

A celebration of life

Florence Vera Pearce

1 October 1916 – 4 October 2019

2.40 pm, 17 October 2019, Yeovil Crematorium



a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

Florence Vera Pearce

1st October 1916 to – 4th October 2019

Tribute to Vera

When Vera was born in 1916, the First World War – the war to end all wars - was raging, George V was on the throne and Lloyd-George was about to take over as Prime Minister of the wartime coalition government. 1916 has, however, a few other claims to fame in an otherwise troubled year: 1916 saw the early beginnings of what became the vital national service of blood donation and transfusion; and the great explorer Ernest Shackleton undertook his remarkable 800-mile sail in an open boat to rescue his men from Elephant Island.

I recently saw a teatowel which started with the words "For those born before 1940" listing some of the many changes experienced over those years including: "We were born before television, before penicillin, polio shots, frozen foods, credit cards and ball-point pens".

It is incredible to think of the times that Vera lived through during her long life. Fortunately, her daughters have impressive memories; they have asked me to read this tribute to Vera, written by Rosemary.

Rosemary's tribute

Vera was born on 1st October 1916 at 11 Craster Road, Brixton, London. Later the family moved to Deal, Kent, where Vera at the age of 14 years went into service. Apparently she was a practical joker and one story stands out, where she put her girlfriend into a laundry basket and pushed her down the stairs. Another time, Vera herself went down the laundry chute!!

Moving on, Vera met and married her first husband Frederick Coomber in March 1937. They had three daughters: Rosemary, Molly who died in 2005, and Maureen – born and died 1942. They then adopted Peter. Her husband was in the army during the second world war, and the family was evacuated to Somerset in 1943.

Vera and the girls would go to the farms to help collect eggs and help with spud picking. They had lots of laughs, covered in mud and wearing sacks on their shoulders if it was raining. Once a month they would walk through two fields to the next village, to the local hop, trying to avoid the cow-pats – they didn't have a torch!

In 1946 Vera and Fred had twins, Jennifer and Doreen. Sadly, in 1958, their marriage ended.

Vera later met and married her second husband, Horace Pearce, in 1965. They eventually retired to Hooe, in Plymouth. Horace died in 1978 and Vera moved to Weston-super-Mare, settling, eventually, in Yeovil.

Vera was always game for a laugh and loved dressing up for Halloween. At Christmas time she would go into Santa's grotto, sometimes sitting on his knee, saying she had been a good girl! On one occasion a lady tapped her on the shoulder saying: "Do you mind, that's my husband's knee." So she quickly got off saying: "Oh dear! But it was comfy"!! She was about 93 years old then. She would chat to anyone. The art of conversation was not lost when Vera was around. She will be missed for that alone.

Bye Vera



Rosemary remembers her father leaving to fight in the second world war, when she was six years old, and how he waved a white hanky out of the train window. When Vera and her children were evacuated to Middle Chinnock in Somerset, they lived in the curiously named Haunts Cottages – very appropriate given how much Vera enjoyed Halloween. Rosemary revisited the area many years later and observed that little had really changed. She remembers picking cherries and hanging pairs of them over her ears to look like earrings. When Vera was 80 and she still had her sight, Rosemary took her on a trip to revisit the area in Deal where they had lived. The woman who helped to deliver Rosemary was still living in the house next door.

When Vera was 100, the local Beaminster School was celebrating its own centenary and invited Vera to talk to the children about her life. She was delighted to receive this thank you letter:

Dear Vera,

Thank you for coming in to our school to talk about your life. We liked hearing about when you were a maid. We also liked hearing about how you had a bath when you were a little girl. It was amazing to see your 100th birthday card from Her Majesty the Queen.

We hope you liked our songs of twinkle twinkle, row row row your boat and the ABC song. We all like fish and chips too and we hope that you have some for your supper soon!

We hope to see you here again soon.

Love from Burton Class.

Vera really wanted to reach her 103rd birthday and it is great that she lived to celebrate it. Despite being blind for the last ten years she lived independently at home with support from her daughters and carers. She was also a great walker and in her '90s walked all the way around the lake at Stourhead. Vera attributed her longevity to drinking milk, eating scampi and having the occasional glass of Baileys.

This has been a tribute to Vera but in reality has touched lightly upon her life experiences and, indeed, your own memories and feelings towards her. A life and a person to be acknowledged with love and respect. Thank you.

