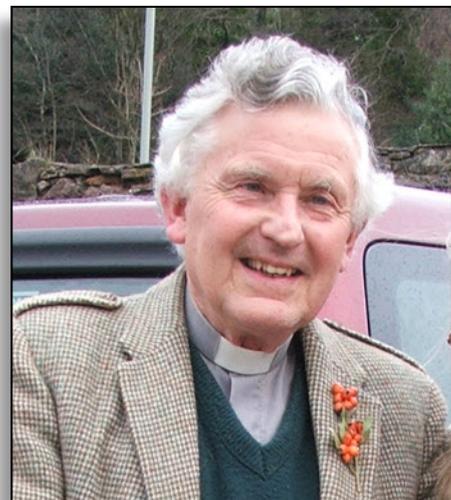


Rev. Canon Martyn Bateman

a tribute by *Christians Together*



Christians Together – in paper form from its ‘birth’ in 1998 and for 10 years following – was published as a quarterly printed news sheet for the Christian community in the Inverness area of the Scottish Highlands. In 2007 it transferred to the internet and, as its ‘geography’ had expanded since its inception, went ‘Highlands and Islands wide’.

But the ‘Genesis’ of the story lies in a phone call to me in 1995. The person on the other end of the line was a recently-retired Anglican clergyman who, if I am to give him his full title, was the **Rev. Canon Martyn Bateman**. I didn’t realise then but that call was going to set my course in quite a remarkable way.

As it transpired, the phone call was made to ask for my help in publicising a *Bible Comes to Life* exhibition to be held in Inverness Cathedral. In effect, it was a travelling ‘museum’ – belonging to *Christian Ministry to the Jews* (CMJ) – of Jewish and Israeli artefacts which illustrated life in the Holy Land in biblical times.

The exhibition ran during the course of a week, with costume dramas and talks supplementing the range of exhibits. It was a great hit with all who came – including organised visits by classes of local schoolchildren.

From that point our relationship with Martyn grew; and to include also his wife Jancis whom he had recently married following the early death of his first wife Jane.



■ The Rev Martyn Bateman tries out one of the exhibits on display at the Bible Comes to Life exhibition at St Andrew's Cathedral Inverness. The instrument he is playing is a Shofar, a ram's horn which was used to summon people to religious festivals. Photograph: James MacDonald

Inverness cathedral display is bringing the Bible to life



The Christians Together news-sheet came into being as a direct result of our subsequent discussions together, and its publication and circulation costs would never have been covered without the direct help from Martyn. In those early days he became, on request, a valued ‘Editorial adviser’.

As Martyn and Jancis lived at the other end of Loch Ness we didn’t see them every day or even every month, but the phone would ring regularly – with news, but often to invite us out for Sunday lunch with Jancis and himself if he was up in Inverness preaching on the day.

Often these lunch dates would include other friends of the couple, and it was always a very interesting and enjoyable few hours – meeting our good friends and theirs.

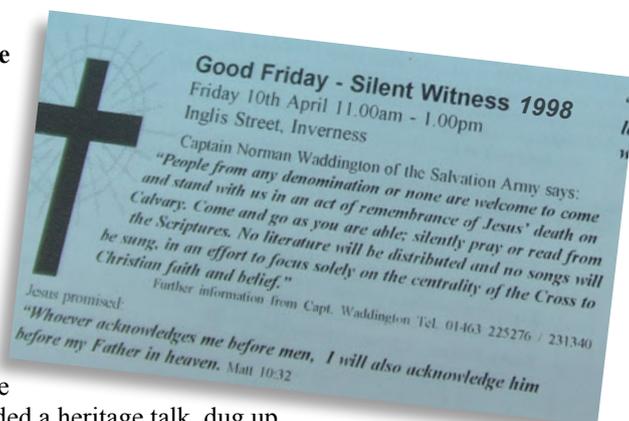
On these occasions he was always interested in our family news, and he never missed an opportunity to speak to those he met – a waitress or hotel receptionist – about the Lord.

At other times we would enjoy a lunch with them and others following a regular Wednesday mid-day prayer meeting which Martyn led in Inverness YMCA/CYC. It was on one of these occasions that through the couple’s great kindness we were provided with the means for Sheila and myself to visit our daughter in Japan. (The trip would otherwise never have happened; and on that day our thanks to God’s servants came in floods of tears.)

As I write, I have just published a notice for what is an annual event – **the Good Friday Silent Witness** – and this was the main front-page news back in the first edition of *Christians Together* in March of that year.

It was at this event last Easter, though we didn't know it then, that we were to see Martyn there for the last time.

Sharing lunch together, he and Jancis were in typically great form that day – with Martyn having just celebrated his 80th birthday. Although we had visited the couple in their home before, we spoke about visiting them again before the year was out. But it was not to be. **On 14 October of 2011 Martyn went to be with the Lord.** The week before he died he was dancing Scottish reels at a local ceilidh until midnight, attended a heritage talk, dug up tatties for the winter, built a new woodshed and cooked a post-church Sunday lunch for seven.



Lunch after preaching

During his life of 'official' ministry he served in England and Persia (modern-day Iran), with his main parish work in Suffolk and Devon, before retiring to his country home in the Whitebridge area just north of Fort Augustus. During his 20 years in the north he was an active and involved supporter of the **Scottish Bible Society** and the **Inverness YMCA** while remaining a keen supporter of CMJ with a heart for the Jewish people and the land of Israel.

At the foot of Loch Ness was very much part of the fabric of the Whitebridge community – always welcoming newcomers, and frequently dropping in on folk with produce from his garden; often as not, having a wee prayer around the kitchen table. He opened his house and cottages to visitors from near and far – and loved the frequent visits from his immediate family and cousins. His many guests relished his warm and simple hospitality with a listening ear and wise words.

Martyn served local community council for many years and was a trustee of the Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust. He chaired the Boleskin Bulletin team and was a Director of the Wade Bridge Trust. He was active to the last in preaching in his own locality and further afield; participating also in prayer services for healing.

As a testimony to the man and his ministry, the local church and church hall in Fort Augustus was full to overflowing at his funeral service in October last year. Shortly afterwards Sheila and I arranged with Jancis to come and visit her; and take her out for lunch and for a run when the weather got better. And so it was on a March day of beautiful sunshine and unseasonably-high temperatures that we met with her in her comfy surroundings on the south shore of Loch Ness and went on to enjoy a most pleasurable lunch beside the canal locks in Fort Augustus. It was a beautiful day in every respect. Such a joy to be with Jancis for that time.



Jancis in her favourite chair

Martyn was a faithful servant of the living God and a true father in the Lord. We miss him greatly and look forward to that day when we will meet with him again.

Colin Wilson

Editor: *Christians Together*



Martyn Henry Bateman (1931 - 2011) was born and grew up in Beccles on the Suffolk/ Norfolk border where his father ran a school. The family moved to Devon at the outbreak of the Second World War. After early education at Mount House, Tavistock, he attended Felsted School in Essex and then did his stint of National Service before going up to Jesus College, Cambridge to read Engineering with a view to a career in Hydro-electric power generation. A year into his course he felt called to be a Christian minister and switched his degree to theology.

In July 1955 he married Jane Campbell, whose mother's family were from Knockie (near Whitebridge). Following a honeymoon in the north of Scotland, Martyn returned South to complete his theological training at Clifton College, Bristol. His first curacy was at Parkstone in Dorset, and then – with two children - he spent two years in Iran as Anglican chaplain to the oil industry. The family returned to Britain in 1962 with a third child and started a twenty year stint of vibrant rural parish ministry in Suffolk during which he was made a Canon in recognition of his work with youngsters in the region. In 1984 he moved back to Devon as team vicar for four villages on the edge of Dartmoor, under the patronage of the Prince of Wales as part of the Duchy of Cornwall. Aged 60 Martyn stepped down from paid parish work and returned to the family home at Ardochy with Jane. Jane died suddenly and unexpectedly in 1993. Martyn remarried a family friend and cousin, Jancis, in 1994; and another 20 years of ministry ensued in the Highlands.



Martyn, Jane and family in Persia (Iran)