

26 years with the GBM radio team

Within the next nine months, the radio team will be losing one of its long serving members as Helen Cook retires. She's interviewed here for *Radio News*, by her son, Andrew, the youngest member of the team.

AC How long have you been associated with Grace Baptist Mission?

HC Roger and I were first accepted by the Strict Baptist Mission in 1967, as it was then, when we were living in Belgium. So, in August 2009 it will have been forty-four years.

AC What were you doing before becoming part of the GBM Radio Team?



Belfry in Mons, Belgium

HC We were working in Belgium with the church in Brussels doing a church planting project in the town of Mons in the south of Belgium. In 1981, I had a breakdown and the Mission brought us home to Abingdon.

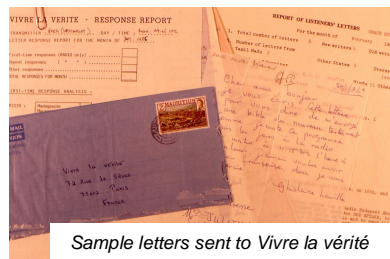
AC So when did you actually join the Radio Team?

HC About 1983 when my husband Roger started producing French radio programmes (*Vivre la Vérité – Live the truth*), it was to do secretarial work for those programmes.



AC What did that involve?

HC Typing scripts, in those days there weren't computers so every time the scripts were corrected, the whole script had to be typed again in full. It was also typing letters to listeners when they responded to the programmes. There was a lady in



Sample letters sent to *Vivre la vérité*

Paris who did the follow up to the programmes, but when people asked biblical or theological questions, Roger would dictate letters which I would type out. That sort of work, basically. Roger had also produced a correspondence course in eight parts, my job was to correct these as they were completed by each correspondent, and then send them the next instalment.



The *Vivre la vérité* follow up team

AC And what about sending programmes to transmitters?

HC Oh yes, copying cassettes for each transmitter which meant working with three reel to reel recording machines, having one with the main programme, then playing in the tail music at the right time and then the address tail at the right time. If you didn't keep an eye on the stop watch and lost count of time, you had to start all over again!

AC How many broadcasters were you working with at the time?

HC At the beginning it was just FEBA in the Seychelles, TWR in Swaziland and HCJB in Ecuador.

AC And then later?

HC As Roger got more involved in Radio training, many local radio stations were at the time also being started up by Christians in French-speaking Africa. This quickly mushroomed to more than twenty radio stations that I had to copy cassettes for, this could only be done in 'real time' which means the time it actually took to copy each individual programme for each and every station.

AC In the time that you've worked in the Radio Team, how has technology changed the type of work that you've done?

HC Oh dramatically. For a start, just having computer word processing and not having to type programme scripts over and over again was wonderful, especially when we produced booklets because text could just be copied and pasted from the scripts. They could then be edited into booklet format. As regards copying programmes for radio stations, that was just amazing because you could do all the editing on the computer. When Roger stopped producing programmes I could take out anything that referred to dates or booklet offers and even if the tail music ended abruptly, I could play around with it until it sounded correct. As for copying programmes, when radio stations began to take CDs we were able to purchase a CD fast copier,

make master CDs with five programmes on each disk. The first copier could do three CDs at a time which was really helpful.

AC When did Vivre la Vérité come to an end?

HC Production stopped in 2001 when Roger started to produce videos about the work of GBM as well going to Africa to run Radio Production training courses.

AC How has your role in the radio team changed since then?



Helen at the CD copier

HC When Roger actually ceased production I had to make a complete set of CDs ready for copying on the fast copier, taking out any references to dates or booklet offers etc which was a big job. Many radio stations were still receiving the programmes and hadn't yet received the whole series, so I had to continue copying and sending CDs to them. By that time we were sending programmes out to nearly forty radio stations. I also had to re-format the Vivre la Vérité booklets on the computer, then print and send them out. I was still correcting correspondence courses and supplying the 'follow-up team' with booklets. Once all that had been done, I started to work for Derek French who is responsible for Sound Words and Serving Today.

AC What type of work was this?

HC Much of the same really: copying programmes, when Derek completes a programme, tail music and a contact address have to be inserted when necessary, saving in mp3 for the website and for some stations which now take mp3, making CD masters for copying, typing up scripts when the programmes are finished. Also, converting booklets into different formats: for the website, sending as attachments to listeners and ready for printing. Then, of course, actually printing and collating the booklets so that can be despatched. I also correct the Sound Words correspondence courses on Derek's behalf and send the next booklet to the correspondent.

AC And what about dealing with transmitters, how does that work now?

HC The missionary transmitters like FEBA and TWR are more complicated because they are very structured and each has their own requirement, they also take programmes with addresses so they have to be prepared individually, but all the other radio stations receive the programmes without addresses, that's quite straightforward. I can copy each CD with its five programmes keeping track of when I send programmes and in what order.

AC But with the bigger transmitters, you're not sending that on CD to them, are you?

HC No I send those via the internet to an FTP site at each station, FEBA in Bangalore, India, TWR-Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa and TWR-UK in the U.K.

AC So would you say that radio work is always exciting?

HC It is – I especially remember when I was dealing more closely with the listeners, preparing programmes months in advance of the time that they are aired. Then much later, you get a listener who writes and says that they were going through a particular problem and that they were searching for God; they didn't know he existed and then they happened to hear one of our programmes being played on a small station in the Congo, Haiti, Burkina Faso, Mali or the Cameroon, their questions were answered and they came to know the Lord. It's just amazing how the Lord will use such a media. Constantly, with Sound Words and Serving Today, you have that sort of thing happening where the programme answers a specific need, whether it be a conversion or helping a Christian in their walk with the Lord. It is exciting, yes.

AC And encouraging too?

HC Very encouraging. Especially the way the booklets are used which is such a help to people in Africa and in Asia who have no resources, and often no means of obtaining Bible study booklets.

AC But you haven't just worked for the Radio Team as well, what else have you been doing?

HC I've been helping up in the main office because they've been fairly short staffed. This has meant producing the monthly Prayer Diary, doing some typing, printing and sending out mailings, preparing the Herald mailings, all sorts of odd bits and pieces really for the main office.

AC And so as you near retirement, have you got anything in mind to do after that?

HC Not at the moment, it would be nice to be more available to help our children with their children – to look after our grand children, to be more available which I've not been. But apart from that, I don't know. I might be needed for a day a week or something in the office. We shall see, it all depends on who replaces me.

AC As they keep saying, you're "irreplaceable"...

HC I don't know about that.

AC Thank you.

