

## Jean Welford, 1932–2024

Jean's childhood was spent with her three siblings on the Cartwright estate in the 'Apricot Village', Aynho, where her father, Philip Abernethy, farmed Home Farm. Although her early years were influenced by the Second World War, she was brought up in a loving, hard-working and extremely sociable family which saw her and her youngest sister share a room with an evacuee. Her parents always had visitors young and old, from passing tramps, the newspaper delivery man, soldiers from the camp in Aynho Park, family, friends and neighbours. Everyone was made welcome and invited to gather around Home Farm's kitchen table to eat, followed by card games, piano playing, darts, etc. On one occasion her father found two young ladies from the BBC sleeping in a hayloft on the farm so brought them home for breakfast. It was a home in which there was much teasing and when Jean's oldest sister and older brother married she kept on with tradition, aged 15, endlessly winding up her younger sister, while also teaching her to ballroom dance.



Jean was also quite the daredevil and, aged 11, rode a large boy's bike at 45 degrees by putting her legs under the crossbar to pedal. This went wrong and she severely fractured her arm. The experience didn't put her off anything with wheels, though, and she continued to drive until she was 88!

Her early years of work were as a Sykes Dental Nurse, a Walfords Optician Nurse and at Alcan. She was also Club Secretary for the Brackley Young Farmers Club. Part of this role was to co-ordinate Club speakers, which is how she met her husband, Donald Welford, when he gave a talk there. Donald was also a tease with a mischievous sense of humour and lover of practical jokes. However, during their first few years of marriage there was a lot of heartache around having children. Ultimately their son Alastair was born and, after still more sadness, eventually a daughter, Ffio.

Together Jean and Donald created a lovely home for their family on a farm. They were both passionate about wildlife, so planted woodlands and excavated a lake. There was fishing in the river, native and rare breed ponies, a jennet, guinea pigs, rabbits, geese, peacocks, bantams, budgies, hamsters, gerbils, cats, dogs, pet lambs, a very cheeky macaw and many, many more, which Alastair and Ffio were fortunate to grow up alongside.

Music was especially important to Jean. She was a brilliant musician and an accomplished pianist, achieving Grade 8 in record time while at school. She still managed to play her beloved piano only a few weeks ago despite suffering from neuropathy. However, the piano was just one of many ways she experienced her passion, others included being a 'roadie' for Ffio. It was a big job moving Ffio's harp around in a Morris to her music lessons and various concerts. There was also the church choir and the Cherwell Choral Society in which she sang until only a year ago, when she fell during choir practice one evening and her life began to change.

Jean was an active member of Deddington church and a prolific organiser in her local community for almost 70 years. This gave rise to many activities from the aforementioned singing in the church choir and Cherwell Choral Society to flower arranging, Mothers' Union

as Deanery Presiding Member, running an after-school club for children in the church, Girls' Brigade, fundraising and recruiting members for Friends of Castle Grounds, running home-baked-cake fundraising stalls in church, Parochial Church Council, Alpha, Deddington Flower Festival, Teddy Bears picnics at Broughton Castle, running the Horton Hospital trolley, cooking and delivering Meals on Wheels to the elderly, baking Christmas cakes as gifts for the lonely, organising the annual trip to the Christmas carol concert in Birmingham with coachloads of friends and family ...

Family was very important to Jean and, throughout her life, she maintained contact with relatives in Canada and Scotland, an ancestry she was proud of. She loved travelling with Donald because of their shared pleasure in exploration, spontaneous road-trips and cruises, catching up with family while making new friends en route. The welcome arrival of Alastair's and Deb's children, Chris, Jonnie and Bec, created a time of pure joy and more spontaneous activities, with impromptu teas in the garden. These were also often gate-crashed by various alternative rock bands Ffio was working with, much to the delight of the grandchildren. The arrival of her great grandchildren, Theo, Mia and Nahla, kept her spirit young and she loved to share some of her hobbies with them, from sewing, dressmaking, tapestry, to sketching, watercolour painting and pottery. She also loved gardening and, besides a beautiful garden, produced fruit and vegetables galore to both feed her family and give to friends. An excellent cook, she especially loved baking with her grandchildren and latterly even became a Manchester City supporter (great grandson Theo's team), changing loyalties from grandson Jonnie's team, Liverpool.

Dogs were a constant in her life and she bred Jack Russell terriers and Labradors, which generally went to carefully selected homes within the local community. On one occasion two young Labrador siblings aptly named, Bonnie and Clyde, seemingly went on the run. In fact, they were simply enjoying themselves too much splashing about in the river to respond to Jean's calls. In the meantime the *Banbury Guardian* ran a front page article, 'Bonnie and Clyde at large, not two heavily armed bank robbers but two golden Labradors ...'

Jean's life exhibited a selfless unconditional love of people in many different ways and, like us all, not always getting it right but always wanting to. That she touched so very many lives has been evident from all the wonderful messages and tributes we have received, which are so appreciated. Thank you.

We will miss her. We already do.

***The Welford Family***