

## PHEMIE SHOTTON

I don't know why PHEME's parents chose to call her Euphemia- it isn't a common name- either now or indeed 88 yrs ago when PHEME was born... but it was in a way prophetic... for in the Gk Euphemia means "to speak well of" and PHEME lived such a life.. that we are more than able to speak well of her this afternoon... her life was extraordinary.

So many of you have contributed your thoughts and memories of PHEME...for wh I am enormously grateful...certain words occur over and over again.. you will probably recognise them in your own experience and shared friendship with her

Words such as constant, demure, remarkable, brave, practical, helpful, unstintingly generous, determined, non confrontational, there are more... but these act as a taster.

The family have written a resume of her life which I share with you now and then later some special G memories.

PHEME died peacefully aged 89, two weeks after collapsing in the swimming pool where she still swam four times a week. She never regained consciousness.

She was born in Sale on Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 1925 to Scottish parents. Her father's work as an engineer in mechanical postal handling took the young family to Australia when PHEME was 18 months old. Her two sisters, Marian and Rachel, were both born in Sydney. The family sailed home in February 1931. To her sisters' envy, PHEME was old enough to remember something of their time in Australia, and she was delighted much later to revisit, staying with her niece Marianne and family with Rachel in 2003 and 2005. PHEME had happy memories too of month-long summer holidays in Arran - where Rachel lives now - bicycling around the island, and gathering pine cones every morning for kindling.

During the war, PHEME trained as a nursery school teacher at Avery Hill College in London. The college was evacuated to Huddersfield where she lodged with a window cleaner and his wife, who she kept in touch with for many years. She taught in Wythenshawe, but was swayed by the deprivation she saw to return to study in 1950 at Cardiff University for an extra year's training as a children's social worker. She worked first in Middlesex and then for some years in York. After her father died she returned to live and work near her mother in Wilmslow, working mainly in adoptions.

She met Douglas, a telecommunications research scientist, on a walking holiday in the Swiss Alps in 1958. She gave up work when they married in 1959, and they settled together in Paradise Road, Richmond, London. She and Douglas lived a quiet, domestic life, taking pleasure in raising their twin sons, Nick and Tim, and in walking holidays in Europe.

PHEME underwent intrusive surgery for oral cancer in the late 1960s and spent three years recovering. Rachel writes that surviving this ordeal gave her a renewed commitment to living life well and doing things for others. In 1973 the family moved to Grundisburgh, Suffolk, for Douglas's work, although he retired a year or so later. PHEME took an active part in the church, the WI and Golden Club, and many other aspects of village life.

How to record un sentimentally a life of small, private kindnesses? Rachel describes PHEME's uncomplaining acceptance and her faith guiding her. She helped wherever

she could. She wrote weekly letters to her sisters and both sons. She cared for her sister Marian through her years of MS, often driving up to Bramhall to cook her healthy meals. Over the years, the three sisters often went on holiday together, on a canal boat adapted for disabled people, to John Grooms houses in Llandudno and near Cowbridge, to York and to Sandringham. Rachel remembers 'jaunts and many hours of laughter'.

Phemie looked after Douglas as he declined into dementia, until he died in 2003. She was a loving Granny/Grandma/Step- Grandma to her grandchildren, especially gentle with her severely learning-disabled granddaughter, Florence. She took pride in Joe's interest in engineering, and attended his barmitzva and other events at the synagogue, and she welcomed Nathan's assistance with computing and other help.

Phemie had a gift for maintaining friendships over decades with all kinds of people. Her warm welcome and her cooking were legendary, and she used her baking as a way of connecting with others. She never visited without bringing a delicious, freshly-baked foil-wrapped loaf or cake (or both). She baked the fish-delivery lady's wedding cake, and left a slice of teabread for the milkman every week with his payment.

Phemie inherited her deep love of music from her mother, an organist, music teacher and choir mistress. She was involved for many years in the Tilford Bach choir, singing mainly Bach and Handel, until her mouth operation. She continued to enjoy music and concerts. She loved walking and nature, which inspired her sense of wonder. She enjoyed quilting - initially with Douglas's help cutting the geometric pieces of fabric - and she produced a quilt for each of her grandchildren and great-nephews and nieces as they arrived. She was a talented gardener, tending her flower garden with care, and entering her vegetables in the Grundisburgh village show. Her Bromley garden was gradually taking shape.

After Douglas died, she managed to build a new independent life in Grundisburgh after their long marriage. She visited Tim and family in Birmingham, and looked forward to holidays, travelling both independently and with both sons and families.

Eight years after Douglas's death, she moved to be near Nick and family in Bromley, where she worked weekly at the Widmore Road lunch club for homeless people. She collected her granddaughter, Lucy, almost every day for her first two years at school, and they formed a close and companionable bond over snacks, homework and crafty activities.

Phemie will be sadly missed by everyone who loved her.

Add to that words from Sally Grahn, on the occasion when we gathered to bid her farewell when she left the village to live in Bromley- Sally has used the letters of PHEMIE- spelt IE at the end - to hang her thoughts on..

P for practical - a fine cook, especially of the "welcome loaves" which were personally delivered to newcomers and a brilliant and creative gardener, who attended U3A garden groups with her dear friend Sheleagh Watkins.

H for helpful- to all, visiting the sick officially through W.I but also popping in on anyone needing help including Chris. Driving members to the Lyttleton Club and inviting newcomers to meals with others.

E for excellent member of the community here, knowing lots of people through her participation at W.I, Church, Local History and other groups. Never wanting to lead

these groups herself but contributing so much to them by her ideas, knowledge and wisdom.

M for matchmaking for others. Joan Hercliffe ended up marrying dear Frank after Phemie "arranged" for them to meet via the Lyttleton Club! It was a wonderful love match for over 5 years and both parties were very grateful to Phemie

I for interesting and interested. Phemie was a lover of people, especially children and was a wonderful grandmother. She was interested in many things and kept up to date with local and national news and current affairs.

E for example to others. Phemie disregarded her numerical age and lived life to the full. She is held in high regard by many people and she is seen a great role model for some of us. She showed us that life is for living in an unselfish way, thinking of others and showing real Christian spirit.

Ringling to say "come to supper" with four other people,. .or. . I've just planted some interesting things in the garden, pop in and see them and have a cup of tea (cake always included, of course),..or.. I've found a new cafe, farm shop, good food pub to try. The food theme was inevitable; a visit to her home or when she called always involved a jar of something or homemade bread or cake, or home grown produce. On hearing of someone living alone who was unwell a bowl of soup and bread would appear on the doorstep. We shall remember Phemie for her boundless energy, generosity, thoughtfulness and sense of fun. We could add much more but this will give you a flavour of what it was to know and love her uniqueness

We have heard of her letter writing and I know within the village how very much that was appreciated- correspondence with Mrs Lambert, who had worked for PHEME and Douglas for 30 yrs - letters written to a younger member of the village community- some years ago- kept and treasured. Postcards from her numerous holidays- describing the sights and the food- she was great at giving thumbnail accounts of all the people she travelled with on her walking holidays.

But the enduring memory in G- is her trademark loaf of bread placed on the doorstep in the early hours of the morning- quite anonymously – I sometimes used to wonder if she had trained with MI5s- she seemed to know who had moved in where telepathically- it would make my job so much easier if I had the same ability and skill!

PHEME to us- Euphemia to her parents- she certainly lived up to her name and we all rejoice that we have known her, loved her, and our lives are so much more the richer for her. May she rest in peace.

Amen.