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They were momentous days in the British Empire, the slave trade had been abolished but Dorothy would have been about 18 years old when slavery itself would be. Dorothy was born in the darkest days of the war just 210 years ago in 1814 with just one year to go before the decisive battle of Waterloo. This is where the story could start, for Dorothy was Maisie's grandmother's grandmother. Do you see how close we were, knowing Maisie, to the French revolution? **You will find a little more of the story in the remembrance book downstairs, which please sign before you leave.**

Thank you all for coming today. We appreciate the support and love you have shown. Thank you also to those who are on-line. We are sorry that we are not able to be with you, and you with us. Thank you to Ernest Lerner the funeral directors.

If I switch between Maisie, my mother and she apparently at random, I apologise. It is not easy to speak of my mother as just Maisie, but by that name she would have been known to most of you.

Birth and provenance

Maisie was born over one hundred years after the first mentioned Dorothy when the British Empire was at its peak under George V but in the years of recovery after the First World War. She was to live as a subject of a further four monarchs: [GV,] EVIII, GVI, EII and CIII. She was the third of seven children to be born to Winifred, whose name she took, and Arthur Spenceley. They lived in North Ormesby in the North Riding of Yorkshire. North Ormesby then was a prosperous working class community built upon the wealth of the steelworks of that area. Unbeknown to the two year old Maisie, her future husband arrived in North Ormesby at that time, his parents having been attracted from Jarrow by the work available in those very works.

Early life

Maisie was distracted by many other things. Her schoolwork, and as she grew the shared responsibilities with her mother for her younger siblings, especially the two youngest boys, John and Val [both of whom *I hope* are watching the proceedings today].

During the 2nd WW the great evacuation of children came upon them and the five youngest were sent away with Maisie in the lead. They had little idea of what was about to happen. They should have been broken up into manageable bundles for the recipient families, but the boys had a different idea. The two younger sisters did not complain about being separated from big sister – perhaps they liked the thought of freedom from her bossiness. The two boys however when they saw they were being separated from Maisie refused to leave her. One of them raced off like lightening, leaving Maisie to chase and eventually catch him. After that they clung on like limpets to her. The hosts eventually relented and a home was found for them which would take three together. The time in the countryside was happy, but would not last long for the Spenceleys. Winifred their mother missed them too much. They were recalled to the town. The danger was not so great as in other parts of the country.

Work

After leaving school, she worked as a seamstress in a factory near her home in Middlesbrough, while her elder brothers went off the serve in the war effort. The factory produced clothing for the troops. Price's Tailors operated for many years, but its site is now occupied by a roundabout.

Marriage

She loved to dance, and the provision of a dance hall in the resplendent Middlesbrough Town Hall (a structure of the cathedral proportions beloved of the ironmasters) served the needs of the young people well. This of course was proper dancing, with well defined steps and movements. She danced well, and so did her future husband Bill. Later their two boys failed to emulate them. Bill was a steelworker, and as a consequence until quite late in the war was exempted from the conscription. He was eventually called up to spend time following the troops building, perhaps more accurately rebuilding, bridges as a mechanical engineer.

Maisie married Bill in the winter of 1947, and as many did then and would later, they went to Blackpool. Only later she would become an honorary Londoner, but then a few years later she came down to visit the Festival of Britain. There would be other visits to London after that but perhaps none as special as that first one was.

Mother

She was primarily a mother. John and Stuart arrived soon after that first trip to London. They kept her busy. Whilst they were at school there would be hurried trips across town to visit her mother and mother-in-law. During the holidays we joined her on those and experienced with her the horrors of the crowded municipal buses, braving the rain as we ran between two bus stops at the Town Hall to be back home in time for her to prepare the evening meal. They were enjoyable days for there would, so it seemed, always be cousins nearby whom we could assist in being nuisances.

In these school years two of her siblings took the opportunity to emigrate to Australia. Hazel, the middle sister, and John the penultimate boy. They built new lives in a new world on opposite sides of that continent.

Her own mother died fifty years ago in 1972 and soon after her children flew the nest. She then took up some training to work as a volunteer in the CAB for one or two days a week. She also had a secondary career as a coiffure which ran alongside everything else, and which she exercised for over 55 years, to the benefit of several of her relatives.

Moving away

After Bill, her husband, retired, and one of our cousins had removed to Louth in Lincolnshire, her elder brother Vin also moved there and persuaded Maisie and Bill to follow him. This they did and happily fell into their new environment. It provided new opportunities for use of their skills, and upon a second move, when the couple from North Ormesby moved near to the village of South Ormesby, Maisie and Bill turned a field into an area to rival the famed Eden Project in Cornwall. You may catch a glimpse of the garden in the slide show downstairs. See if you can distinguish their garden from Cornwall.

Widowhood

The time in Lincolnshire came to an end after the deaths of uncle Vin and some time later my father. Supported for a year or so after that by members

of the church in Louth and fellow villagers, she then sold up and returned about sixteen years ago to the town in which she had viewed the Festival of Britain nearly sixty years earlier. She settled in Putney near to us, making new friends. In her eighties she soon knew her way around South London far better than we did. She made a good friend of another Yorkshire lass, but from the East Riding, who introduced her to many things and many people. Her faith blossomed in these years, as she grew in her understanding of what the Lord had done for her. Margaret, from Yorkshire, who had lived just around the corner from here (Eglantine Road near East Hill Baptist Church), was greatly missed after her passing.

She outlived those ladies and friends of the earlier years in London – I found names of people of whom she spoke crossed out in her address book as they passed away – but continued to make new ones.

Diaries

There were many things that I had forgotten, though I knew them, before her death, but one thing stood out as searched for addresses. I came across diaries. They were not everyday diaries, but records of special unrepeatable events such as the visits to her family in Australia, and their visits to the UK. Pages of detail written out in long hand demonstrating her capacity to think thing through and condense the events of a day into a brief written out memory.

Amongst her possessions were scraps of paper too, some of which helped to put together this service today. How many times do you need to write down phone numbers? Lists were found in many places – as if she were saying to herself 'I hope I can still remember these numbers'. But there were also notes of the sermons she heard, and services she attended – the readings, the hymns, verses that meant something more to her. During her last days she said to me pass me the Bible I want to read what James, the Welshman, was talking about on Sunday. 2 Samuel 4-6 David's establishment as king of Israel. It reminded me that if she had not understood or followed what had been said on the Sunday, she would look it up again during the week to be clear about it. We often listened together to the Irishman John Lennox, an Oxford mathematician, not speaking about mathematics, but about current philosophies and the answers his faith has against them. She took it all in.

Memory

Having mentioned her memory, it did not appear to wane in its power. Perhaps it was because she kept it in practice. She would remind me of what was happening in the coming week. On our shopping trips, she would say have you got such-and-such? It had not been written down, but she had remembered that Chris had mentioned it in passing earlier that evening. Perhaps it was because she wrote all of those little notes, pressing her memory into action that she retained it.

Last year

Her strength kept her for 98 years. Only in the last year did she start to say that she could not manage some things. We took her to see her brother John in Australia with a thought that we might not bring her back. She even talked about that with the insurance companies as we tried to find insurance for her. She managed. The crew on the aircraft fêted her on the way over. When we arrived we had to use the wheelchair for her quite a lot, but she was still on her feet. She was very pleased to once more spend time with her brother, his family and her sister's family, all the time expecting – or knowing – it would be the last. Coming back to England, whilst she could no longer go out on her own, she would still potter around the supermarket with me holding onto the trolley most weeks. John, my brother, came over from Thailand at that time. Gradually though over the summer her strength declined, however it was not until probably November that she could no longer manage at all and then just waited in the car.

She needed much more support over the last year. Others rose up to help in these days. As well as her grandson, John, her niece, Marie, and grandchildren Louise and Paul, came down at various times to stay with and look after her whilst we were away. Whilst Kate would have been more involved, Maisie understood that her responsibilities for her almost three year old daughter made that somewhat difficult. Ashia and Peter being on the other side of the world also could not be involved.

Final days

Appointments with the doctor and at the hospitals increased somewhat in the autumn after she had noticed a lump in her neck, which was probably the cause of a neck pain that had been troubling her for many months. The tumour was no longer in hiding. She reached her 99th birthday. It was eventually diagnosed as a secondary. They did not find the primary. She would not have treatment for it, but would have refused any aggressive

treatment such as would have been offered to a younger person. This was the permission she needed to leave. There would be no more struggle for her. She had to encourage the medical professionals to speak plainly and not to try to be, as perhaps we would say, 'kind'. She would stay at home and not go into hospital or a home. The Royal Trinity Hospice were brought in and arranged all the care she required in the last three or so weeks. We thank them for all that they did. Whilst all that went on, Maisie waited to die. Instructions were given to Chris, and a number of matters were explained, including the christening gown of my brother, and those of her own mother.

After Christmas my brother's children came down to stay with her for a few days. On the day of her death, some of you will already have heard, Paul was about to go out for a walk with Rachel, his wife, when Louise who was at Maisie's bed-side cried out to them: *Don't go!* Or words to that effect. They were probably the last words she heard in this world. The voice of Jesus, which she had longed to hear, had called her: *Come unto me, and rest.* She listened to his voice and departed from us.

To close

When her husband died she said to me *You have had him for many years.* meaning *Be thankful.* After her death I came across a box by her bedside containing his watch, his dates and a note: *Weep not for me.* She had written it, probably on the day of his funeral. We thank God for keeping her, and for giving her to us for many more years than we might have expected.

I mentioned that we had found notes and lists: here in this small wallet a list of birthdays, and in this together with her Freedom Pass:

**I walked life's path with worry
Disturbed and quite unblest
Until I trusted Jesus
Now faith has given rest**