

# PRECIOUS TO GOD

When I was a girl growing up in Ferguslie Park in Paisley in the 1950s, everyone was poor, but we lived in a real community. If there was a problem, the women sat and talked about it, sharing their cares and their worries. Sometimes, they just sat on their doorsteps, still wearing their aprons and talked and talked. Maybe they looked as though they were wasting their time, but they weren't. Apart from anything else, they needed to sit down for a rest. Bringing up a family was hard work. Women did the washing bent over scrubbing boards, rubbing the clothes up and down the hard ridges until their shoulders ached and their hands were sore.

Hair-washing was a weekly event, usually done on Fridays, and normally followed by the dreaded nit-comb. We sat down on a hard chair with a newspaper underneath it, and our hair was tugged through a fine metal comb to get rid of any lice



and nits. We weren't dirty; even the poshest Glasgow children would have had their hair nit-combed weekly sixty years ago.

Clothes were patched and darned until the patches and darns joined together, and what could be passed on from one child to another was passed on, and on, and on. Things were passed down in families and between neighbours too. Of course there were fall-outs, but neighbours were real neighbours, in good times and in bad. Fall-outs were short, sharp and mostly soon forgotten.

We were poor; we were all poor. In fact, our part of Paisley was one of the poorest places in Europe when I was growing up. But we didn't know we were poor and we were no worse than anyone else in the street, and were better off than some.

