

Molly Pamela Neild 1928–2019



Molly Neild, a long time and well-known resident of Deddington, died peacefully at home in Hudson Court, Deddington, on 30 January. She was born in London in 1928. Her father was a colonel in the Royal Army Service Corps and she was very much a daughter of empire.

Molly's was a peripatetic army childhood and the family was constantly on the move including stints in Egypt and Cyprus. She learned to swim in the Suez Canal and to speak French at school in Ismailia. She moved schools 14 times, ending up during the war at St Elphin's in Derbyshire which she loved. She clearly remembered the German plane which bombed Chatsworth flying over the family house.

Molly was an only child and lived a lot of the time in her own make-believe world, writing stories, plays, and drawing things throughout her life. She would have loved to go to university to read English and her school felt she could easily have got a place but, as was the case with many women of her generation, her parents couldn't see the point of it and she was sent to a secretarial college in the Cotswolds.

Books were always her great love and in the late 1940s she went to London to work at the National Book League in Albermarle Street. She enjoyed London life and spent a lot of time at the theatre watching her idols from the 'gods'.

She married John Neild, a Cambridge-educated civil engineer, in 1951. After two years living near Southampton, John was offered a job as partner with a big engineering firm in what was then Southern Rhodesia. Despite having a small baby, Molly was excited at the prospect of starting a new life. John went ahead by flying-boat and Molly and the baby, Simon, set sail arriving three weeks later in Cape Town.

Molly and John spent 25 happy years in Southern Africa where Martin and Kate were born.

During the seventies she published two children's books set in Africa. She also wrote a series of retellings of bible stories for the black educational market in Zimbabwe. She worked for some years in the library of the University of Zimbabwe and helped to run a legal aid clinic there.

The political winds of change began blowing fiercely in Africa. Molly and John were not political radicals but worked in their own quiet way against the white regime clinging to power, always believing that a phased introduction to majority rule was the way forward. In 1980, soon after Zimbabwean independence, the Neilds returned to England and moved to Deddington in 1981.

Molly loved life in Deddington and was an enthusiastic and active member of the community. For many years she co-wrote and co-produced the annual pantomime with Jean Flux and looked after several generations of children who were in it. She was a contributor to and great supporter of the DN and was the local correspondent for the *Banbury Guardian*. She was a leading member of the Deddington Writers' Group, the play reading society, the reading scheme at the primary school and many other activities. She was

an avid line-dancer and enthusiastic member of the Warriner Choral Society. She worked tirelessly in support of the Home Farm Trust who looked after her daughter Kate so well in Moreton-in-Marsh and she delighted with Kate's many successes and achievements there.

John died in 2014 and life was not easy for Molly after that. She died as she had lived her life, elegantly, quietly and with no fuss, at home in Deddington. She will be remembered for her quiet intelligence, fierce loyalty, determination, generosity, love of conversation, her naughty sense of humour and her zest for life in all its quirkiness.

The Neild Family