

## **ELIZABETH TOTHILL (d. 2002)**

Many people will have been shocked to hear of the death of Elizabeth Tothill in Gozo. Elizabeth and Frank lived in Grove House on the High Street during the 1990s, when Elizabeth made an enormous contribution to this community.

Elizabeth's faith was central to her life. Until she joined Frank in the Roman Catholic Church, she was deeply involved in every aspect of Parish Church life: from dusting pews and arranging flowers for services and weddings, to organising a St Nicholas Fair to raise funds, selling Traidcraft goods, opening her garden as a Quiet Garden for prayer and contemplation. She helped with the Children's Church in its early days. When the Church Restoration Appeal was launched, Elizabeth was working for a History of Art degree with the Open University; her contribution to the Appeal was to research, write and print, at her own expense, a pamphlet about the Jones' stained glass windows in the church. (The pamphlet is available in the church.) She and Frank regularly welcomed overseas students to their home during holiday times. During a prolonged power failure one winter, Elizabeth kept the elderly residents of Grove Court supplied with soup and hot drinks, thanks to her Aga. She also visited prisons and persuaded one inhabitant to try his hand at writing, subsequently typing up the story herself.

From its beginnings she was an enthusiastic supporter of the Deddington Players. For one nativity play she made the shepherds' costumes out of discarded curtains. Though she preferred to work off stage, she also took parts in several village pantomimes: as the villainous cat in Pinocchio, with Frank as the pantomime cow in Jack and the Beanstalk and, most memorably, in a costume of her own devising, as the improbable pink rabbit who helped to trap the Millennium bugs in our 2000 production, 'The Wizard of Whatsit'.

From 1994 to 2000 Elizabeth was a member of the *DN* editorial committee and its Church and Chapel editor. She helped to collate and deliver the magazine. 1998 found us looking, unsuccessfully, for a new Advertising Manager. With typical enthusiasm and generosity (her days were not empty) Elizabeth took on this extra duty, learnt the job from scratch and kept the 'yellow pages' well filled, ensuring the *DN's* financial stability. She was happy to write a report on almost any subject; no editorial meeting was boring if Elizabeth was present. She was a colleague on whom one could rely absolutely, knowing that she would give of her best. Elizabeth was a 'can do' person. And if she couldn't do what you wanted, she'd find some other way of being useful.

For the Map Group, she researched and wrote about the churches and chapels of the parish. In the Playreading Group she tackled any part she was given, large or small, and put her own individual stamp on it. She was also much involved in the Deddington Gardeners' Club, arranging visits and lectures for the rest of us. She initiated a garden project at the Primary School; borders below the classroom windows are still filled with perennials as a result of her efforts. She contributed to Walter Meagher's parish flora records and it was Elizabeth who suggested the creation of the wildflower area in Daeda's Wood.

Artsweeks, quilting, cooking, dog walking ... the list goes on. We missed her enormously when she left for Gozo in 2000. We shall go on missing her energy, kindness, talents and her unique personality. Truly a remarkable and much loved woman. Our thoughts are with Frank her husband, her sons Christopher and Nick, and with all her family. Frank says: 'You will be glad to hear that despite her difficulties, her grin stayed till the end!'

*Memories compiled by JF, NS & KT*