

Tribute at Grace Howard's Funeral
Trumpington Parish Church ,September 27th 2008
By Alan Howard

We are here this afternoon to celebrate and honour the life of Grace Elizabeth Howard who died at the age of 90 last Saturday.

Grace was born in Cottenham Cambridge on Dec 21st 1917 . Her family were farmers and she was brought up by her father and two aunts when her mother left home at the age of 5.

Grace excelled at the local school and was the only pupil in her year to win a place at the local girls grammar school ; the Cambridge and County School for Girls founded in 1900 and situated off Mill .Road .Baroness P D James the famous crime authoress was educated there too.

She did well in the School certificate exam and gained employment at Lloyds Bank opposite Christ's College and was there for over 20 years as a secretary to a manager in the Stock & Share department, She was working there when we met in 1950 . We were married in 1952 at Cottenham Church and had two children: Jonathan in 1956 and Julie in 1958.

A few years ago I asked Grace what was the happiest day in her life and she replied it was her wedding day. Among the very few papers that she kept at Langdon House I found all the memorabilia associated with her wedding including an album of photos and accounts for flowers etc . Thus in memory of that day the blue irises on her coffin are the same as in her wedding bouquet and the organ introit Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring was the processional played at our wedding.

Grace was a great help to me personally in those early years and was the breadwinner when I studied for my Ph D degree . It is doubtful if I could have managed otherwise We took in foreign students as paying guests in order to pay the mortgage when we bought a house in Topcliffe Way.

Grace travelled with me extensively when I attended international Scientific Conferences in Europe and the USA. She was especially popular in Dresden which we visited many times when it was behind the Iron Curtain

As can be vouched by Jonathan & Julie here today. Grace was a caring mother who saw that her children were well educated and brought up to respect Christian values, As a family we will remember very many happy times together including holidays in the Mediterranean in the summer and & Alpine resorts in the winter, They in their turn always respected their mother and helped her as much as they could in her old age.

As was common in our generation , wives did not go out to work but looked after their families . Grace was not a person to sit at home willing away her time. She devoted her spare time to serving the local community and it is this above all that she will be remembered.

Grace spent one day a week serving in Charity shops: unpaid of course. She completed 25 years serving in Scope in Burleigh St a charity shop supporting cerebral palsy, for which she received a commemorative medal.

She was very musical and joined the Cambridge Philharmonic choir and took part in many of their concerts at the Guildhall . Later on she played the piano for many years as the organist and a member of Lodge Granta , the Cambridge branch of Women Freemasons .

But her consuming interest was supporting the Conservative party in Cambridge and SW Cambs. Grace never sought high office such as becoming a local counsellor but organised fund raising and running the elections particularly in the Queen Edith area always with enormous enthusiasm. During some 50 years she help elect as MP Francis Pym , David Lane, Robert Rhodes James , Sir Anthony Grant and Andrew Lansley She attended many annual party conferences , and was in Brighton when the IRA blew up the Grand Hotel which fortunately Margaret Thatcher survived. In recognition of her services to the Conservatives Grace received a special invitation to 10 Downing Street in 1986 by Margaret Thatcher then Prime Minister,. It was an occasion she greatly treasured.

She became Chairwoman of the SW Cambs women's advisory committee and a member of the European Union of Women

Grace was highly thought of by all her associates . Sir Anthony Grant wrote " We were very fond of Grace as a great supporter and friend ; people like her are the backbone of the party". It is with pleasure that our MP Andrew Lansley whom she helped to elect is here today.

Grace was a devoted Christian and a regular attender at church services for 20 years at St James Wulfstan Way and 25 years at this church in Trumpington. Her special interest was the Mother's Union which she supported throughout her married life. The high light of her week at Langdon House was the Sunday afternoon service . Thus it very fitting that she has her funeral service as a Christian in this church and will be buried in it's very beautiful churchyard .

Everyone will remember Grace in her Hey day as a vivacious , witty and scintillating person with enormous energy and great enthusiasm for everything she did. She kept going well into her early 80s and it is only in the last 7 years that her health declined.

In January this year she had her 90th birthday lunch at Downing College when about 35 of her relatives and friends attended. She was in good form and was able to speak to everyone. The album of photographs taken at the party and the dress she wore at the 1950 Downing College May Ball are placed in her coffin in a secure metal capsule.

What a wonderful long ,interesting and fulfilling life Grace had!

I would like to include as contributors to this tribute Grace's family either here or represented .These are:

Her son Jonathan, daughter Julie , son in law Jeremy, grand sons Alistair and William, cousins Rita and Rollo, Mary, Leslie , Doris and Dudley , brother in law Roger and his family represented by Brian.

They remember Grace with much love as I do and are sad at her departing.

Grace Elizabeth , we salute you for the valuable contribution you made to the community , and the care and love you showed to your family and friends

