

Pamela Newton 1916 – 2004

A personal appreciation of Pamela Newton by Diane Daly

Very many years ago when Martin and I came to St Nicholas as newly-weds our first encounters with the life and work of the parish came through knowing Pamela and her husband, John. They welcomed us into the church, and into their home.

Over suppers at Thames bank I was drawn into becoming treasurer of the fifth Chiswick Abbeyfield House: an enterprise co-founded by the Newtons. This little job lasted for ten years ! Later, as we are both dedicated book-worms, Martin and I became the natural helpers to the Newtons and then their successors to run the Bookstall at the Christmas Fair: a pleasure that continued for many years.

Pam's matter-of-factness and friendly 'can do' approach to the young is something I will always remember and be grateful for. Thank you, Pam. May you rest in peace.

Pamela Newton and the Abbeyfield connection, by Joy Barrett

I worked closely with Pamela Newton for about 35 years in the Chiswick Abbeyfield Society. It all started like this:

In the 1960s a small group of us from St Nicholas met together, and John Newton told us about the Abbeyfield Society which had already been tried and proved successful in other places. It was a scheme to provide affordable accommodation for elderly and lonely people who wanted to live in home-like surroundings. Each house would take 6 or 7 people, each in their own bed-sitting rooms and they would take meals together in a communal dining room. There would be a resident Housekeeper to cook the meals and generally contribute to the homely atmosphere. Costs would be kept to a minimum as it was not intended to make a profit, and all management and administrative jobs would be undertaken by volunteers.

The meeting agreed it would be a good thing to start an Abbeyfield Society in Chiswick and John and Pamela Newton and John Barrett became founder members. Soon a committee was set up under the chairmanship of Dr Shaw, which included an architect, a solicitor, a doctor, an accountant, a local councillor and others with the expertise to get the scheme off the ground.

In 1965 we opened our first house, in Park Road, and that is when I became very involved. The scheme was a success and we soon had a waiting list. Over the next few years we opened 4 more houses in Chiswick bringing the total to 5. During all this time Pamela was Organising Secretary of the Society, and, apart from setting up new houses, furnishing the communal rooms, interviewing housekeepers, etc, she was always available to sort out any difficulties – of which there were many ! She somehow

managed to solve everything in the very shortest possible time. She was always on hand in a crisis. I particularly remember an occasion when a Housekeeper walked out on Christmas Eve and Pam went in on Christmas Day and cooked Christmas dinner for the eight residents, notwithstanding the fact that she had a family party of 17 to cater for at home.

I very much enjoyed working with Pam and all the other volunteers who helped us over the years. Sadly, all good things come to an end and by the 1960s society's needs and expectations were changing. Applications were no longer coming from people in their 70s but mostly from people in their 90s who needed more care than we could offer them. Gradually over the years as rooms became vacant and we could empty a house by moving residents to another one, we sold off all but one of the houses. The one that remained was in Duke's Avenue. At this stage the Chiswick Society merged with the one in Richmond, and together with the Duke's Avenue house became part of Abbeyfield UK. The Movement continued to support the welfare and housing of elderly people but, when appropriate, in a different way.

Over the 35 years or so of the Chiswick Abbeyfield Society, I hope we made a difference to the happiness and quality of life of the many elderly people who came to us. Many of them, as well as the housekeepers, became personal friends. We miss them all, as indeed we very much miss Pamela Newton.

Pamela and John Newton - from Donald Maxwell

With the death of Pamela Newton a long association with St Nicholas comes to an end. Older members of the congregation will remember her husband, John, who died many years before Pamela, leaving her all alone in her large home on Chiswick Mall where her five daughters grew up. The next generation took over this property when Pamela moved into a newly built and more manageable house, College House, which was built alongside Thames Bank, in part of the garden.

Pamela was a faithful member of the choir and John once told me, as we sat in our pew on a Sunday morning, that it was rather lonely being parted from his wife when he came to Mass each week. John made me feel really welcome when I first came to St Nicholas and I have always remembered his gentle kindness.

Pamela and Church embroidery

Another of Pamela's skills was as a church embroiderer. She created at least one of our altar frontals at St Nicholas, and a banner. She made the wonderful curtains covered with the fish of the Miraculous Draft which cover the tower door behind the font, and she participated in the making of the great cope created for the Bishop of London which has images of many of the diocese's churches.

