

Lived on Bridge Down for > 20 yrs.

Joan Healey Ashworth

20th May, 1914 - 25th May, 2003

Personal tributes from her cousin Colin and
her friend and colleague Judy Jenkins

I first met Joan in 1947 when, as a young teacher, she came to teach English at Canterbury Technical School and so part of me still wants to call her Miss Ashworth. She was a GOOD teacher, one of the old sort, and I know it was her influence which encouraged me to choose English as one of my two main subjects at college. In my last year at school, we studied Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Money in those days was in short supply and there weren't enough text books to go round. Imagine my amazement when Miss Ashworth declined the offer of a book and shared mine, by reading it UPSIDE DOWN.

Apart from English, her loves were hockey and tennis. I shared her enthusiasm for tennis but hated hockey. I remember one cold wet day (it was always cold and wet for hockey), I was standing on the field feeling miserable, when Miss Ashworth came rushing up, whistle in mouth, asking what was the matter? I replied that I was cold and there was nothing to do. Her solution - "Run about looking as if you're doing something". In those far off days, we had a House system and as Miss Ashworth was Mitchell's House Mistress and I was her House Captain, we had many discussions regarding policy. One Christmas we organised a House Party, and one game we played was "Stations". I gave each team leader the first station and several leaders asked how to spell their respective stations. Imagine my embarrassment, when without thinking, I began spelling Worcester for Miss Ashworth. "Thank you, Judy," she interrupted, "I think I can spell it without your help".

When I returned to teach at the Tech in 1960, Joan was one of the few members of staff who welcomed me as a colleague. She was helpful without being patronizing and we became good friends. In her retirement, she kept in touch with many of her former colleagues and her presence at parties was always welcome.

I am sure that all of us, family, friends and ex-colleagues will miss Joan greatly and remember her with affection.

Joan lived a full and active life, and we who know her, have come together, whilst mourning her loss, to celebrate her life.

I stand here (just about) as her last remaining relative of the same generation but, as she said when I congratulated her recently on her 89th birthday, at 79 I am a mere stripling. She was born, as I found out this morning, in Ipswich and not as I thought in Rochdale, Lancashire, the town where her parents Walter Ashworth and Alice Healey were born and resided. Although Walter had one brother and Alice had four sisters, between them they only produced five offspring, of which I am now the only survivor. Joan stayed in Rochdale only a short time as her father was artistic and followed a teaching career which took him as we now know to Sunderland and then to Coventry where he was Head of the School of Art. Joan was proud of the fact that one of his paintings was accepted and displayed by the Royal Academy, and the Coventry Art Gallery commissioned him to record the Blitz and displayed several of his pictures in their exhibitions.

With this background, Joan leant towards the academics and became a teacher, first in Coventry and subsequently in Penzance and Canterbury, where she settled. She entered enthusiastically into the life she had chosen, but as the remainder of the family was based in Rochdale (although eventually some moved) we were never a close unit, and my first memories of Joan were at times like Christmas and holidays, when we had family get-togethers and visited each other.

What were her hobbies and interests? Well, I gather that hockey was prominent in her younger life, and she liked walking, driving and the theatre. She was a marvellous guide and could drive round Kent with one hand on the wheel and half an eye on the road pointing out items of historic interest and beauty. Quite hair-raising at times. Most of all, she enjoyed meeting groups of friends. She loved the Lake District, and moved there when she retired to be near her cousin John and his wife Mavis. However, eventually she found that she was missing her many friends in Kent and decided to move back to Canterbury. She settled in Bridge and resolved to live out her days in her bungalow, even

when, sadly, she was no longer able to drive. Happily for Joan, she completed this aim and, despite a stroke and several other illnesses and investigations, she was able, with some help, to continue to look after herself and the ever decreasing number of her friends able to visit her.

We are all sad that Joan has died, but happy that she was able to remain independent to the end. We shall miss her, but remember her with affection for a life full of kindness, help, achievement and determination.



BARTON COURT

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