

madeleine

Our daughter's disappearance
and the continuing search for her

All royalties
donated to
Madeleine's
Fund

KATE McCANN

Revised and updated for this edition

Madeleine

Still missing, still missed



Madeleine (aged 3½, January 2007)



Age-progressed image, age 9

Madeleine McCann was abducted in Praia da Luz, Portugal on Thursday, 3 May 2007. Kate and Gerry McCann established 'Madeleine's Fund: Leaving No Stone Unturned' in response to the many generous donations that started to flood in from the general public who were wanting to help the search for their daughter in some way. As there had been no police force in the world actively looking for Madeleine since July 2008, the fund enabled a small team of committed and experienced people to investigate Madeleine's disappearance. It continues to

support the search and also runs awareness campaigns in several countries, to ensure the public know that Madeleine is still missing, and to encourage them to remain vigilant.

Once Madeleine has been found, the fund will be used to assist searches for other missing children worldwide.

A note from Kate and Gerry McCann



‘The decision to publish this book has been very difficult, and taken with heavy hearts ... My reason for writing it is simple: to give an account of the truth ... Writing this memoir has entailed recording some very personal, intimate and emotional aspects of our lives. Sharing these with strangers does not come easily to me, but if I hadn’t done so I would not have felt the book gave as full a picture as it is possible for me to give. As with every action we have taken over the last five years, it ultimately boils down to whether what we are doing could help us to find Madeleine. When the answer to that question is yes, or even possibly, our family can cope with anything ...

Nothing is more important to us than finding our little girl.’

Kate McCann

'It is a sad fact that for over three and a half years not a single police force was looking for Madeleine. The launch of Kate's book with the support of the British public has reenergized the search - the Metropolitan police are now carrying out an investigative review of Madeleine's case following a request from the prime minister. This is a major step forward for us and Madeleine. Our daughter and whoever took her are out there. Someone knows where. We still need your help to find them.'

Gerry McCann, April 2012

www.findmadeleine.com

CONTENTS

Cover

Madeleine's Fund: Leaving No Stone Unturned

A note from Kate and Gerry McCann

Title Page

Dedication

Map

Foreword

1. Gerry
2. Madeleine
3. A Family of Five
4. The Holiday
5. Missing
6. Friday 4 May
7. Aftermath
8. The Birth of Our Campaign
9. No Stone Unturned
10. Meeting the PJ
11. The European Campaign
12. Morocco
13. The Tide Turns
14. Warning Sirens
15. One Hundred Days
16. Fantasy Land
17. *Arguidos*
18. The Fightback Begins
19. Action on Three Fronts
20. The Good, the Bad and the Mad
21. Closing the Case

22. Standing up for the Truth

23. Adapting to Our New Life

Epilogue

Picture Section

Key Sightings

Missing, Abducted and Exploited Children: Did You Know?

Acknowledgements

Picture Credits

Index

Copyright

MADELEINE

Our Daughter's Disappearance and the
Continuing Search for Her

Kate McCann

To our three beautiful children,
Madeleine, Sean and Amelie,
for enriching our lives and making us very
proud and happy parents.



FOREWORD

The decision to publish this book has been very difficult, and taken with heavy hearts. Before making up our minds to tell our story, my husband Gerry and I have had to give very careful consideration to a number of issues, not least its impact on the lives of our three children.

My reason for writing it is simple: to give an account of the truth. It has always been my intention to set down a complete record of what happened to our family, for our children, Madeleine, Sean and Amelie, so that, when they are ready, the facts will be there for them to read. I wanted to make sure they would always have access to a written chronicle of what really happened, no matter how many years have passed. They have already been through too much, and there will be further challenges ahead. Understanding our ordeal will give them the best chance of dealing with whatever life throws at them.

Choosing to share this personal account with the world has been much harder. Of course we want the truth to be told. For the past five years it has been excruciating to stand by as all kinds of tales have circulated about Madeleine's disappearance and about Gerry, me and our family. The press have published a mountain of stories, often without knowing, and perhaps caring, whether or not there was any substance to them, causing great distress to our family and, more importantly, hindering the search for Madeleine. Others have seized the opportunity to profit from our agony by writing books about our daughter,

several of them claiming to reveal 'what really happened'. Which is extraordinary, given that the only person who knows this is the person who abducted her on 3 May 2007. Many of these authors have no first-hand knowledge of the case and have based their theories on the half-truths, speculation and full-blown lies appearing in the media and on the internet.

Dealing with Madeleine's disappearance has been almost all-consuming, leaving us little time or strength to address these further crimes against our family. The appalling loss of our daughter has been too much to bear. Everything else, however huge, has had to take second place. There is only so much pain human beings can stand at once. It doesn't mean the injustices hurt any less. On the whole Gerry and I have managed to dig deep and remain focused, although the temptation to shout the truth from the rooftops has always been there. There have been many times when I have struggled to keep myself together and to understand how such injustices have been allowed to go unchallenged over and over again. I have had to keep saying to myself: I know the truth, we know the truth and God knows the truth. And one day, the truth will out.

Yet publishing the truth is fraught with risks for our family. It lays us open to more criticism, for a start. We have discovered that there are those in society who will always criticize. It doesn't matter who you are, what you do or why you are doing it. We don't know what motivates these people (although I have a few theories). In the early months, I found such censure incredibly upsetting and sometimes overwhelming. Our beloved daughter had been stolen from us, we were suffering terribly and I could not begin to comprehend why anyone would want to add to that pain. As time went on, I was able to shoulder it a little better, either by trying to understand why people did it (unfair as it was) or by simply trying to ignore it. These detractors didn't care about Madeleine, so why torture

myself by even listening to them? We've met many wise people along the way who have stressed the importance of not being derailed by those with their own agenda. It has proved to be good advice.

We realize that Madeleine's abduction has been hard for every parent to bear. It has brought home to everyone how vulnerable our children are and how fragile our lives. I have come to understand that some of these critics have been acting out of self-preservation. Holding us culpable in some way makes them feel their own children are safer. Who knows how we might have reacted if this had happened to another family and we had been the ones watching from the sidelines? Whatever lies at the root of these negative reactions, they have never stopped us doing what we think is best for Madeleine, and they won't do so now. As long as we are acting in her interests, we will withstand whatever slings and arrows we must face.

The sacrifice of our privacy has been another concern. Given the choice, we would prefer to try to sink back into the anonymity we took for granted before 3 May 2007. But our anonymity has gone now anyway, and we constantly have to weigh our desire for privacy against the need to keep our search for Madeleine in the public eye. I have wondered whether we haven't already given too much of ourselves and our family to the world. It is not something with which we are comfortable but often the considerations involved in such decisions seem irreconcilable. Writing this memoir has entailed recording some very personal, intimate and emotional aspects of our lives. Sharing these with strangers does not come easily to me, but if I hadn't done so I would not have felt the book gave as full a picture as it is possible for me to give. As with every action we have taken over the last five years, it ultimately boils down to whether what we are doing could help us to find Madeleine. When the answer to that question is yes, or even possibly, our family can cope with anything.

My biggest worry has undoubtedly been invading the privacy of our children. My account obviously exposes them, to a certain extent, as well as Gerry and myself. Later in their lives they may feel I have made public information they would prefer had been kept private. My instinct tells me, however, that it will be far more important to Sean and Amelie to know that their mum and dad have left no stone unturned in their efforts to find their big sister, and if that has included publishing a book, I'm sure they will understand and accept that necessity. And I have no doubt that Madeleine, too, would feel the same way.

What tipped the balance in our decision is the continuing need to fund the search for Madeleine. While she remains missing, the onus has been on us to keep looking for her, since after July 2008 there was no longer any law-enforcement agency *at all* actively looking into her disappearance. Investigations and campaigns cost money, which we have had to raise. It is still a struggle for me to see beyond tomorrow. Every day I wake up hoping this will be the day we find Madeleine. But having lived through five painful years without my dear daughter, I have reluctantly been forced to acknowledge that our quest could take weeks, months or yet more years, and the reality is we have to ensure we have adequate funding for the long term. Every penny we raise through the sales of this book will be spent on our search for Madeleine. Nothing is more important to us than finding our little girl.

We are also hopeful that this book may help the investigation in other ways. Perhaps it might prompt someone who has relevant information (maybe without even knowing it) to come forward and share it.

Somebody holds that key piece of the jigsaw. Indirectly, it may boost our search simply by enlightening those who, for whatever reason, believe Madeleine is no longer alive, or that there is nothing else that can be done to find her. We trust it will put to rest some of the myths that have

sprung up around her abduction. As will become clear in the following pages, while we still do not know what happened to Madeleine, there remains no evidence whatsoever to suggest that she has come to serious harm.

Although writing this book has been a time-consuming and, at times, heartbreaking experience, it has been made a little easier by the fact that I have kept a daily journal since towards the end of May 2007. This is something that would not have occurred to me. It was suggested by a man I met in the course of the innumerable meetings Gerry and I had that month with experts helping us to negotiate the emotional and practical minefield in which we found ourselves. I am for ever in his debt for this advice. Initially, it seemed a good way of keeping a record for Madeleine of what happened in the days she was away from us, but writing everything down turned out to be immensely therapeutic for me. It provided me with a release valve for my thoughts and extreme feelings. It was a place where I could shout what I was unable to shout from the rooftops. And it gave me a means of communicating with Madeleine.

My journal was also to prove invaluable when Gerry and I later felt it necessary to quash claims made about where we were and what we were doing at various times. Now it has been pressed into service once more as the basis for much of this book. It has enabled me to recall with clarity my innermost reflections at periods when my whole life was clouded by despair, and it is the reason why I have been able, four years down the line, to be so precise about the timings of particular events.

What follows is an intensely personal account, and I make no apology for that. Since 3 May 2007, there has undoubtedly been much going on behind the scenes we haven't known about and perhaps never will. I have been as open as possible about everyone involved in the story. As our investigation is still ongoing, and for legal reasons, some opinions or episodes cannot be shared until

Madeleine is found. I hope readers will understand this and not judge this record harshly because of it.

Thank you for buying and reading this book. In doing so you are supporting the search for our daughter.

1

GERRY

BEFORE 3 MAY 2007, I was Kate Healy, a GP married to a consultant cardiologist and the mother of three children. We were a perfectly ordinary family. Boring, even. Since settling down to bring up our longed-for babies, Gerry and I had become such strangers to the fast lane that we were often the butt of good-natured teasing from our friends. We'd give anything to have that boring life back now.

It began for me in Liverpool, where I was born in 1968 - on the first day of an eleven-week bus strike, according to my mum. My parents, too, were Liverpool born and bred, though my dad's family were originally from Ireland and my mum's mum from County Durham. My dad, Brian Healy, was a joiner, and served his time initially at Cammell Laird shipbuilders. My mum, Susan, trained as a teacher when I was small - which can't have been an easy juggling act - but eventually ended up working for the Civil Service. I was an only child, which prompts many people to assume, quite wrongly, that I must have grown up either spoiled or introverted, or both. I certainly never went without food, or clothes, or love, but I was not spoiled in material terms, and if I was a little shy, I don't remember ever being lonely.

Until I was nearly five, home was a cul-de-sac in Huyton, in the east of the city. It was also home to several big families, and my earliest memories are of fun-filled days playing outside with the neighbours' kids. After we left

Huyton I returned often to join my friends for games of Kerby and Kick the Can in the street. I'm sure the residents didn't enjoy that as much as we did, and if there is anyone out there who still remembers it less than fondly, I apologize. Better late than never.

A couple of years after my maternal grandmother died, still only in her fifties, we moved in with my grandad in Anfield. Now retired, he had been chief clerk for a firm importing nuts and dried fruits. He had excellent accounting skills but, like many men of his generation, he hadn't a clue about housework or cooking, and he was struggling without my nana. Yet I remember him always being very smartly turned out, appearing in shirt, tie and waistcoat for church every day. I went regularly, too. I was baptized and brought up in the Roman Catholic faith, I attended Catholic schools and went to Mass on Sundays. It was expected of me, it was what I was used to and I didn't question it.

So my Catholicism and my belief in God were part of the foundations of my life and I didn't question them, either, or at least, not to any great extent. There were momentary blips when I wrestled with life's big issues quietly in my mind - God, the universe, my own existence - but for the most part I was satisfied with what I'd come to believe and what I'd been told by the people who mattered to me. I might not have acknowledged my faith on a daily basis - and there were certainly times when church took a back seat, especially in my university days - but it was always there in the background, a source of comfort, refuge and support.

Perhaps because I didn't have brothers or sisters, I have always been very close to my cousins, and I had plenty of mates, many of whom remain dear to me to this day - one of them, Lynda, a neighbour in Huyton, has known me since I was born. Our mothers were friends then and still are. As well as being shy I was quite sensitive, which aren't

qualities to be envied, as I have discovered, but I loved company and wasn't one to sit around quietly on my own.

Michelle and Nicky have been my friends since primary school. I met Michelle on our first day at All Saints in Anfield, and we were inseparable from that moment onwards. At the time my parents were planning a family trip to Canada to visit Auntie Norah, my dad's sister, who had emigrated there, and I was very excited about it. Michelle must have been an immediate hit with me because I asked her on that first day at school if she'd like to come with us. Naturally, she said yes, and she was rather upset when she got home and her mum put paid to that idea. Michelle and I both passed the Eleven-Plus and went on together to Everton Valley (Notre Dame Collegiate School), followed the next year by her sister Lynne, who is ten months younger. They came from a big Catholic family and I spent every Tuesday evening at their house. They came to mine every Friday. In the holidays we were rarely apart, either. I even used to go to the Liverpool FC parties in their street (well, this was the 1970s), which, given that the Healys were dyed-in-the-wool Blues, speaks volumes for my love for Michelle.

Nicky was another All Saints pupil. Although our educational paths diverged when I went on to Everton Valley, she lived very close to me and we remained firm friends. If you asked my mum for her abiding memory of Nicky when we were kids, she'd instantly say, 'Pickled onion crisps.' We used to have midnight feasts when Nicky stayed overnight and leave the evidence under the bed. They didn't all involve pickled onion crisps, but apparently it is that unmistakable aroma that sticks in my mum's mind from those innocent days. Nicky has always been happy-go-lucky and full of energy. She was a great singer and dancer - she grew up to become a fitness instructor - and we spent many days together making up little dance routines to 1970s disco hits like Baccara's 'Yes Sir, I Can Boogie'. I'd

like to say we were good but I have a feeling only one of us was. She was a real tonic, Nic. She still is.

At school I was hardworking and conscientious and did well academically. I think the fact that I was sporty, too, and was always picked for the school team – I was netball captain for a while, and played rounders in the summer – was what saved me from being branded a swot. At that stage I didn't have a particular career in mind. My decision to opt for a degree in medicine emerged gradually from the choices I made after my O-levels. So it wasn't a lifelong vocation. In my early teens I wanted to become a haematologist and find a cure for leukaemia (God knows where that came from, or how I even had a clue what a haematologist was). I'd also toyed with the idea of training as a vet. When choosing my A-level subjects I wasn't sure initially whether to go with three sciences or maths, economics and French, and then, when looking ahead to university, whether to aim for medicine or engineering. At both crossroads I could have gone either way.

Although I wanted a fulfilling and worthwhile career I have never been overly ambitious, except in one respect: it was no secret to anyone who knew me that my main goal in life was to be a mother, and preferably a mother to many. I certainly wasn't one of those girls prepared to devote everything I had to climbing to the pinnacle of my profession if it meant sacrificing relationships and babies along the way. That might be viewed as lame by some, though not, I suspect, by most mothers. When I graduated from Dundee University in 1992 my entry in the university yearbook concluded with the line: 'Prognosis: mathematician and mother of six.' I achieved neither of these predictions, but I was extremely happy and proud to end up with the best prize imaginable: my three beautiful children.

Dundee University might seem a surprising choice for a Scouse girl with no particular Scottish connections. But

back then it was almost a rite of passage for students from English schools to choose a university a decent distance from home, and Dundee came into the equation when it was recommended to me by a good friend who knew somebody studying there. I went up to have a look at the university and was shown round by a very amiable bunch of fourth-year students. It was Guy Fawkes night, I remember, they were all going on to a party afterwards and they invited me to go along with them. There were so many student parties and other social events happening over the next few days that I wound up staying there rather longer than I'd planned. I had a ball and was made to feel really welcome.

So Dundee it was for me. The social scene lived up to its initial promise (partying is practically obligatory for medical students, after all) and I made lots of friends. I had a fantastic time at university and did my best to achieve a balance between work and play, not always successfully. I kept myself fit by playing for the university netball team. After qualifying in 1992, the next step was to complete two six-month stints as a junior house officer, one in general medicine and one in general surgery or orthopaedics (I opted for the latter). On finishing my first six-month post, at King's Cross Hospital in Dundee, I felt I was ready for a change of scene, and the bright lights of the big city - Glasgow - beckoned.

It was in Glasgow in 1993 that I remember first meeting Gerry McCann. He says that we actually met in 1992, when we were both interviewed for the same job (neither of us got it), but I have no recollection of that. Sorry, Ger. He had qualified in medicine in the same year as me from Glasgow University (Scotland has a much stronger tradition of students going to local universities). Although we didn't work together early in our careers we moved in the same circles and our paths often crossed in the course of the

many social events so beloved of junior doctors, including the infamous doctors' and nurses' 'pay night' extravaganza at Cleopatra's nightclub, affectionately known as Clatty Pats.

Gerry was good-looking, confident and outgoing. He also had a reputation as a bit of a lad. But as I got to know him I discovered a natural warmth and honesty, especially when he talked about his family, that revealed an endearing sweetness and vulnerability beneath the potentially intimidating façade.

We had quite a lot in common apart from our profession. We both came from ordinary, working-class Catholic families with Irish roots. Like me, Gerry had attended Catholic schools and gone to Mass on Sundays. Of course, when we first met we didn't know this about each other and it wouldn't have entered either of our heads to ask, though our names would have been a pretty strong clue if we'd thought about it. And Gerry's dad was a joiner, like mine. His mum, Eileen, had been born in Glasgow to Irish parents. She had been sent to live with her grandmother in Donegal shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, returning to Glasgow when it was over. Gerry's father, Johnny, was from St Johnston in County Donegal, just over the border with Northern Ireland.

Johnny had had a tough start in life. He'd lost his mother, his elder brother and his father before he was sixteen. After spending some time with an uncle in Sligo, Johnny found himself responsible for his father's pub and a small brother. Having been forced to give up his own education at a Jesuit college, Johnny wanted better for his own children and insisted that they all worked hard to gain the grades to get to university.

Unlike my own family, Gerry's was large and boisterous. Born in the same year as I was, 1968, he was the youngest of Johnny and Eileen's five children. He has an elder brother, also Johnny, and there are three sisters in between

them - Trisha, Jackie and Phil. From Gerry's stories it sounds as if it was a fun, loud and colourful household, quite mad at times. It must have been hard, too: seven people living in a one-bedroom place in a Glasgow tenement - and that was without the occasional 'lodger' with nowhere else to go who'd be offered a berth on the floor. Johnny senior was away working for long periods, and Eileen also worked intermittently, as a shop assistant and later as a cleaner, so 'wee Gerry' was often entrusted to the care of his elder siblings. But life in a tenement full of Catholic families and hordes of other kids had more advantages than disadvantages. Everyone was in the same boat, so to the McCann children and those of their neighbours, this was perfectly normal, and nobody felt deprived.

Like me, Gerry did well academically in school. By the time he came along, the family work ethic was well established, his goals had been set for him and he followed in the high-achieving footsteps of his brother and sisters, competing with them and always determined to do even better. 'Shy' and 'Gerry' are words that would never occur in the same sentence. All the McCann children are very sociable and self-assured - and McCann confidence is of the kind that would make you a fortune if you could bottle it and sell it. My dad often cheekily remarks that they were born with silver microphones in their mouths.

Gerry was good at sport, too, and being Gerry he was hugely competitive. Middle-distance running was his forte and at seventeen he was the fastest in Scotland in his age group over 800 metres. At Glasgow University he ran with the Hares and Hounds club, whose team strip was a hideous bright yellow. Fine for sports kit, but he was so attached to his running shirt that he insisted on wearing it out socially as well. You could see him coming from a mile away.

To me, the contrasting strands of Gerry's personality – the confidence and ebullience interwoven with that honesty and openness – combined to produce a very engaging and attractive man. He was a lot of fun on one hand and kind, serious and loving on the other. And yet I kept my distance and tried to play it cool. It was his jack-the-lad image that held me back, I suppose. I was hesitant to plunge into a relationship in which I might end up getting hurt and I guess there was an element of pride to it, too. I didn't want to be just one of a succession of girlfriends. It all seems a bit silly now, after Gerry's wonderful qualities have been confirmed to me so many times over the years. I'm not suggesting that his reputation as a ladies' man was completely without foundation – it wasn't – but there is no doubt that it was unfairly exaggerated, as these things often are, and that I paid too much attention to gossip. And believe me, I know now how damaging that can be. As things turned out, it took both of us moving to the other side of the world to finally bring us together as a couple.

I was keen to travel, and I knew if that was going to be anything more than a pipe dream I needed to do it sooner rather than later. The further my career progressed, the more committed I was likely to become at work and the more difficult it would be to break away. After completing my 'house jobs' (as they were known then – basically a doctor's first year post-qualification), I'd found myself embarking on a career in obstetrics and gynaecology. While that hadn't been my intention – I'd planned simply to gain the experience I needed for general practice – I really enjoyed O&G. Looking back, I have to admit that the departmental social scene was great, too, and this might well have added to its appeal. But it was an incredibly busy and competitive area, with many apparently dissatisfied and overworked doctors, mostly women, stuck on middle grades, and I wasn't completely sure it was for me.

Early in 1995, during an oncology posting I'd taken up to enhance my O&G training, I started to apply for jobs in Australia via an organized scheme. I also sent one letter on spec to a hospital in New Zealand at the suggestion of a Kiwi colleague. I was expecting a formal response by post in due course, so I was somewhat taken aback when I was called to the phone one day at work and found myself being offered a job by a neo-natal consultant in Auckland. I said yes.

While I'd been making these applications, at the back of my mind there was always the lurking regret that if I went away, the chances were I'd lose touch with Gerry. We hadn't talked about our respective plans, and what I didn't know was that he, too, was seeking to work abroad, in either the US or New Zealand. Later, the unfair, if not entirely serious, story doing the rounds of the Glasgow hospitals grapevine had it that as soon as Gerry found out I was going to Auckland, he decided to chase me across the world and immediately started applying for jobs himself in the Land of the Long White Cloud. Flattering though this version of events may be from my point of view, the truth was that he was already waiting to hear back from several hospitals in both New Zealand and America. What I would like to think, however, is that the news that I would be in Auckland made the decision between the two countries a bit easier for him!

I was the first to leave, in July 1995, and I arrived in New Zealand not knowing a soul. On my first day in my new job a friend of a friend with whom I'd been put in touch rang me to see how I'd got on and asked casually, 'Want to come for a run tonight?' in the way that at home we'd say, 'Fancy a beer after work?' Although I was sporty, running was not part of my repertoire - that was Gerry's province. But as this guy was the only person I knew in Auckland, I agreed.

That evening I found myself squelching and puffing across a muddy field. Every step involved trying to yank your foot out of the clinging mire. My new Kiwi mate pointed to a hill up ahead. 'One Tree Hill?' he suggested. I nodded confidently. All the way up he was making conversation, asking questions to which I barely had the breath to give one-word answers. Honest to God, I thought I was going to die. When, mercifully, we reached the summit he stretched out his arm to show me the view spread out beneath and around us. From this 182-metre volcanic peak, a famous Auckland landmark, you can see the whole city. 'Look at that!' he enthused. 'And look at those amazing clouds!' All I could think was, sod the clouds - I'm going to be sick.

But I wasn't about to be beaten by One Tree Hill. The next evening, I went out to do the run on my own and I did it again and again until I'd conquered it. That's me. I might not be the most ambitious woman in the world, but what I do have, in abundance, is determination and doggedness. After that I became a bit of a convert and, as well as playing mixed netball in New Zealand, I began to run regularly. Given Gerry's devotion to the sport, it was probably just as well I enjoyed it too.

I loved my job in the neo-natal unit, and I loved working with babies, but it was something of a baptism of fire. I was classed as a registrar even though I had no neo-natal experience and had junior doctors working under me who did. I was going to be putting big, fancy lines into tiny, twenty-four-week-old babies on my own. 'Just give us a ring and we'll come in for the first few, then you'll be fine,' the consultant said. And I was. I just needed to get used to the laid-back Kiwi way of doing things. Once I had, I found New Zealanders to be lovely, capable, easygoing people who worked to live rather than the other way round.

Gerry arrived in the country two months after I did but he wasn't exactly round the corner. His post, in general

medicine and cardiology, was in Napier - a flight or over five hours by road from Auckland. But in spite of the distances involved we saw as much of one another as we could. Away from home, and from everyone else we knew, we focused on each other at last and our relationship immediately moved up a notch to the romantic level. In some ways the fact that we'd been friendly for over two years made that transition easier. We already knew quite a lot about each other, after all. Initially, though, adjusting to this new footing was a bit strange and awkward, and we were both very nervous, like teenagers going on their first few dates. Thankfully, that stage soon passed.

After my stint at the neo-natal unit, I took a six-month job in O&G in Wellington (which is about the same distance from Napier as Auckland). We were in New Zealand for a year altogether. It was an amazing time and we were so happy. We both loved the country and our lives there. I think Gerry would seriously have considered staying on for good but, sad as I was to leave, for me it was just too far away from my family and friends, particularly my parents. And now there was no question that wherever we went, it would be as a couple. Having finally found each other, we felt we were the luckiest people on the planet.

So in September 1996 we returned to Glasgow, Gerry to the Western Infirmary and to begin his research for an MD in exercise physiology, while I worked initially at the maternity unit at the Queen Mother's Hospital before transferring to anaesthetics at the Western Infirmary in 1997. We rented a flat together to start with and then bought our own terraced house very close to Gerry's brother Johnny and his family. We were married in Liverpool in December 1998 by our good friend Father Paul Seddon. We chose the weekend before Christmas for the wedding: with our friends and extended families scattered all over the place, taking advantage of the holiday period was the best way of making sure as many of them as

possible could be there. Added to that, I had always loved Christmastime. It was a wonderful day, and we looked forward eagerly to our future as a married couple and to the children who would make our lives complete.

MADELEINE

GERRY AND I were keen to start a family as soon as possible, but after a couple of years with no sign of a pregnancy, it became clear that it wasn't going to be as easy as we'd assumed. Those who have been lucky enough to conceive effortlessly often fail to appreciate how heartbreaking and testing trying fruitlessly for a baby can be: month after month of aching disappointment, punctuated by a mid-cycle urgency to have sex at the crucial time, which removes all the spontaneity, and much of the fun, from making love. Sex becomes a clinical requirement rather than an enjoyable and intimate experience. And as time drags by, you find yourself having to force a joyful smile and congratulate your friends as they become pregnant, apparently without the slightest difficulty.

We were now living in Leicestershire, having taken the decision to move south in 2000 to enable Gerry to take up a training post in cardiology, positions that were very hard to come by. Even then, he had to complete the first part of his rotation in Boston in Lincolnshire, a two-hour, cross-country drive away. By this time I had been promoted to a registrar post in anaesthetics in Glasgow and was working hard towards completing my postgraduate exams or 'fellowship'. Within six months, I'd been able to transfer to the registrar rotation in Leicester and we had settled in

Queniborough, a picture-postcard village with a couple of pubs, a general store and an excellent butcher.

By coincidence my mum's brother, Brian Kennedy, lived in Rothley, just ten minutes along the road. Now retired, he had been headmaster of a school in Loughborough. I was close to Uncle Brian and Auntie Janet - when I was a child we'd spent every Christmas and Easter with them - and their children, Aileen and James, were like a little sister and brother to me. It was a great bonus to have family nearby. Leicester wasn't Liverpool or Glasgow, and I found people more reserved than I was used to, but our neighbours, a mix of young professionals and retired people, were all new, too (our mews home was part of the recent conversion of an old country house, so everyone there was new), and that helped.

Shortly after we moved to Queniborough I decided to leave anaesthetics and train for general practice. It wasn't an easy decision to make - I was happy in anaesthetics, and it meant that my fellowship would be redundant in terms of furthering my career - but just as Gerry was finishing his stint in Boston I was due to begin six months there. I felt that if we both continued to work as hospital specialists, on call at different times and in different places, it would not only be our quality of life that suffered but also our chances of conceiving a child.

With the variety of hospital posts I already had under my belt, all I needed was a six-month position in psychiatry to gain the breadth of experience required for GP training. However, I still wanted to finish my anaesthetics fellowship. It entailed loads of work and everybody told me I was crazy to carry on with it. But I had started it, I wanted to complete it, and I did. Deep down, Gerry understood. We are both 'finishers', Gerry and I. Neither of us gives up anything easily.

I did my GP training at a surgery in Melton Mowbray, one of the first specialist GP practices in the country, which