

LOIS HUMPHRIES (1947–2016)



Lois was born at Duns Tew in a wooden bungalow, the sixth of eight siblings, to Evelyn and John Cook. John brought the children up strictly with certain behaviour required at table, for instance, and an insistence that the children not play in the village since they didn't need the company of other children, having company enough on their own. There were fields enough to roam around in Duns Tew, but also space for her older brothers and sisters to go off and lose Lois, who wanted to tag along but who was very much a member of the younger department of the family. Lois went to Duns Tew School and then Dr Radcliffe's at Steeple Aston. On leaving school at 15 she worked in Duns Tew looking after children and she also cared for an elderly couple.

Lois and Albert were married in Duns Tew church in 1970. Having put in a hard shifts to get it ready over that summer, they were able to move into Allo Cottage in Deddington High Street after the wedding. It soon became a real family home with the arrival of Donna (1972) and Mark (1974) – and it was to be Lois's till the end of her life. She was very much a home and garden person. She enjoyed family holidays in Wales and North Devon and elsewhere – she and Albert seemed always to have offers of accommodation in the caravans or apartments of friends, which tells you something about the appreciation and affection in which they were held. There were European holidays too – Lois particularly enjoyed the warmer temperatures of the continent. Although she wasn't a great joiner of clubs and groups, she socialised, always making sure she was well turned out.

From Allo Cottage Lois worked first at cleaning jobs and then for Pete and Bet Howarth's catering firm as a waitress. Later she moved to the Holcombe where she started as a chambermaid and moved on to assistant chef. Then came a period of 21 years working for Solar Designs at their various sites in Clifton, Deddington and then Chipping Norton, assembling jewellery. The assembling happened too back at home because she liked to be busy. When Solar Designs ceased trading, Lois became a carer at St Anne's Home, Clifton. She also looked after the Waters family who looked on her as a surrogate granny.

Being a Granny certainly gave Lois huge pleasure: she doted on Tom and Amy, Georgia and Toby, Vicky and Katie. The family and friends were all the beneficiaries of Lois's fine cooking and baking which she did to great general appreciation without ever using a measure, just eyes and hands. There was many a birthday cake and the mince pies were a real industry too – 60 dozen at Christmas time for generous widespread distribution –and that was just one part of Christmas. The whole house had to be decorated room by room.

These extravagant Christmas observances which carried on a family tradition set by her mother, had to do with central aspects to Lois's character – her desire to do things for other people, to put other people first. Maybe Lois liked doing the baking and the decorating, but she probably didn't much enjoy getting up at night to put a sock in the bell calling Albert to Fire Service duty (the children needed to sleep) and getting his bicycle ready for the road.

Lois's life was very much about helping others but it was also an expression of her enthusiasm for life. She appreciated the gift of life and strove to make life good for others. She will be missed by all her family and friends.

The Humphries Family and Hugh White