

## Pat Polley

Pat was born Pat Foster to a family from a rural village in Staffordshire between Burton on Trent and Uttoxeter. Her grandfather worked as a manager in a nearby gypsum mine and her father followed in his father's footsteps. (*Gypsum is the stuff that forms the basis of plaster and plaster board*) Her father was a church organist and he married the daughter of a nearby Methodist lay preacher- so church music was in Pat's bones from an early age.

After National Service, Pat's dad took on a small dairy farm and it was there that Pat grew up in a farmhouse with her 2 brothers (one of whom is here today)- it wasn't all idyllic – rather quite a harsh regime and milking to do come rain or shine twice a day.

She attended Hanbury Primary School; passed the then 11 plus and went to Uttoxeter Girls Grammar School- from there she moved to Northhampton and trained as an Occupational Therapist at St Andrew's College. After qualifying, Pat took up a residential post at St Audrey's Hospital in Melton and it was while she was there, that she met Bruce. They married in 1957 and bought a former farm workers cottage (semi-detached, 2 up, 2 down and 1 down the garden!) for the princely sum of £825- over the years they were to improve the cottage and extend it.

The cottage as you all know is on the edge of Grundisburgh and Pat and Bruce cycled each day on their push bikes- Pat to St Audrey's and Bruce into Ipswich – where he worked for the County Council and the Central Electricity Generating Board- (remember all those pylons). Once settled here in Grundisburgh, they found lots of other reasons to stay.

Pat and Bruce joined this church and soon became a much loved part of the church family here. Pat joined the choir and only John Dunnett has seen longer service- each year at the Carol Service she sang the 1<sup>st</sup> verse of Once in Royal David's city- John Cooper our organist and choir master said of Pat- that she could always be relied upon- nothing phased her- her sight reading was excellent and she retained the voice of a much younger person, right up to her 81st year!

She was both musically talented and florally dextrous- by which I mean she was a wonderful flower arranger- and the church flowers you see here today are in her memory- created by folk, many of whom were inspired by her example. She wrote in the Wickham Market Flower Club Spring Newsletter " as the daughter of a farmer my interest in plants and flowers developed early and I was aware where the best violets, primroses, cowslips and bluebells grew, but it wasn't until I was married in 1957 and had a garden of my own that the interest developed". She took inspiration from Beth Chatto and no doubt Constance Spry- she loved her flower arranging and wrote "I joined the club because I love the fun, the friendship and the flowers, they all combine to interest and inspire us to provide a haven of calm in this troubled world."

Family was at the heart of Pat's life. Elder son Richard was followed by Simon and as toddlers both boys delighted in holidays on "Grandad's Farm". He had a little grey Massey Ferguson tractor to cart cattle feed, and the boys loved their rides on the tractor, in those heady days when Health and Safety didn't exist and risk assessments were unknown. Grandchildren were a joy and delight, I think I first met Pat with Laura in tow and some times Kieran too; I don't know Michelle and Nathan as well- but I've certainly heard about them and I know about the absolute joy and delight that Pat had when her first great grandchild Oliver was born – sadly she won't see the next great grandchild whose arrival is fairly imminent!

Other family holidays included visits to family in Cornwall and Bruce's brother in Australia and visiting a friend from college days now living in NZ

In the 1960s, more often than not, mothers stayed at home with their children, but as the boys grew, so Pat returned to work, not at the hospital, but at Adult Education centres, lecturing on flower arranging and the handicraft subjects from her professional qualifications. One out post of Adult Education was at Hollesley Bay, where Pat as well as being a teacher, was a kindly middle aged aunt to those she called "the naughty boys". At the more relaxed class just before Christmas, the boys would say "bring your daughter in Miss", but Pat only had sons. Graham Parker, a retired Governor from Hollesley Bay, tells Bruce of many happy years working with Pat and of the respect that she was held in.

Meanwhile here in the village, Pat became a much loved member of the WI. She has belonged to the WI for 66 years, having first joined aged 15 (and if you want to know what Pat looked like, then just glance at the front cover of your order of service). While at the hospital Pat belonged to Ufford WI, then to Grundisburgh, Burgh and Culpho. She was Grundisburgh' youngest ever President at the age of 30 and its oldest at 81 in her last year of life. In those 51 years she was President 17 times – no one else scores more than 8. She also held office both locally and at county level. For many years she represented the village in WI classes at the Suffolk Show and often won. She entered classes at the village show too and ...won! It is no surprise that there are so many members of the WI here with us today and that the WI has prepared the refreshments for us to enjoy at the village hall following this service.

Her skill and creative talent led to years of demonstrations to WIs and others across Suffolk and beyond, and then not just to exhibiting, but judging at village shows for the Suffolk Horticultural and Produce Association.

She was a multi talented craftswoman, and you will be able to see a display of her work at the village hall following this service – but of all her many skills - closest to her heart was tating, a form of knotted lace made with a handheld shuttle. Pat was a respected authority in this skill and her original designs were published worldwide. For about 20 years Pat hosted a small but faithful housegroup in her sitting room. They met every Wednesday at

2.00pm, hence the timing of this service and they last met 12 days before she died. The group have vowed to continue in their meeting together, to natter and tatter in memory of Pat.

Today is the feast of the Epiphany- the time in the Church's year when we remember the arrival of the Magi and the gifts brought to the Christ child- not just any old presents, but offerings of significance and symbolism. In this service we recall with gratitude and thanksgiving the offering of Pat's life – her creativity and skill, her time so generously given, and her love, friendship and faithfulness.

But the feast of the Epiphany is about more than, the offering of our lives; it is about our understanding of who and what God is, it is about recognising in the darkness the one who comes to us as light. Death can often be a time of darkness, but into the darkness of death, Jesus came as a light- death did not defeat him, his love was stronger than death. In a sense the resurrection was an Epiphany moment offered to the world- a moment of recognition and understanding – in the words of the song- that "love changes everything" and that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. Death is not the turning off of the light, but travelling into a new dawn, a new beginning.

Each year at the Christmas Carol Service, Pat would sing, the opening words of "Once in Royal David's city"- I want to leave you with the closing words –words which she would have sung to the descant tune "and our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love, for that child so dear and gentle, is our Lord in heaven above. There like stars in glory crowned, all in white shall wait around"

May Pat and her love shine in you today, as she has her own Epiphany experience, of meeting with her Lord, in the place of absolute and utter harmony and of entering into the heavenly Jerusalem . Amen.