

CORA D COLLIN (née STOOP) 1894–1978

Memories of Cora will be kept alive in Deddington even when those of us who met her have passed on. Words like local benefactress, artist, art collector, occupational therapist by chance and lover and hub of village life, spring to mind. She had a citizen of the world charm about her.

Cora was born in Byfleet, Surrey, of wealthy parents. Her Dutch immigrant father, Freek Stoop, married a Scottish heiress. Cora was their 6th child. The family fortune came from her uncle's discovery of oil in Indonesia. (He was sent out from Holland to discover water, and was sacked when he only unearthed a puddle of oil!).

Cora attended art college where she met her future husband 'Collin' (christened Charles) who had made his mark by winning the Prix de Rome in 1914. They were married in 1916. The War separated them, she worked in the Land Army while he built ships for the Merchant Navy. In 1922 the family moved to Cagnes, a mecca for artists in southern France. These happy days ended in 1936 with Collin's deteriorating health. He died in California in 1937, aged 47.

Chance brought Cora to 'The Old Corner House' in Deddington. She fell in love with house and village and settled there in 1943 renaming her home 'The Hermitage'. The Land Army made use of Cora again in WWII, putting her in charge of placing and supervising Land Girls on local farms. In the 1940s spirit of 'England Expects' she furthered jam-making by villagers for the village, started a Youth Club and instructed girls in toy making.

Although quite handicapped by deafness she enjoyed a gregarious life style, was adept in lip reading and as a trained artist observed situations and atmospheres around her at a glance and only occasionally got it wrong! Cora enjoyed her wealth by sharing it with others in the way her father Stoop had taught her: 'to give anonymously without fuss if possible, or be well advised by experts on greater projects'. In the late 1960s she funded the building of a clubhouse in her kitchen garden (now known as the Holly Tree Club). A few years later she financed the building of four bungalows earmarked for the elderly and handicapped of Deddington and founded the Deddington Housing Association, on the Committee of which she served up to her death on Easter Sunday 1978.

Gifted, fun-loving and gracious, Cora inspired many personal memories. Some remember her two cats, one asleep on the air vent in the hall, the other curled up in a basket on top of the kitchen table. Others remember her fabulous collection of costumes and dressing up clothes generously loaned out for fêtes, plays and charades. Her son remembers that she never locked her door when she went to Church. Her belief in God was implicit. And we all remember her for constantly being on the go, inventing, planning to bring newcomers old and young together. Being busy, observing and helping others helped her overcome the communication difficulties due to her deafness.

Ruth Johnson 2004

With thanks to Robert and Orma Collin who shared many memories