

## **Pamela Shirley Llewellyn**

**28th September 1933 – 19th September 2017**

It is incredible to think that Pam's childhood homes were in workhouses. Even one of her teachers was disbelieving when Pam gave her address at infant school registration.

Pam was born in Bromley on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1933 to parents Jack and Minnie – always known as Daphne - Jones. Jack and Daphne worked as Master and Matron of Public Assistance Institutions – previously known as workhouses. We usually think of workhouses as Victorian institutions but it was not until the National Assistance Act of 1948 that the last vestiges of the Poor Law disappeared, and with them, the workhouse.

Pam was not always happy about her domestic situation. In the hated art classes at Infants' School, she would repeatedly draw childlike pictures of a house, with four windows, door and a blue sky. Her teacher berated her, saying 'Can't you draw anything else?' When you look at old photographs of the forbidding buildings that were the workhouses – despite their illustrious architects such as George Gilbert Scott - we can understand why she could not.

Pam's early memories were of Infants' School in Wellington. At the time her parents were managing the workhouse in North Street, the remains of which survive in the low wall, railings and gate that fronted the building. Pam went to the then Courtland Road Infants' School, and remembers: a rest in the afternoons, on a camp bed with a navy rug with red binding, and having to regularly fetch back another little girl who kept running away into the neighbouring park.

Jack and Daphne were to divorce at the end of the war. Pam and younger sister Gillian went with their mother to live in Exmouth with Lionel, the new head of the family, and his daughter Maureen. Pam moved from the grammar school in Bridgwater, which her parents had had to pay for, to the grammar school in Exmouth, where fees had been abolished by the 1944 Education Act, and where she was able to drop the still-hated art lessons. By this time Pam and Gillian had a little brother, Bill, who died in 2014.

In 1951 Pam went to Birmingham University to study history. She received a scholarship of £210 a year from Devon County Council and lived in halls of

residence in Edgbaston. To get to lectures she had to cycle daily into the centre of Birmingham, down Broad Street – unthinkable now.

Pam did well at University despite spending a good deal of time playing hockey; her team became the women's British Universities' champions. Her dissertation required researching the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* – a survey of the finances of monasteries, created for Henry VIII in 1534, written in Medieval Latin.

Pam decided on a career in teaching and studied for her PGCE in London, keen to indulge in its cultural offerings. She became a dedicated theatre-goer, seeing early productions of plays such as *Look Back in Anger*, amongst others. At London University's Institute of Education she met fellow students Barbara and Margaret, who became lifelong friends.

Pam taught in the state system for 40 years. Her first teaching post was in Plumstead, followed by positions in Gosport – where for 4 years she was a borough councillor - and in Totton. She rose through the department ranks with each post, becoming Senior Woman Tutor at Totton Sixth Form College.

When asked when she was happiest, Pam replied – when she and John got together; they had met when teaching in Hampshire. Their move to the Lake District followed John's taking up a post at a College of Education in Ambleside. Pam taught at Barrow Girls' Grammar School, Ulverston Comprehensive School and the Sixth Form College in Barrow-in-Furness where, as Head of History and Government and Politics, she worked until retirement.

Pam and John lived in Ulverston, a market town full of character and the birthplace of Stan Laurel. It had a tiny cinema that showed Laurel & Hardy films. One year the Sons of the Desert, the Laurel & Hardy appreciation society, held their world convention in Ulverston. Visitors from around the world dressed as sheiks and other film characters and they paraded through the town, some driving vintage cars, cheered on by the whole town.

They retired to Taunton in 1991 as both wanted to come South again and the cricket appealed. John started the Taunton Art Group, and Pam became a founder member of the campaign for a better library in Taunton, having left a comment in the Corporation Street library's suggestion box: "I cannot believe this is the library of the County Town". For five years they ran an energetic and popular local campaign and achieved their goal of a new and better library with a children's library, a café, exhibition space, a meeting room and study space for students. Pam said that the new library opening was fantastic, with balloons everywhere, a big crowd of people who

rushed in when the doors opened and a crocodile of children passing books from the old to the new library.

For ten years, from 2004, Pam convened a music appreciation group of the Taunton University of the Third Age. She also stayed active with walking, keep fit, Tai Chi and croquet.

In 1999 John died suddenly of a heart attack, aged 73. Together they had enjoyed holidays abroad including to Egypt, when Peter was living there. Now, with friends, Pam indulged in more diverse travel to Australia, America, the Italian Lakes, the Côte d'Azur, the Adriatic, the Rhine and the Danube. In 2004 she moved to St Joseph's Field.

Pam spoke very warmly of all of her family. She was interested in all of you and said "The only thing I will miss, because of dying, are the young people in the family. I love them all and would dearly like to know what's going to happen to them". She spoke very proudly of her stepson Peter and of his interesting and diverse career; she was proud of granddaughters Siona, a physiotherapist in Holland, and of Saskia studying International Relations at St Andrew's University. She admired Rebekka, the girls' mother, for her intelligence, her fluency with languages and her knowledge of Africa and the Middle East. She loved her nephews in Australia and told me, admiringly, of Andrew's work as manager of a drug and alcohol dependency unit, and of Alastair's work at Monash University. She took a constant interest in her niece Susannah and Ben her great-nephew. Other great-nephews, Gregory and Jonathan wrote often from Australia, as did Freya her great-niece; when asked what made Pam laugh, Pam replied that Freya's letters and drawings made her day – thank you Freya for making your great-aunt happy!

Roaming across her life, Pam told me she had been very lucky: a free education up to post-graduate level; the benefits of the National Health Service; she was, unlike so many young people today, able to buy her own home, the first one costing £4,000, and a car – her first mini cost £350. She had loved, and been loved – she and John enjoyed a happy and loving relationship.

I asked Pam how she would like to be remembered, and she replied: as a kind and generous person who was interested in other people.

This has been a tribute to Pam but in reality has only touched upon her life experiences, and indeed your own memories and feelings towards her. A life and a person to be celebrated. Thank you.