

Patricia Wright - Pat

1st May 1952 – 9th October 2017

Tribute to Pat

This tribute to Pat's life has mostly come from Alan, plus anecdotes and stories told to me by Alan and his sister, Kit, when I met them a few days ago. Each of you here today will undoubtedly have your own perspectives and memories of Pat and although I never had the opportunity to meet her, it is clear that she was a woman with a mind of her own, who was wholehearted in everything she did, who never did anything by half measures, yet she had the gift of being popular wherever she went.

Pat was born in Sunderland, and raised in South Hetton, Hartlepool and Seaton Carew [*pron Seaton Caroo*]. She was always proud of being a native of County Durham, or, as she would say, "the land of the fighting Prince-Bishops", so now we'll listen to music from the North-East of England, it's a medley of three traditional tunes - Lads of Alnwick, Sunderland Lasses, and Peacock's March, played by Kathryn Tickell on the Northumbrian Smallpipes, a favourite instrument to both Pat and Alan.

Pat was an only child and had no remaining close relatives, just Alan, poor thing! However, she kept a framed photo taken in the 1940s of her Aunt Ada in her district nurse's uniform, in pride of place on her mantelpiece. Aunt Ada had stepped in when Pat's Mum was ill and she was determined to come to Pat and Alan's wedding 35 years ago. That was a three-day event with a ceilidh at the Lord Leycester Hospital on the Saturday night; the Coventry Morris Men were there and also the Gloucestershire Morris Men, so there was some competitive rivalry!

Pat and Alan were together for forty years. They had no children, neither of them wishing to do so. Pat was grateful to be living in an age when such a choice is possible, besides which she had a low threshold of pain and consequently always said that she could not be present at the birth.

Apart from that decision they shared many opinions and tastes, particularly in music (very important to them both), where their preferred styles were English traditional, Early, and Baroque – we want to reassure you that not too much of the last will be inflicted upon you!

Their other great love was for the Norfolk Broads, which Alan introduced to Pat on their honeymoon and she quickly became even more addicted than he was. They both enjoyed getting away from the stresses of their working lives, and loved the slow speed of the boat as they watched the wildlife - otters, kingfishers. They went to the Broads often 3 or 4 times a year, sometimes over Christmas and New Year. One of the photos Alan showed me was of Pat looking competent and confident at the helm of their boat on the Broads.

Not everything was peaceful - how could it be in 40 years? Pat had a mind of her own and everyone knew it. With Pat you always knew where you were, and, if you were in it, you always knew what the depth was! As an example, she often accompanied Alan when he was dancing with Coventry Morris Men and would occasionally make pithy observations on their performance, such as, "Lines, gentlemen." and, "You are living proof that practice does not make perfect". These comments earned her the accolade of "the woman who put the Pat into Patronising". She loved that, she could take the flak as well as dishing it out.

Pat had a range of talents, both professional and practical, and it was probably her teaching career that gave Pat the greatest satisfaction and her proudest achievement.

Pat had trained as a primary school teacher, but spent over 30 years as a special needs teacher because there was both the opportunity, and she could see the need. She took the job seriously and was very successful, becoming the Coordinator of Special Needs at Champion School in Leamington. She worked incredibly hard with both the students and their parents to help them access the education they were entitled to. This

often didn't endear her to the local education authority! One parent was so amazed at what she'd done for his son that he burst into tears.

Pat also worked with young people from the Portuguese and Vietnamese communities in Leamington helping them to learn English. She sometimes bumped into her ex-pupils; it was only much later that they fully appreciated what she had done for them. On hearing that Pat had died, one of her ex-pupils sent a card to Alan, saying, "Pat was a lovely person. It was an honour and a privilege to have her teaching me". Inevitably, Pat brought her work home, and when she was offered and took early retirement, it brought great relief to both.

Dancing was a favourite hobby – for many years she and Alan performed the English country dances of the 17th and 18th centuries. They were happiest dancing together at Playford Balls such as at the Sidmouth Folk Festival. She loved making and dressing up in her full length dresses; one photo from 30 years ago shows Pat wearing one of these with a hand-made larger-than-life butterfly on her shoulder.

Pat was also a member of Chinewrde Morris Dancers for twenty years until injuries forced her to stop - cornering at high speed in clogs on loose gravel is a risky business! She designed all the distinctive Chinewrde dresses and re-wrote their constitution. One of Pat's proudest moments came when she wrote a new dance and led it on the stage at Sidmouth.

Pat was a fine exponent of needlework, both knitting and dressmaking, also making breeches for Alan for Morris and Country dancing.

After retiring from teaching Pat took up a new pastime, making greetings cards. Two of her ex-colleagues, Joyce and Helen, joined her in the card club. Pat's cards were varied and imaginative; on the back of them she wrote, "All smears, smudges and imperfections were intentionally added for that handmade look".

Finally, we mustn't forget to mention Pat's love of cats; she adored her two Somali breed cats, named Bateman and Woodforde; Pat named the previous pair Hewlett and Packard because they were black and white.

Methodical and organized, wholehearted, intense, never afraid to speak her mind, yet she made friends everywhere. If there was one item that summed up Pat, it was the sign in the hallway at their home in Bradford Close, which proclaimed, "Dull women have immaculate homes".

Dull, she wasn't!