

Myfanwy Phillips

Just to hear her name brings her back in a flash. Myfanwy, or Phil as she was known to many, was a part of the St Nicholas scene for as long as I can remember. And what an energetic, feisty, witty and cheering person she was.

Come rain or shine, until the last year of her life, which she was grateful to spend at St Mary's Convent, she would walk along to Parish Mass from her Airedale Avenue home, through the underpass, beside Fullers and down Church Street, and this even when she was pushing her wheeled 'chariot' and had failing sight. She would listen intently to the Mass and as much of the sermon as her narcolepsy, which she put up with for years, would allow before she nodded off to sleep. She was undaunted.

Over the years I only picked up bits about her life – oh that I had asked her more – but I knew her career was with the British Council and that Italy had become very important to her. Many were the young Italian professionals whom she welcomed to her home either to meals or as staying guests when they were doing courses here. In her retirement years she frequently met with former colleagues to go to the theatre, or other performances. She had a strong interest in the arts. She was an enjoyer of life.

We saw at St Nicholas how much she valued the shared effort, be it at the PCC meetings, after which for years she would write up her own concise and amusing accounts for the magazine, or the splendid Church Mouse comments also in the magazine, querying and poking fun at the strange ways of the Church and St Nicholas in particular, or at the church bazaars when she would reign with Betty Madden at the Preserves Stall, bringing her own special variety of chutney. I have just turned up a note from her of years ago meticulously comparing the costs of supermarket preserves and of making her own, and suggesting her prices. Myfanwy always did her bit.

What I shall miss above all, and have missed this past year or two, as Myfanwy gradually moved towards her end, is the quality of companionship she gave to others. I remember first really talking to her at length at a parish away-day, at Clewer or one of the retreat venues used by St Nics, probably over some questions we were asked to consider. I realised then that here was someone of formidable intelligence, forthright, courageous and full of questions and uncertainties about precisely what she believed. I felt an immediate rapport. In her constancy at the Lord's table she provided an admirable and reassuring example to all of us. She put her trust in God.

There were times when I'd give her a lift, picking her up where she'd wait for me on the Chiswick High Road, and en route to a service or meeting we'd always have a lively discussion. She could be very funny and sardonic in her comments. As the years went by Myfanwy would sometimes complain that 'It is always the same old crowd who get things done' and I would get quite indignant with her, insisting that this was not the case and that lots of the young ones were taking things on! But never did she take offence, and always parted with an affectionate goodbye. She liked people and knew how to be a friend.

Myfanwy had long-held friendships, many from her working days, and outside Chiswick. Some devoted friends visited constantly during her last years. For thirty years Mrs Heather Romaine, a parishioner, knew Myfanwy, helped to keep her house cleaned, and as time went on, looked after her in every possible way. It was Heather who realised that Myfanwy needed the security of living at the Convent and who helped to secure a place for her there. She has been the most loyal friend and supporter of Myfanwy, and this feeling was mutual. Myfanwy knew about loyalty.

We can be thankful for Myfanwy that she was granted death when she had finally run out of energy for this life. I hope that in tribute to her spirited attitude to living we will remember her and, like her, contribute of our best to our fellowship at St Nicholas.

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