

This article contains extracts of the diary of Mrs Hodgson in relation to her wedding and preparations for missionary work.

My mother writes under the name Phoebe -a servant of the Lord-

“When the time came for my fiancé to leave college he still had two years probation to do but he was asked if he would go as a Missionary to Nigeria in the place of Rev Christopher Finlay, whose wife was too ill to return to Nigeria. I had always felt drawn to being a Missionary and so had George and we knew that if God was calling us to this work we must go. The problem was we did not want to be parted and there would be another two years wait before we could marry. I wanted to be married in this country and by my Father.”

“The Missionary Society finally gave us permission and agreed to us being married before we went. The only problem was that we had to go almost immediately and we had a great rush to get everything ready in time to get married within the time scale the Missionary Society gave us.”

“Fortunately I had very good relatives who lived in London and my Aunt Alice was very kind and let me stay with the family at week-ends so that I could arrange the wedding, and get my wedding outfit and all the clothes I would need for a stay of two years in Africa. She, and Auntie Gladys, went with me to do my shopping and we managed very well. I got my wedding dress and trousseau from Bourne and Hollingsworth. I wanted something extra special that would do, not only for my wedding, but something that I could wear for more formal dinners on the boat.”

“For our other needs we were fortunate in that the Missionary Committee had appointed Allison and Co as their agents and we were able to get all that we needed from them. We had to buy sufficient food for a year, mostly tinned food, as fresh food would not be readily available. Fortunately too I had access to other Missionaries lists as well.”

“It was arranged that my Father should marry us helped by four other ministers, three Primitive Methodist and one Presbyterian. My Uncle Chris, who was also a Local Preacher, was to give me away, and my cousin George Busbridge, then organist at Liskeard Methodist Church (a Wesleyan Chapel!) was to play the organ. My one bridesmaid was to be my friend Winnie Culley and Rev: Will Rose was to be the best man.”

“The ladies of the church catered for the reception in the schoolroom and made it very friendly and cosy.”

“So, on Easter Tuesday April 21st 1925 we were married at Prospect Place Primitive Methodist Chapel Swindon. The ceremony had aroused a great deal of interest in the town and the church was full of interested spectators.”

“We did not have a honeymoon, but had two days in Portsmouth and then had to return to Swindon for a farewell service arranged by the Methodist church, at which the ladies of the Missionary Auxiliary (as it was called in those days) presented me with a Bible which I have to this day. We boarded the boat the next day. Members of both families were at the dockside to see us board the ship which would take nearly 5 weeks to reach our destination.”

The wedding dress went with them and after two years came home. After the furlough my father returned to Nigeria for a further 2 years on his own (that is another story) and the dress was left with my mother in Wednesfield. When my father came back it travelled with them to ten circuits. Whenever we moved I remember it being put, very carefully, on the top shelf of a wardrobe. Now it has found its final home at Englesea Brook.

Janet Field