

Shelagh Ranger Record of Remembrance 9th December 1930- 18th February 2019

Shelagh Campbell Clarke was born in Cheshire and met Terence Ranger at St Antony's College, Oxford. She was Secretary to the Bursar when he was working for a PhD at that college. Terry described her thus: "Highly intelligent, Shelagh was a victim of the prevailing gender attitudes. Her brother was at Magdalen College (Oxford). Her father had been killed in World War II. Shelagh felt she had to contribute to the family finances, so she did not go to university but trained as a shorthand typist." Shelagh finally took her degree 20 years later, in Politics and Religious Studies, at Manchester University. But the young Shelagh had travelled much more than her future husband. She was more internationalist than Terry, spoke good French and some German. Terry and Shelagh were married in 1953.

In 1956 Terry was appointed to a lectureship at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Harare (then called Salisbury). Terry wrote at the end of his career that he arrived in what was then Southern Rhodesia "deeply ignorant" about the country. What became Southern Rhodesia had till 1893 been ruled by Africans: but that year a British colony was violently established and confirmed with the suppression of a massive black people's uprising in 1896-7. Britain retained powers to veto white Rhodesians' laws, but never used these powers. Southern Rhodesian Africans had, like almost all black inhabitants of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, bitterly resisted the imposition in 1953 of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

The Rangers, Terry wrote later, went to Rhodesia as political innocents and anti-racists. Against fierce African opposition, Salisbury had recently become the most segregated city in Southern Africa: Terry was told that the College was a beacon of hope between the white nationalism of South Africa and the black nationalism of East Africa. He soon found, however, that a worse place to site the Federal University could hardly be imagined. "Within a remarkably short time," wrote Terry's colleague the late Professor John McCracken, "the Rangers moved from principled protest against racial discrimination into active involvement in the nationalist movement as members of the National Democratic Party, and when it was banned, of the Zimbabwe African People's Union." Shelagh had delighted African nationalists when she offered to do typing for the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress (revived in August 1957).

In May 1958, Terry and Shelagh were subpoenaed because they had attended meetings of SRANC. The press had a field day, wrote Terry, reporting that the Rangers had been questioned about subversive (even "communist") activities. "Panic ensued," he wrote. "The mere fact that we had been at a (legal) Congress meeting was enough to terrify our associates and employers." As the Rangers prepared to be questioned, Shelagh "vowed to adopt an obstructionist policy of bovine imbecility. She gave the court absolutely nothing." By early 1959, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was threatened with breakup, and on 29th January the Prime Minister, Sir Edgar Whitehead, declared a state of Emergency. During that night, two thousand Africans were arrested throughout the three territories of the Federation. The only white man arrested was Guy Clutton-Brock of St Faith's Farm. He and his wife Molly were staying at the resthouse in the Matobo Mountains on their way south. The Tswana leader Tshekedi Khama had asked Guy to start a similar project to St Faith's in Bechuanaland.¹

As a result of Guy's arrest, Shelagh had a great deal of work in sitting with Molly Clutton-Brock, who suffered a nervous breakdown, and drove her to Salisbury prison to see Guy. Shelagh also organised car trips to Bulawayo to take the wives of detainees imprisoned

¹ Bechuanaland became independent as Botswana in 1966.

there to see their husbands. From then on, Shelagh's reputation grew. "I am widely known among Africans as Mr Shelagh Ranger," Terry wrote to his parents. After October 1959, Shelagh and Gervase Muchada of the Christian Action Group took over most of the welfare work to support detainees. From then onwards, Shelagh was absorbed in welfare work. Later, back in Oxford, Terry found files of Native Commissioners full of his wife's letters and the angry responses of the officials. "Do I have to pay attention to this dreadful woman?" asked the Native Commissioner, Sipolilo. But he had to and he did.

In March 1959 Terry and a colleague decided to establish a journal, "Dissent", to allow views critical of the Emergency to be expressed. This publication reached African readers. Shelagh typed the stencils and usually ran them off. On 1st January 1960, a new nationalist party, the National Democratic Party, was formed. In April, Terry wrote to his parents: "Shelagh with her usual courage has joined the NDP openly and is now more notorious than I am." Terry wrote a little later that "Shelagh had been exhausting herself more over the detainees, the NDP, etc than is good for her. The trouble is that she has found a cause and there is really no holding her. By her NDP joining she has neatly trumped me with the Africans and I am now very much Mr Shelagh Ranger... She even made a speech the other day after which Africans dubbed her 'Mrs Danger'. " In July, Shelagh, together with Terry's colleague John Reed, took wives and children to visit men who had been restricted to Lupane, far to the north of Bulawayo and a huge distance from Salisbury. Shelagh listened to the restrictees' complaints and, in Bulawayo, talked to the nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo's brother, Stephen, about establishing a committee for the Lupane restrictees. These visits, Terry noted, built important friendships. Meanwhile in Salisbury, pressure had been building on the NDP. In the early hours of 19 July 1960, Shelagh and Terry were raided by the CID and police. The warrant was made out in Shelagh's name. That night, Shelagh and Terry went to an NDP protest meeting. A general strike was declared. Police and white reservists armed with tear gas kept the huge crowd at bay. "Shelagh came into her own," wrote Terry of the NDP period in August 1960. "She took notes of the proceedings of the trials of Michael Mawema and Sketchley Samkange, leading figures in the NDP."

In 1961 Terry became involved in Citizens against the Colour Bar² while Shelagh became for a time the secretary of the Salisbury City NDP Branch. This functioned at the heart of the white city of Salisbury. She also became chair of the Branch's Council of Women. Quaker Margaret Moore, married to Stanley Moore, a bank worker who had been jailed in Britain as a Conscientious Objector during World War 2, was an active colleague in the NDP. But at the end of 1961, the NDP was banned and shortly afterwards, the Zimbabwe African People's Union was founded. Terry was elected Vice-Chair of Harare District Executive, but ZAPU was also banned. In mid- 1962, Shelagh professed Catholicism. Terry remained an Anglican and, in later life, attended services at Christ Church, Oxford with Geoffrey Best, husband of our Friend Marigold Best.

In early 1963, Terence Ranger was issued with a deportation notice: he had to leave the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland within two weeks. As he and Shelagh left Salisbury, with support from a large friendly crowd, the choir of ZAPU's Women's League sang, "(Joshua) Nkomo "(ZAPU's leader)" is a bull, Ranger is a bull, Shelagh is a militant woman." (Zimbabwe is a top range country for raising cattle).

² Salisbury Council rigorously segregated swimming pools, for example. Hotels and cinemas, for instance, were also segregated.

The Rangers returned to the UK for a brief trip, when I met Terry for the first time. He came to my student room at 7 Warnborough Road, Oxford, to tell the committee of the Joint Action Committee for Action against Racial Intolerance about the situation in Central Africa. Shortly afterwards, Terry and Shelagh flew to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where he became chair of the University History Department. The Ranger house became a refuge for Zimbabweans. In the six years he worked there, Terry and Shelagh adopted three daughters: Franny, from the UK, Margaret, a Tanzanian and Jane, a Kenyan.³

Terry's next career move, in 1969, was to the University of California in the USA. He wrote: "My wife accompanied me very reluctantly. California represented everything she disapproved of. We had to go, she thought, in a missionary spirit, and it was appropriate that we ended up living in a little house in the central mission enclave of Pacific Palisades, Haverford Avenue, named for the pioneer Quaker missionary to western Kenya. "It **was** a little house and one of Shelagh's prosperous Catholic friends, on visiting it, told her sincerely, 'I do so much admire your witness to poverty.' But after a year or two, Shelagh "examined me "(Terry) "closely and said accusingly, 'You are **enjoying** this'. And I did enjoy UCLA."

In 1974, the Rangers moved to the University of Manchester in the UK where he became Professor of Modern History, taking a 50% salary cut. "My children," he wrote in 2009, "still think of California as a Garden of Eden from which their parents were expelled for some very original sin."

In 1980, when Zimbabwe achieved independence, Terry returned for a visit. In 1981 Terence Ranger and other committed people founded the Britain Zimbabwe Society to promote friendship between the peoples of Britain and Zimbabwe. Shelagh was a steadfast member till her death.

In 1988 Terry was appointed to the chair of Race Relations at Oxford University: he and Shelagh moved to Charlbury in Oxfordshire. For several years the Rangers provided shelter and protection to Jeremy and Joan Brickhill and their children, who were effectively refugees from Harare. In 1987 Jeremy and Joan Brickhill had been injured, Jeremy very seriously, in an assassination attempt. This was perpetrated by an apartheid hit squad because of the Brickhills' activities for democratic Zimbabwe and in supporting the African National Congress's struggle for freedom in South Africa.

The Rangers arranged for the Brickhills to live next door to them in Charlbury while they recovered from their injuries and until it was safe for them to return to Harare in 1991. Jeremy recalled that the Rangers were very kind and generous in enabling the Brickhill family to move to Charlbury from the workers' tenement block in Tottenham which Labour MP Bernie Grant had kindly initially arranged. The Brickhills recall that Charlbury was a much safer and more healing environment than Tottenham.

The late Professor John McCracken wrote that "in terms of tangible results, it was Shelagh who achieved" more than Terry "in her relentless campaigns against small-minded officialdom in Rhodesia and later in Britain, aimed at ensuring that detainees, asylum seekers and their families received the rights that were due to them."

For Shelagh and Terry continued their committed civil society work in Oxford. Shelagh served on the executive committee of the Catholic Association for Racial Justice. Shelagh with Terry, Nigel Gilson and Beryl Knotts from the United Reformed Church in Summertown in that city became founding members of Asylum Welcome.

³ Jane died in 2011.

In 1991, two community workers had started Refugees in Oxford. The aim was to ensure that refugee children and their families received education, healthcare and support, and to inform teachers and social workers about the needs of such families. In 1993, the first immigration detainees were transferred to Campsfield House in Kidlington, near Oxford. Janet Makepeace explained⁴ that "Some of us who lived nearby knew the Chaplain at Campsfield. He spread the word about possibly visiting the detainees. Shelagh Ranger and Elisabeth Johnson set up the visiting service. In the beginning, we would hear the name of a person who had been taken to Campsfield House and so we would go and see them there. No booking was necessary: we just had to wait in the queue and ask to see the detainee. Then when we visited them they would give the names of their friends (fellow detainees) who would also like a visit - so it was a word of mouth service."

Shelagh served as a trustee of the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership in Birmingham.

Sarah Lasenby writes: "I met Shelagh when I joined her Black and White Christian Partnership Group. I was a representative from the Oxford Quaker Meeting. Shelagh was very keen on this and usually brought additional people from different countries to the welcoming meetings. Most of us had strong connections with Africa and wanted to get black and white churches to meet and have joint services. We were not successful and neither was the national part of B&WCP in Selly Oak as sadly the white churches were really not interested. This led the people in the group, especially Nigel Gilson with Shelagh, to set up Asylum Welcome, which was established as a registered charity in 1996 and is still going strong today. Terry Ranger and Uwe Kitzinger became patrons."

In 1997 Terry retired from his Oxford Professorship and the Rangers returned to Zimbabwe for several years. Here Shelagh researched her book, "The word of wisdom and the creation of animals in Africa" which was published by James Clarke and Co, Cambridge, in 2007. A copy is in Oxford Friends Meeting House library.

From Zimbabwe, the Rangers returned to Oxford, having bought a flat at 100 Woodstock Road. But, as Sarah Lasenby commented, Shelagh was very unlucky with her health. She went into hospital for a hip operation, but while in hospital contracted the dread c.difficile, from which she suffered for over a year.

The late Professor John McCracken commented that the Rangers' commitment to Zimbabwe was probably expressed most effectively through the constant support over decades that Shelagh and Terry gave to Zimbabwean friends and their relations. Jason Brickhill, son of Jeremy and Joan, and himself a human rights lawyer, attended Shelagh's funeral. He recalled how Shelagh lived next door and looked after him and his sister as children in Charlbury, teaching him Scrabble, and supporting the Brickhill family after the assassination attempt on his parents.

Another grateful friend was Oswald Chinyamakobvu, who wrote when Shelagh died: "I was a student in Manchester in the '80's and got to know the Rangers well. For about a year I actually rented a room in their house and they treated me like their own child. I recently learnt with great sorrow of the passing on of Shelagh Ranger- a mother to me once really."

⁴ In a report from Asylum Welcome, passed to the collator

Shelagh could be very morally challenging. I remember her more than once asking me why I did not share my two-person flat with an asylum seeker. And in later years, when I sometimes cooked Christmas lunch for her and Terry, she said “It’s not people like us who need Christmas lunches”. Shelagh became a Quaker in November 2004.

Mena Remedios writes:

“I came to know Shelagh and her husband Terry in the early 1990s when my husband Clive and I moved to Oxford. We had interests in common – in particular social justice and the plight of refugees. Shelagh and Terry were part of the Oxford Black and White Christian Partnership and they went on to found Asylum Welcome in order to help provide support for the growing number of refugees and asylum seekers in Oxford, many from the African continent – a place close to the hearts of the Rangers. We were able to offer hospitality to some of these asylum seekers at St Francis House – the Oxford Catholic Worker. This bonded our relationship. Shelagh had a generous heart and her home in the Woodstock Road was a place of welcome to people of many nationalities. She and Terry also initiated the Ranger Education Fund which has helped many refugees and asylum seekers who wanted to further their learning.

“Shelagh's faith was important to her. She joined the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe but later was drawn to the Quakers. Shelagh's health began to fail but her commitment to social justice remained strong. My fondest memory of Shelagh was from about ten years ago outside the Army Recruitment Office in St Giles, not far from the Oxford Quaker Meeting House. We were both taking part in a protest against the arms trade. Shelagh was there in her mobility scooter holding a placard with a slogan against the money spent on war. She did not let her infirmity get in the way of her peacemaking. Shelagh Ranger, may you rest in peace.”

From early 2006, Shelagh’s health was poor and she suffered memory loss. But with constant care she was able to remain in her own home till a few days before she died in the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford. Terry had died in 2015. On my last visit Shelagh was singing with her carer, in fluent chiShona (the language of Eastern Zimbabwe) the wonderful Southern African freedom song “God bless Africa”.

Collator: Marieke Faber Clarke. (NB. No relation of Shelagh!)

Judith Todd in Zimbabwe, Sally Roschnik (daughter of Guy and Molly Clutton-Brock) in Switzerland, Margaret Ling in London, and members of Oxford Meeting. Jason and Jeremy Brickhill also most kindly contributed to this Record.

Some useful sources: “Writing Revolt, an engagement with African nationalism” by Terence Ranger (James Currey, 2013) . Other books by Terence Ranger add to one’s knowledge of Central Africa.

“Lozikeyi Dlodlo, queen of the Ndebele: ‘A very dangerous and intriguing woman,’” by Marieke Clarke and Pathisa Nyathi (Amagugu Publishers, Bulawayo, 2010). On the queen who co-ordinated the 1896 Revolt against the white settlers in Matabeleland. She also kept alive the identity of the amaNdebele people after Conquest.

“Our history” the history of Asylum Welcome, Oxford. No date. Provided by Asylum Welcome, Oxford.