

Memories of Barbara Blanchard

As so often happens, when a member of the congregation dies it isn't until their funeral that a full picture of their life emerges. And so it was with Barbara Blanchard, who died in November 2014 in Braintree, where she had moved to be near her daughter.

Barbara first came to St Nicholas Church in the early 1990s and quickly became a presence among us. She was friendly and forthright, knowing exactly what kind of liturgy she was after, deeply embedded in her Christian faith. She was sometimes to be heard practising the organ, having been a keyboard player all her life, and soon made firm friends with Jan Vickers and with Liz Crocker, to whom she later gave lifts to church when Liz needed them. When her husband, Paul, returned in 2000 from working in the USA, they moved from Chiswick to Oxfordshire; but Barbara, undaunted by the distance, drove up to Chiswick on Sunday mornings for many years. She wasn't going to let a few miles interfere with worshipping at Nics.

From her sons came an overview of her life: her birth in New Zealand; her childhood, from ten years, spent in Sydney; her love of the piano from early on; her training as a nurse and move to this country to take advantage of the career opportunities here. She worked as a District Nurse in Kent, and then at University College Hospital. After her marriage to Paul she focussed on her four children's upbringing, insisting on all things British for them, even when the family moved to Texas. She was an adventurous cook, inspired by Elizabeth David's books published in the '50s and '60s, she loved gardening and her dogs, and most importantly, wherever she went she made friends, who remained through her life as her support network, Jan Vickers among them. Jan remembers many pleasant times she and her husband, Martin, spent with Barbara and her husband. She wrote from Australia (where she now lives), 'We both found Barbara interesting and surprising; her artistic nature was always stimulating. While she and I would reflect on our childhood antipodean days, Paul and Martin would be talking gliding, engineering or wartime experiences. Many a pleasant hour we spent, often over some of her beautiful food.' When Paul died Barbara derived much comfort from her friendships, from her abiding faith and from her love for her eight grandchildren.

At St Nicholas we miss her energy, enthusiasm and deep religious commitment. May she rest in peace.

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