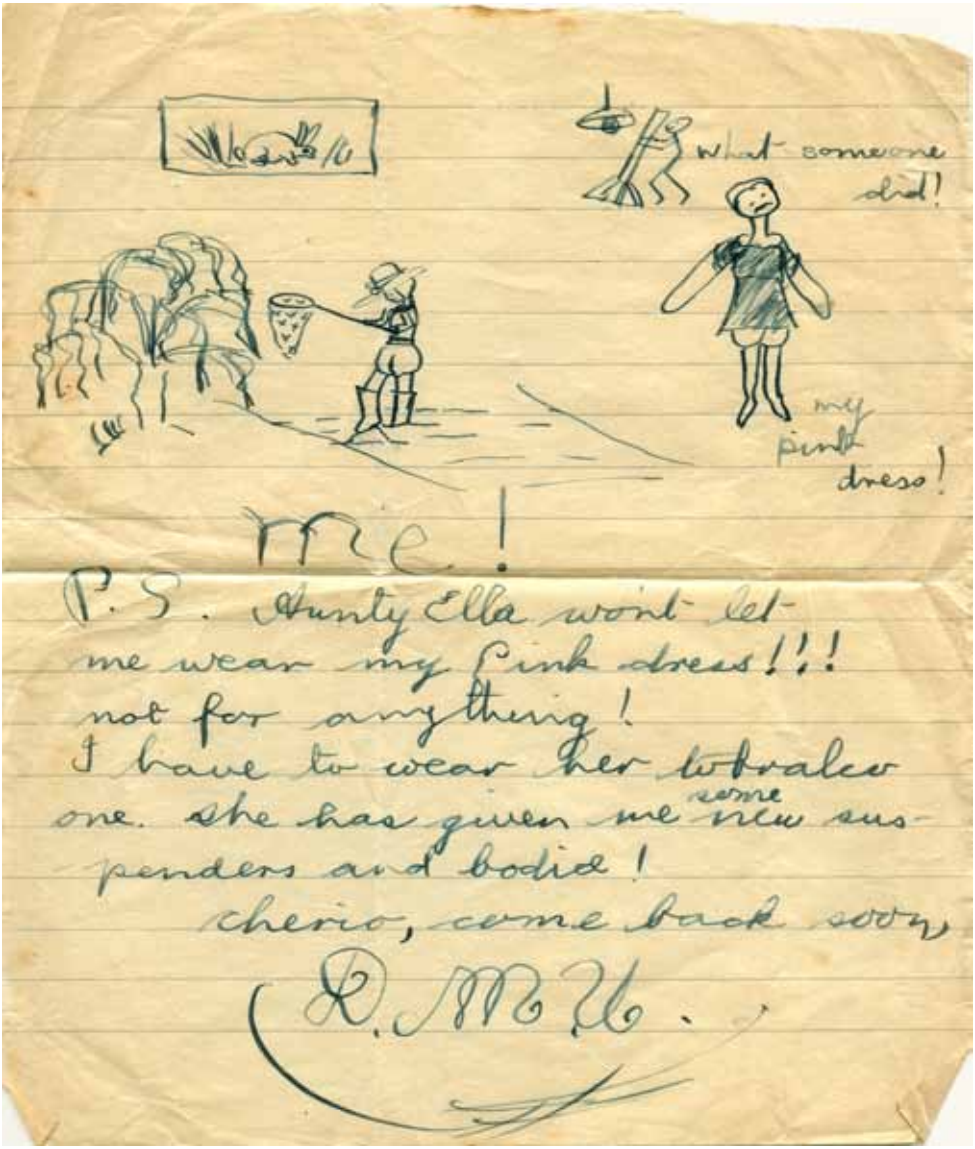
For Proficiency { SCIENCE, HISTORY, Geography } Thursday Next!

Isn't it awful? Please may I stay up till a quarter to eight to get my work done? How do your symptoms assuage? Will you be down in time for the Sports, Nov. 9? Please have as long a holiday as you can. I do miss you so.

Oh, mother, can I have a fishing rod or an old barrel if I pass Pro?

What I intend to do with it

Letter from Diana to her mother at the time of sitting her Proficiency Examinations in Standard Six, when she would have been eleven or twelve. Trying to work out the circumstances in which it was written is like putting together a jigsaw. Diana's mother Grace was apparently away, on holiday or recovering from illness ('How do your symptoms assuage?' is perhaps what



Diana meant to say). Aunt Ella was an unmarried sister of Cyril Unwin. Various members of the Unwin family came out from England to stay with Grace after Cyril's death. 'Stonycroft' was the name of the orchard owned by Diana's Uncle Sidney, where Diana had previously been home-schooled.

Diana on the porch of The Red House

recording in her diaries every penny of household spending, and in other circumstances would have made a shrewd businesswoman. As it was, she managed her affairs prudently enough that in 1937 she was able to buy a new car, a Morris Eight, that Diana was still driving in 1970. Somehow, she also now found the money to allow Diana to complete her schooling in Dunedin at the Anglican Church's St Hilda's Collegiate, where she became dux: generous as he was with the boarding fees for Timaru Girls', Uncle Stanley had not been prepared to pay for a private education.

'Where my background was unconventional compared to other women of my age,' Diana reflected, 'was that, in terms of career, my mother gave me the impression that I could do anything. There was no suggestion that you didn't do this or that because you were a woman, not even medicine, regardless of the cost. Even so, I found it very difficult to decide what I wanted to do. I certainly wasn't about to go nursing like my mother, and although I talked to my Uncle Will about medicine I wasn't sure enough about it to take on something so demanding. At school I had a splendid history teacher, Netta Bragg, and it was she who inspired me to go on to university to study history.'

Diana spent the years of World War II at Otago University acquiring an archetypal Liberal Arts education—along with history she studied French, English, psychology and anthropology—and completed a Master of Arts with First Class Honours at the end of 1944. Her thesis, entitled

'Women in New Zealand Industry', concluded on a 'distinctly feminist note': 'Thanks to the spirit and ability of the women pioneers, a liberal outlook towards women's status was shown by the statesmen of this country at the end of last century: the position of women in this [twentieth] century, whether in industry or the professions, depends on herself. Her future is in her own hands.'

Even though it was wartime, the medical students at Otago were exempt from military service, and university life continued relatively unaffected. 'I grew up in such an extraordinarily female environment,' Diana mused, 'an only child with no men in the family, going to girls' boarding schools, that I was quite inadequately prepared for the facts of life. University was my first opportunity to socialise with boys.' It was at university that she formed the one deep and lasting romantic connection of her life. Bill was a medical student; they were in the tramping club together, and the relationship might have gone further, but—so the story goes—his mother wrote to Diana to put a stop to it. 'He needs to get on with his

First class honours

studies,' she insisted: and that was that. It was fifty years before Diana spoke of these events to anyone.

After university Diana spent a year in Auckland at secondary teachers' college, and then returned to Canterbury to a series of relief teaching jobs. Realising that she wasn't wedded to classroom teaching, as a 'stop-gap measure' she took a job as a reporter at the Timaru Herald. The work, initially, was interesting, covering the courts and all the comings and doings of a small town and providing a vehicle for her undoubted skill with words; but when the men returned from the war, rather than accept being relegated to the women's pages, she decided to move on. 'The research I did for my thesis led to a rather will-o'-the-wisp career in industrial psychology,' she said, 'and I spent a couple of years with the Labour Department until I found myself a qualified Factory Inspector and decided that wasn't how I wanted to spend the rest of my life. I decided to go overseas.'

The Big OE

In 1951 Diana sailed for Sydney and then, on board the Italian ship *Sebastiano Caboto*, through the Suez Canal and on to Genoa. For the next twenty months she hitch-hiked through Europe, sleeping rough or in youth hostels, swimming in the Mediterranean, rebuffing amorous fishermen, scrounging meals, and taking rides from anyone from truckloads of peasants to beekeepers on motorbikes to one-time SS officers in their BMWs. Here she is that summer in Umbria: 'Met Alberto, a blond freak, writes awful novels, American accent, … gave me coffee—got a lift in a Fiat Topolino to within 20km of Perùgia—all village came out—a doctor of international law with whom I talked in French—in the end slept on floor of empty room in house belonging to him …' And the following day: 'Up early—walked for miles—tried to buy milk at farm but ended up drinking wine and having a peculiar meal at farm house—tipsy after—slept on road—got lift in very old car to Perùgia—slept in station—then to see the town … met three girls … very kind, shouted me a beer—on to Assisi—Italian boy showed me church … met Yank who took me to dinner—to church service—up to castle—slept on balcony.'

In those post-war years, said Diana, every young person was hitchhiking. She explored the whole of Western Europe—doing battle with bureaucracy to obtain the grey military pass that allowed her passage through the Russian-occupied zone as far east as Vienna—and returned to spend yet more time in Italy, whose people had captivated her with their generosity and hospitality. Although she set out alone, she was not on her own, making connections and linking up with other people in every place she went. The only flag she carried on her rucksack was that of the United Nations, and this trip marked the start of her lifelong embrace of the humanistic spirit of international co-operation. It was also a time of spiritual enquiry. Although brought up Anglican, in Italy she often rose before five to attend early-morning Mass, and on meeting a certain Padre Pio in the small south-eastern town of San Giovanni was disappointed to discover that he was 'only half-Christian'. But although she always retained a deep interest in religious ideas, organised religion was to play little ongoing part in Diana's life.

There is nothing to suggest that this trip ended anything but happily, although Diana was such an extraordinarily private person that it is impossible to know for sure everything that happened while she was away. We may never know exactly why, having returned to Timaru, she fell into such a deep depression that the day came when she went down to Caroline Bay and swam out to sea. 'She just kept going and going and going, out in the water,' went the unspoken family secret. An austere childhood, early bereavement, and unrequited love were all part of her story, and there is a suggestion that the always-complex relationship with her mother—with whom she had returned to live—was now proving difficult.

After she was found, Diana was taken to Sunnyside Hospital, where six orderlies held her down for each dose of the shock treatment that was, at the time, routinely administered without anaesthetic. Nonetheless, in latter years Diana regarded it as 'the best thing that could have happened.' For two years this adventurous, educated woman of exceptional intellect was kept amused making baskets and moccasins in what passed for 'diversional therapy', until in due course she was deemed sufficiently recovered to be discharged to the care of her mother. In 1955 they sold the house at Winchester and moved into Timaru.

The Timaru Years

Now settled in Timaru, Diana took a job at the local Public Library, where she qualified as a librarian and remained for the next seventeen years. Paid employment, however, occupied only a small part of her prodigious energy. Inspired by her travels through Europe, and deeply committed to the cause of international peace, justice and humanitarianism, she founded the South Canterbury branch of the United Nations Association. Her commitment to the UNA was such that she was eventually made a life member. She became involved with the international relief agency CORSO; UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund; and the international children's charity Save the Children Fund, campaigning to raise funds for development programmes, refugee assistance, and child sponsorship. Diana was president of the local branch of the Federation of University Women and in 1968 was elected to the South Canterbury Hospital Board.

Looking back through Diana's papers, it seems as if every waking moment outside the library must have been devoted to these impassioned causes. Yet another of her ventures was to organise, under the auspices of the United Nations Association, a series of residential seminars for 6th and 7th formers addressing various aspects of the work of the UN and aimed at promoting the ideals of international understanding, world peace, and human rights. She worked hard to secure the best of speakers and was unafraid of controversy, enlisting, for example, Professor (now Sir) Lloyd Geering, the progressive theologian who in 1967 was tried by the Presbyterian Church for heresy after asserting that the resurrection of Christ was not a historical fact. The hefty volumes of correspondence—the seminars continued for nearly ten years—bear witness to hours at her typewriter, petitioning for funding, organising speakers and answering requests from participants for publications and transcripts. On at least one occasion Diana herself was among the speakers.

Diana continued to travel internationally. 'Miss Diana Unwin of Timaru has been nominated … as one of two Dominion delegates to attend a UNESCO seminar in Kuala Lumpur …' announced the newspapers in 1967, alongside a photograph of Diana in stylishly coiffed hair, pearl choker and the butterfly spectacles that were then the epitome of fashion. In 1971 the same photograph attested to a trip to Luxembourg with the

City Woman U.N. Delegate To Kuala Lumpur Seminar

N.Z.P.A. WELLINGTON, October 23.

Miss Diana M. Unwin, of Timaru, and Mr T. W. Langley, of Palmerston North, have been appointed by the United Nations Association of New Zealand as delegates to a regional seminar on education about the United Nations.

The seminar will be held in Kuala Lumpur from November 2 to 14, the association announced in a statement released today.

Miss Unwin is president of the South Canterbury branch of the United Nations Association. Now with the Timaru Public Library, she is a former high school teacher and first-class honours graduate in history from the University of Otago.

Mr Langley, a post-primary teacher, is secretary of the United Nations Association's Palmerston North branch. He was educated at Auckland Grammar School, has a bachelor's degree and is studying for the diploma of education.

The seminar is being organised by the world federation of the United Nations Association with the approval and assistance of UNESCO and the Government of Malaysia.

Delegates have been invited from Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Australia, Korea, Hong Kong and Japan, in addition to New Zealand and the host country of Malaysia.

The seminar aims at providing delegates with opportunities of examining techniques and exchanging ideas on promotion of teaching about the United Nations in schools, universities and in adult education.

The country's delegates will also represent the New Zealand University Students' Association.

Miss Diana Unwin

Diana's trip to Kuala Lumpur in 1967 made newspaper headlines

United Nations Association. 'In spite of apparent political failure,' she said on her return, 'the United Nations achieve[s] much, mainly in providing machinery for "a magnificent talking-shop" … edges [are] gradually rubbed off and contacts made.' For Diana, personal human connections were the starting-point for resolving large-scale geopolitical tensions.

Making these personal connections was one of Diana's greatest attributes. Her hosts on the trip to Kuala Lumpur were the families of students she had met when she facilitated their travel to New Zealand as part of the Colombo Plan; and returning from Luxembourg she flew via Italy, determined to fulfil a longstanding ambition to meet the two sisters whom she had sponsored since the 1950s through the Save the Children Fund. Anna, the elder, was now a grown woman with a young son of her own. 'She was lucky enough to have married a boy who made good in the huge industrial city of Milan,' Diana told an audience of philanthropists when she got back, 'but for her, and other village girls in their late teens, marriage was not a new responsibility but a blessed release from a monotonous round of drudgery and a non-existent childhood. Later, when I met her parents and the younger children in Rochetta a Volturno, their tiny mountain village in southern central Italy—the most beautiful country I have ever seen, but, in human terms, brutal—I saw what subsistence farming really means: digging marbles of potatoes with a grubber and cutting wheat by hand, only a foot high and full of weeds because there had been sickness in the family and the mother simply hadn't had time to care for it.' These were to be deep and lifelong friendships. When Anna's sister was born she had been named in Diana Unwin's honour. Aged about ten at the time of that first visit, Diana Miniscalco (as she became, remarrying after suffering widowhood at thirty-five) was the only one of that family of six to spend her life in their home village.

This second major chapter in Diana's life began to draw to a conclusion when, in the winter of 1968, her mother was admitted to hospital and went on to suffer a disabling stroke that deprived her of speech. 'The only way left to communicate was by action, by the power of what you did,' Diana insisted. For the next eighteen months she visited her mother in hospital every day, lunchtime and evening, feeding her and helping with nursing care, and returning to the Public Library at night to make up the hours she had missed from work. At weekends an ambulance brought Grace home to visit. 'I was lucky to be able to look after her like that,' said Diana, 'and the experience made me much more sympathetic and understanding in my subsequent work.'

Grace died in 1970 aged 87. Within three or four years, Diana had left behind the house in Timaru—furniture, letters, diaries, piano, cello and all—and moved to Wellington to begin a new career. The burden of the past was already becoming too onerous to bear.

Activism and Philanthropy in Wellington

'I enjoyed being a student again,' said Diana, on the cusp of fifty. Having forgotten her earlier opposition to imitating her mother's career—or perhaps for more psychologically complex reasons—she was now training to be a nurse at Wellington Hospital. As a mature and thoughtful student she grappled with the professional and ethical questions raised by her new vocation as assiduously as everything else she tackled in life. An assignment on care of the dying, coloured though it was by the idealism of the then-nascent hospice movement, was accepted for publication by the *New Zealand Nursing Journal*. 'What is basic,' she wrote, 'is [simple] acceptance of dying as a natural part of life, and a positive approach to the way it is fulfilled ... it can become the personal achievement of a grace and maturity to which there are no short cuts'.

Absorbing and satisfying as nursing may have been, one has to conclude that it was never the true focus of Diana's passions. Even during her student years her involvement with the United Nations Association and other groups continued unabated, and with such pressures on her time it is little wonder that she struggled with some of her exams. The institutionalised existence of hospital and nursing home could easily become unendurable, forcing her to 'keep on the move every free moment'. Less than ten years after graduating she was working part-time, on permanent night-shift, freeing her up during the day to pursue her other interests—and earning the wrath of the ward sister when she fell asleep on duty, exhausted from having been too busy to sleep at home.

Diana always remained committed to the United Nations' goals of promoting global peace and justice and combating poverty and hunger, but—as it did for many in that era—one particular issue now moved to the centre of her attention. Beginning in the 1960s with the formation of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and fuelled during the 1970s by the French Government's deeply unpopular nuclear testing in the Pacific and in the early 1980s by renewed Cold War tensions between the USA and the USSR, opposition to both nuclear weapons and the use of nuclear power was becoming widely embedded in New Zealand society. At a grassroots level, many local communities, churches, schools and other organisations

had been symbolically declared 'nuclear weapon-free zones'; in 1973 the Kirk Labour government had sent two New Zealand Navy frigates into the French nuclear test zone at Mururoa Atoll in a defiant gesture of protest; and in July 1984 David Lange's Fourth Labour Government was to be elected on a nuclear-free platform. Lange's famous refusal to allow entry by the USS *Buchanan* to New Zealand waters was yet to come, as was the courageous and internationally unprecedented *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Act* of 1987, establishing New Zealand as a nuclear-free state, but fears of the devastation that could be caused by a nuclear conflict, and a consequent determination to do whatever possible to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons, were at the forefront of many people's thinking and featuring prominently in the media.

Diana Unwin was one of those who stepped into this ferment of protest and activism. Disarmament had been among her concerns for many years. She was a longstanding member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. In the 1960s she had tried to engage the Federation of University Women with the nuclear issue, but her remits were defeated, and, frustrated, Diana later came to regard the need for majority consensus as one of the limitations of working with such formally constituted organisations. By the 1980s she had become involved with another group, Nurses for Nuclear Disarmament, and for two years she single-handedly produced their substantial two-monthly newsletters. What she needed now was a catalyst to further action.

In the autumn of 1984 Diana heard a speech that made such a profound impression that she later came to regard it as a watershed in shaping her approach to social and political activism. Wellington's Anglican Cathedral was holding a series of Lenten talks on nuclear issues, and on 17 April—Diana's clear recall of the exact date underlines the impact it had—Sir Guy Powles was the invited speaker. Following a distinguished military and diplomatic career that culminated in his appointment as New Zealand's first Ombudsman, Sir Guy had become a strong advocate for individual freedoms—including the right to non-violent protest and dissent—and an uncompromising opponent of the use of nuclear weapons. He had seen first-hand the horrors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Speaking now with deep convictions born of personal experience, Sir Guy laid down a challenge: 'You may ask what one person can do, but nobody made a bigger mistake than the person who did nothing because they could

do so little. Whatever you do, whatever you do not do, has an effect.' Diana was unable to resist the challenge. Drawing on the words so often attributed to the 18th-century philosopher Edmund Burke—'all that is needed for evil to prevail is for good people to do nothing'—she embraced the strategy of small, symbolic, individual actions that she was to follow for the rest of her life. And now she found her opportunity.

Since 1981, the Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common, a Royal Air Force base some eighty kilometres west of London, had been attracting international media attention as a touchstone of the anti-nuclear movement. Opposing the decision to allow United States cruise missiles to be located at the base, the 'Greenham women' set up camp around the nine-mile perimeter, at times blockading the entrances, and over the course of a decade engaged in innumerable symbolic 'actions' designed to ensure that the nuclear issue remained prominent in the public imagination. At time these actions involved tens of thousands of individuals, as in December 1983 when 50,000 women gathered with mirrors to 'reflect the base' and turn the military's image back on itself. The following year the women were being repeatedly subjected to mass evictions. Conditions at the camp became grim, with tents replaced by 'benders' made from bent trees and polythene. Nonetheless, the protestors were tenacious. In response to a planned series of NATO manoeuvres, they put out a call for ten million women to join them to surround the missile base for ten days from 20 September to 30 September 1984.

'Nobody made a greater mistake than the person who did nothing because they could do so little.' Those were the words that Diana recalled when she learned that a group of women from Waiheke Island would be travelling to Greenham Common: and those were the words that inspired her to join them. 'At Auckland,' she wrote, 'we were farewelled as though on a righteous crusade. At Gatwick Airport, we suddenly felt like subversives.' Arriving at the Common, the New Zealand women set up camp under a canopy of birch and oak trees where their specially screen-printed Aotearoa banner quickly attracted the attention of other itinerant Kiwis. They were among 'thousands' who had come from all over Europe and around the world, ranging from punk youngsters with neon hairdos to 'Grannies for Peace'. Conditions were easier for the visitors than for those who were based at Greenham long-term, and the bailiffs left their campsites undisturbed. The women talked, sang the Greenham songs,

and blockaded the gates, from which they were bodily removed by police. One night some of Diana's group trespassed onto the base itself, while she waited back at the camp like the anxious parent of a party of errant teenagers; mercifully, although they were unceremoniously picked up and bundled out, none of them was arrested. 'The protest was better without men,' said Maynie Thompson, one the women from Waiheke. 'The way of demonstrating was gentler, more creative. We blew seeds through the wire to fall on the barren ground inside the base.'

Kit Nelson, Maynie Thompson, Elva Lynch and Diana Unwin outside the perimeter fence at Greenham Common, September 1984

As a symbolic gesture the New Zealand women's presence at Greenham Common was significant; their trip was reported in the national press and became part of the strong tide of antinuclear sentiment that was sweeping

the country. Equally important, however, was the impact the experience had on Diana's thinking. She was struck by the effectiveness of the non-hierarchical organisation of the camp and the irrelevance of any markers of status and achievement amongst the women there. 'Without such labels, there was no alternative but to treat each other as equals, uniquely affirming "the dignity and worth of the human person" … There was nobody in charge, no obvious organisation, yet each big camp had an information "bender". There was only one source of tap water on the whole nine-mile perimeter, yet washing places were set up, trenches dug … and there was relatively no mess, no litter. What these women had in common was an intense commitment to the future of their children, and this concern extended to each other, to the environment about them, its wild life, and to every living thing.'

'How did this happen?' Diana wondered. 'How could the camp operate so effectively with no obvious organisation? That had me reading and thinking very critically for a long time after I returned.' At one level, the main significance of Greenham was that it demonstrated the power of symbolism: here was a 'relatively small group of women, powerless, unarmed, defenceless, suffering appalling harassment, intimidation, horrific physical conditions during the winter, and yet all the power of authority could not budge them from that camp. They became a focus of hope and inspiration worldwide.'

At another level, the experience drove home the critically important relationship between *structure* and *function* in organisations and institutions. 'Peace is really about the whole condition of our lives,' she realised. Hierarchical, authoritarian, and punitive social systems both reflect and engender the mentalities that lead to war; achieving peace demands a fundamental reappraisal of the ways in which society is put together. The contrast between the 'unstructured, co-operative living' of the Greenham women, and the hierarchical organisation of the military machine that maintained the missile base—representing, respectively, peace and war—took on profound symbolic significance.

Becoming impatient with formal and rigid structures, Diana embraced the concept of *networking* as a way of organising both communities and organisations. 'With networking, people relate to each other as equals, not as subordinates and superiors; authority is held by someone with relevant information rather than a special position; there are many centres rather

than one—a good survival characteristic; and rewards come by empowering others, not by climbing over them.' This concept of a collective, decentralised, consensual exercise of power was fundamental to the way in which the Greenham women operated, and provided a model for more generalised and radical social change.

The final spin-off of the trip to Greenham Common was the realisation of the power that an individual has in a free society. Unfettered by the protocols of officialdom or the procedural constraints of a voluntary organisation, a private individual always had 'immense scope for opportunity.' Even the smallest action, such as writing a letter to the newspaper, was worthwhile, and the cumulative effect of innumerable such actions would always be significant. Nonetheless, in stressing the importance of action at the personal level, Diana never wished to decry the value of group action through organisations: for her, these were parallel processes, to be engaged in simultaneously—not alternatives.

A couple of years later, Diana took part in another major, symbolic, demonstration of collective purpose. 'The Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament, which set out from Los Angeles on March 1 1986 and reached its destination, Washington DC, the following November 15—exactly as planned—was an astonishing achievement,' she wrote.

> [The March] was initiated by David Mixner, shocked that his young niece dared not plan her future since she was sure it would be obliterated by a nuclear war. From grandiose conception to near-disaster through bankruptcy only two weeks out, it re-formed, phoenix-like, to become a truly grassroots movement of 500 totally committed people—large enough to make an impact, but small enough to be supported by communities along the way. By the end of the journey, numbers had swelled to a thousand.
>
> The March's statement of purpose [was] comprehensive: "We believe that social change comes about when the will of

Diana kept an immense archive of letters, diaries, speech notes, and other documents, including the ID tag that identified her as an official participant in the Great Peach March

the people becomes focussed on a moral imperative. By marching for nine months across the United States, we will create a non-violent focus for positive change; the imperative being that nuclear weapons are politically, socially, economically and morally unjustifiable. It is the responsibility of a democratic government to implement the will of its people, and it is the will of the people of the United States and many other nations to end the arms race." …

[Those who took part] could not have been a more disparate group: from a 78 years old Rhodes Scholar to a year-old toddler; and more significantly, from conservative Republicans to principled Anarchists. They couldn't agree on much at all "except the notion that it must be possible for us all to live in peace and harmony without atom bombs." Yet somehow—albeit with great tribulation—they created out of this diversity a workable "Peace City" which catered for all community needs: food (1800 meals a day!), sanitation, vehicle maintenance, fundraising, schooling for 60 children, postal and library services a daily paper, even graphic and performing arts—all while moving on each day.

Diana joined the March in Philadelphia, two weeks before it reached its destination. As with Greenham Common, she saw its value in large measure as a demonstration of the way in which people could live and work together by resolving their differences through negotiation and compromise rather than violent struggle:

> This demonstration of how unity of purpose can overcome inherent differences and conflict was … the primary achievement of the March, since it was only from a basis of working together that their message could be effective.

But it was also important in giving communities and individuals a sense of empowerment, enabling them to believe that the world was not out of control, that what each of them did could have an impact:

> Overall, the March changed not only those who took part, but the communities with whom they interacted…. [It] gave tangible expression to the longing of 80% of Americans for an end to nuclear tests; encouragement to dispirited peace groups; conviction that we as individuals can do something to halt the 'megamad megamachine of megadestruction'.

The third of this series of memorable journeys in the cause of world peace was a trip to the USSR in 1988 to take part in an 'International Peace Cruise' from Kiev down the Dniepr River to Odessa on the Black Sea. Diana travelled as a representative of the Pacific Institute of Resource Management, a Wellington-based organisation with a strong anti-nuclear stance 'dedicated to sustainable use of the earth's resources.' These were the years of glasnost, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's new policy of openness and transparency, and a seeming shift in Soviet foreign policy towards a more conciliatory position vis-à-vis the West. The Soviet-hosted Peace Cruise was timed to coincide with the Moscow Summit, one of a series of highly significant meetings between Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan that heralded the incipient end of the Cold War, and the schedule was densely packed. Topics for discussion included 'disarmament, conversion, development,' 'demilitarisation of thinking and the spiritual life of society,' and 'perestroika ["restructuring"] and the Soviet Peace Movement;' but seminars and plenary sessions accounted for just 15 hours of the ten-day programme and sometimes did not start until late in the evening. They were sandwiched in between what Diana called the 'tourist-ing,' tours and visits to monuments, museums, 'hydropower stations' and youth centres, along with performances and cultural events. The climax of the trip was a three-hour session back in Moscow with General Secretary Gorbachev in which—in the true spirit of glasnost—he took questions from the floor, broadcast live on Soviet television.

Given the timing, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the Peace Cruise was a carefully-planned publicity campaign—propaganda is far too cynical a term—designed to impress the 200-odd Western participants with the Soviets' commitment to disarmament. Nonetheless, the people she met were genuine and sincere, and Diana was captivated. 'It was wonderful to experience the rich culture of the Ukraine through colourful folk dancing and haunting music,' she wrote. As always, she was drawn by the personal connections she made. 'My most lasting impression is of the warmth and generosity of the Soviet people; of the horrors they have suffered through invasion and the Great Patriotic War of 1941—1945, engendering in them a realistic and intense hatred of war; and of the need for truth and under-standing to replace myth and stereotype, so that together we can overcome the real enemies (like pollution and poverty) that threaten life on earth.' And it is fair to say that, at a social level, the trip was an enjoyable one: 'We

were driven straight back to the Captain's gala dinner, if you please, complete with champagne and vodka! Then entertainment—the Captain obliging with some fine singing, too—and dancing on deck until all hours…. And I did get to swim in the Black Sea … with the help of the very nice Don, the youngest of our party…'

'Glanost seems here to stay,' proclaimed the newspapers as the New Zealand delegation returned to Wellington. 'The people [of the USSR] enthusiastically support it…. Diana Unwin … believes there is no chance of

Diana in the Ukraine with a 'babushka' at the new settlement for Chernobyl victims, 1988

a U-turn in Soviet policy…' One has to believe that the highly-publicised demonstrations of anti-war sentiment by Diana and her companions in the Peace Movement did have some influence on world affairs. By the late 1980s the goal of disarmament appeared to be coming closer to reality. The USA and USSR were negotiating highly significant arms control treaties that were to result in major reductions in both intermediate- and long-

range strategic nuclear weapons on both sides. In 1989 Gorbachev and Reagan's successor, US President George H W Bush, declared the Cold War to be at an end; and in 1991 the last of the US Cruise missiles were removed from Greenham Common and the women's Peace Camp formally closed.

1988 was also the year in which Diana retired from nursing—'Your use-by date was defined for you. At 65—out!'—but not from voluntary work. She was convinced that, beyond merely the absence of war, peace had to include racial and social justice and equity in the distribution of world resources. Her belief in the value of small, individual actions, and a deep-seated empathy for the disempowered and underprivileged in society, led her to work increasingly at the level of her local community. She became involved with a Restorative Justice programme; taught English to refugee and migrant women; volunteered for the Wellington Council of Social Services; offered care to the elderly; spoke eloquently in support of her local kura kaupapa Maori language school; and set up a 'mini-food bank' to support Women's Refuges—making her donations anonymously as 'Mrs Wilf', a nickname derived from the acronym of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She championed environmental causes as well as the rights of indigenous peoples around the world. Well into retirement she travelled to Vanuatu with the Habitat for Humanity and was found making concrete blocks for a community housing project. She became an inveterate writer of letters to members of Parliament, newspaper editors, and the chief executives of corporations in which she had shares, constantly lobbying for social justice, fair dealing with Treaty of Waitangi issues, restraint of military spending, ongoing efforts towards total nuclear disarmament, and—in the case of the corporations—the relinquishing of any investment in the arms industry. But perhaps most important of all was her enduring belief—one of the legacies of the trip to Greenham Common—in the value of networking—putting people of like minds in touch with each other, facilitating conversations and the exchange of ideas and information, drawing links amongst individuals and within and between communities. 'She went to lectures, conferences and symposiums always with the intention of passing on information ... because she hoped that she could inspire and support people ... and help instigate action.'

Alongside all this very visible activity was another, hidden but very significant, manifestation of Diana's long-held views about the inequitable

distribution of wealth in capitalist societies and her concern that support be available for those doing 'useful work' that was not recognised by the prevailing market economy. Whether it was a gift from Uncle Stanley, or a bequest from her canny mother, Diana had been endowed with a portfolio of shares that had now accrued significantly in value. No-one would have suspected it from her self-denying lifestyle, but she was, in fact, a substantially wealthy woman. Committed as she was to a wide range of community groups, she did not wish to have her personal involvement compromised by taking on the status of a donor—nor did she necessarily wish to support them all financially. Diana therefore set up a charitable trust as a vehicle through which to support both individuals and organisations that came to her attention, whilst maintaining her own anonymity. Whenever she met someone whom she wished to assist, she could now direct them to the trustees for advice, and at the same time indicate to the trustees that this was someone she wanted to help, without revealing to the recipient her own connection with the trust.

Running repairs to a pair of second-hand tramping boots

A trip to the nature reserve at Kapiti Island

During all of her time in Wellington, just as in Timaru, most of Diana's social contacts were through the various organisations that she was involved with. She spoke avidly about the causes and ideas she was interested in, but seldom of her own past or inner life. 'An intensely private person,' was how many people spoke of her, 'who kept all the various aspects of her life in separate compartments.' Living initially in the Wellington Hospital Nurses' Home, and then for several years in boarding houses—one on Oriental Parade, another at the old brick Karitane Hospital in Melrose—on her days off she would drive up to the Manawatu to spend time on the farm with her second cousin Caroline Melville and her family, or visit the Quaker settlement at Whanganui. Always keen on the outdoors, she went tramping with her ancient external-framed deerstalker's pack, skied until she was far too old for it, kayaked the Whanganui river—several times—and swam, almost daily, year round, in the icy waters of Wellington's Evans Bay.

Diana was seventy when finally, for the first time in her life, she moved into a home of her own. With the encouragement and assistance of her friend and financial advisor Frank Pearson, she bought a sunny, freestanding house in a comfortable street in Newtown: an ethnically diverse and cosmopolitan part of town well suited to Diana's approach to life. She established herself as a local identity, a now-stooped elderly woman riding

everywhere on the bicycle she'd acquired second-hand in the 1970s, and became a regular at the grungy-chic Mexican Café in Riddiford St. Her neighbour, Hariata, became a well-loved friend and theatre companion; Diana had a lifelong love of the performing arts, and attended every showing of live theatre or classical music that she could. Early music ensemble *The Tudor Consort* was among her favourites.

In the same year that she moved to Newtown, Diana reconnected with Bill, her boyfriend from university days. She had known him as a medical student; he had trained as an anaesthetist, married, and had children; now a widower, he managed to track her down and invited her to visit him in Christchurch. It was Bill who went with her back to Timaru to collect the accumulated possessions of two generations and move them up to Wellington: her mother's piano and her father's cello now stood in the lounge in Newtown like unfinished ghosts and the boxes of diaries, letters and mementos filled the garage and the spare room. They went on holidays together, visiting relatives in Australia and travelling around New Zealand. Sadly, ruminated Diana, 'after five years the relationship all turned to custard. Coming from the most conservative profession in a conservative city, Bill found me too independent (being on my own, I had to be—as

Kayaking with Bill on the Whanganui River

I told him) and too liberal (I've become increasingly radical with age!).' She certainly was a person of black and white opinions, and well enough informed to win most arguments. In the end it was Bill who broke it off. Diana was devastated, blaming herself for not pursuing the opportunity that had returned to her after so long: 'It took me five years to get over it.' Bill went on to marry someone else, but it is testimony to the strength of their connection that after he died in 2001 his daughter continued to keep in touch with Diana from London.

The last time Diana travelled was in 2006 when, aged 83, she returned to Italy. The friendships with Anna and Diana, the sisters she had sponsored through the Save the Children Fund, had lasted more than four decades. Diana had visited on several occasions, learning the rudiments of Italian in order to communicate. In latter years, when e-mail replaced pen-and-paper correspondence—Diana never owned a computer—she depended on an Italian-speaking friend as a go-between in exchanging messages. Both sisters had children of their own now grown to adulthood; Diana Miniscalco's daughter was now getting married, and Diana Unwin was invited to the wedding. The trip was a recapitulation of her first-ever overseas journey, where she disembarked in Italy and experienced for the first time the essential unity of human experience, transcending geographical and cultural differences, that had shaped the rest of her life.

During her years in Newtown, Diana's eccentricities became more prominent. She refused to allow any tree, shrub, grass or weed on her property to be pruned or trimmed; from inside the house she looked out into a jungle, and when the neighbours complained she begged, 'Please leave me to my wilderness.' The depression that had troubled her in earlier years returned to dog her and she was often hesitant and uncertain. Sleepless, she sat up at night reading by a tiny lamp no bigger than a candle. The economic deprivation of her childhood had instilled in her a frugality and asceticism that bordered on extreme; her meals at home consisted of nothing but a scrap of microwaved fish; and—like her mother—she remained unable to discard any piece of paper or plastic that could possibly be reused. 'The past has been accumulating around me like a junkheap,' she lamented, frustrated at her inability to sort out the boxes of stuff she had brought from Timaru, 'and I seem to be unable to deal with it.'

That, perhaps, is the key to Diana's life. We look back past the frail old lady celebrating her 90th birthday surrounded by friends in the nurs-

ing home, past the vivacious elderly tramper of the 1990s, past the ardent peace campaigner of the '70s and '80s, past the severely respectable Miss D M Unwin of Timaru in the butterfly spectacles of the '60s, to imagine a feisty, spirited and courageous, educated woman in her mid-twenties hitch-hiking around the globe: and beyond that to a young girl at boarding school

Diana celebrating her 90th birthday

with her dolls hidden at the bottom of the dormitory closet, heading home for the holidays to mow the lawns for her widowed mother and her companion, 'Aunty' May. The knowledge of deprivation, an emotional guardedness, a feminist upbringing combined with a deep belief in the equality of all people, a rich education, first-hand experience of the diversity of

human cultures, and the capacity for a searching intellectual appraisal of social and political institutions: all these factors both drove Diana forward and, at the same time, held her back.

Over several decades Diana contributed, both financially and in terms of time and energy, to a vast array of humanitarian causes, directly and indirectly enabling many people around the world to enjoy a better life. Her work with secondary school students in the 1960s and early 1970s helped instil in a generation of young people a sense of the values of international co-operation and social justice. She campaigned for global change, and surely the protests and demonstrations of the Peace Movement of the 1970s and 1980s did have some influence on the decisions made by world leaders, helping to stabilise what at the time seemed to be a terrifyingly unstable stand-off between two world powers. History has moved on, however, and the environmental, humanitarian and geopolitical issues that now face the world are, if anything, more urgent than ever before.

Diana Unwin died on 4 July 2014, in her 92nd year. 'Despite her determinedness and perfectionism,' said her friend Chris Greenwood, 'anyone who had anything to do with Diana loved her.' Her lasting legacy is in the individual lives she touched: the families she supported, her compassion for the disadvantaged, her befriending of the friendless, the connections she fostered, her passion for peace, and her endless advocacy of social justice and the equitable distribution of resources. Her eloquent critique of the hierarchical, consumerist, market-driven capitalist world order that can only lead to conflict and exploitation was mirrored in a life that turned aside from success on those terms and focussed on the individual acts of generosity, kindness and selflessness that are the foundations of the world she dreamed of.

References

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In addition there is her Master's thesis:

Diana Unwin, 'Women in New Zealand Industry, with special reference to factory industry and to conditions in Dunedin,' unpublished thesis presented for MA (Honours) in History, 1944, University of Otago.

Diana maintained a huge archive of press clippings, ephemera of all descriptions, correspondence, speech notes, drafts of articles, diaries, memoranda and other writings. Selections of these are now in the possession of Chris Greenwood and Caroline Melville who kindly provided me with access to them. Not all of the press clippings are identified or dated. Note, however, that I have only examined formal (and generally typed) correspondence: prior to the instigation of this project the decision was made in consultation with Diana's attorneys that it was not the appropriate time to read personal, handwritten letters.

I conducted interviews with a number of Diana's friends and relatives as follows: Kathy Hindmarsh on 8 March 2013; Frank Pearson on 24 May 2013; Caroline Melville, Diana's second cousin, on 26 May 2013; Chris Greenwood on 8 June 2013; and Hariata Hema on 14 June 2013. In addition I referred to (a) Elizabeth Hannah, 'My Special Friend Diana,' unpublished memorandum, 2013, provided by Frank Pearson, and (b) Diana Miniscalco, 'Story of Diana in Italy,' translated by Nina

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A fully annotated electronic version of the text is available on request from the author: silverimage@paradise.net.nz.

Mark Beehre
Wellington
July 2013

Appendix

The Grace Memorial Trust

by Jenny Gill

In *In Search of Peace* we read of the persona Mrs Wilf that Diana had invented for herself in the 1980s, through which she was able to make anonymous cash donations to community organisations and causes close to her heart. What is not well known is that in 1992 Diana decided to establish a charitable trust as a vehicle for her personal giving. Her financial advisor Frank Pearson was appointed as co-trustee. The trust became a vehicle where Diana could give with complete anonymity. Initially named the Grace Aid Trust, after her mother, it was later renamed the Grace Memorial Trust, although grants were made under the name of the 'G Trust.' Diana established the trust with a capital gift and she continued with regular gifts of capital throughout her life.

In their first year the trustees distributed $60,000 in grants and since then giving has averaged $173,000 each year. Total giving through the trust, to 2014, has totalled $4 million.

Over her adult life Diana had been involved in CORSO, UNICEF, Save the Children, the United Nations Association, CND, WILPF and the international peace movement. This international involvement combined with her extensive local participation in restorative justice, homelessness and poverty, women's refuge, refugee and migrant services meant that Diana was not short of ideas as to where her trust's funds could be directed.

In 1994 Diana attended a Workers' Educational Association talk on philanthropy by Basil Potter, a trustee of the Roy McKenzie Foundation. With the capital of the trust growing Diana had been thinking about making her giving more focussed. However, she was very clear that her anonymity was vital and she recognised that public recognition or publicity could lead to her being overwhelmed by unsolicited applications. She appealed to the Roy McKenzie Foundation for help with her grant making and the trust embarked on the next stage of its development.

In 1995 Diana and Frank decided to expand the number of trustees and invited Warwick Greenwood, the trust's accountant, and McKenzie's Jenny Gill to join them as trustees. This quartet was a harmonious and effective group. Frank brought his considerable international investment expertise to the growing portfolio, Warwick his extensive financial experience and Jenny grant making experience and wide community networks. Diana trusted and respected her fellow trustees and we in turn felt privileged to work alongside a modest but committed philanthropist.

Grants from the trust and gifts from Diana have supported a wide range of organisations in New Zealand, in the Pacific and in Aboriginal Australia.

In an undated letter a recipient of an unsolicited donation from Diana wrote:

> I cannot express how supportive it feels when a gift such as yours just turns up out of the blue. Just to tell local people of the type of support and to show them your letter is such a valuable message that there's some real people on this planet … I hope you understand the true value of giving as you have.
>
> In peace and green, David

Despite, or perhaps because of, being a teacher and a nurse, Diana had an intolerance of government inefficiency and inequity. She believed in the importance of the role of the not-for-profit sector in supporting the disadvantaged to express their needs and to have them met in the community.

The trust has been a long time supporter of ANGOA, the Association of Non-Governmental Organisations of Aotearoa; Women's Refuge; Wellington Housing Trust; and the Wellington Women's Health Collective, to name a but a few.

In a letter written in 2005 to Jenny Gill, Diana said:

> Anyway I'm convinced that what *XX* is doing is so worthwhile that I'd like to see it getting as much funding as we can possibly spare! I'm convinced it will be value for money and nothing wasted…
>
> At a WCC Ward meeting I asked why—when Christchurch, Hamilton & even Rotorua—had buildings dedicated for the use of community groups, Wellington didn't have one. Too many groups, said the Mayor, and they could find their own premises and apply for subsidies (neglecting to

say they were contestable & for one year only—with all rents steadily rising). But I haven't given up…

In a 2004 interview with Philanthropy New Zealand Diana said that she wanted to support 'individuals and organisations that are doing useful work but are not supported in a market economy.'[1] She told the interviewer that she did not want to be in the position of being approached for grants. She felt that she needed some direction on how she could achieve her aims while preserving her privacy. She commented that the feedback that she got about the difference that a grant had made was hugely rewarding.

Later in the interview she explained how grateful she was for the help she had received from experienced trustees, and from her financial advisor. One advantage for her in having trustees who were already involved in philanthropy was that when she came across a person or organisation that she would like to support, she referred them to her trustees for advice. She could then indicate to the trustees that she would like to support the applicant, but the recipient did not need to know where the support came from.

Her final comments in the interview are typical of the keen intelligence and compassion that she applied to each decision about each grant and about the future of the trust. She said that she enjoyed the ability of the trust to respond to needs as they arose and that although she had made provision for the trust to continue beyond her death, it is clear that she did not necessarily expect it to continue forever: the remaining trustees will be free to decide its future. While she had thought about making bequests to organisations she knew that her views about which organisations she might want to support have changed over the years, and she has chosen instead to leave her assets in the trust and available to meet needs as yet unknown.

Peace, dispute resolution, prison reform and restorative justice have been a major focus of trust funding, culminating in 2013 with the support of the inaugural Chair in Restorative Justice at Victoria University. Appropriately the Chair will be named after Diana.

Jenny Gill
June 2014

1 'A Tool Kit for Giving: the Rewards of Generosity.' *Philanthropy New Zealand* 2004.

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Mark Beehre
Publishing
51 Durham St, Aro Valley, Wellington
Aotearoa New Zealand
silverimage@paradise.net.nz