

MAUREEN GALE

Maureen was a Ryde girl born in Adelaide Place on the 26th January 1930. Her parents, both Islanders, were George and Molly Barton. Maureen as a child was very keen on dancing and from an early age was performing and appearing with her dancing class in events at the Pavilion and on Carnival Floats. When age 4 her brother John was born and the family continued to live in Adelaide place until the New Year of 1947 when George and Molly bought a sub-post office at Durrington just outside Worthing and in the shadow of the South Downs. Maureen who was in the Lower Sixth Form at Sandown Grammar School, decided she did not want to transfer to a school near Worthing and started her nursing career at St Nicholas Hospital near Woking – she was just 17. Later she was accepted for training at King's College Hospital and embarked on the 3 year State Registration course followed by a year at King's as a Staff Nurse. It was whilst at King's through the impact of the way the Catholic Priest cared for his parishioners in the wards, that Maureen was received into the Roman Catholic Church.

Maureen knew Tony from an early age but contact was lost after her move to the mainland.

In 1952 Maureen started training to become a Midwife at Sussex Maternity Hospital in Brighton. Whilst there her parents indulgence extended to buying her a Vespa motor scooter and so she became the first midwife in Brighton to go roaring around the streets on her scooter instead of riding a bicycle! In November of 1953, towards the end of her training, she had a long weekend off and came to stay with her beloved Aunt Meg (her Mother's sister Mrs Margaret Wheeler) in Well Street Ryde. Tony, (who was nearing the end of his period of National service) through the encouragement of David Wheeler, met up with Maureen – despite her protestations – after a Gang Show at the Pavilion. They “clicked” immediately and from then on there was no one else for either of them.

Tony worked for Solicitors in Cowes but in August 1954 Maureen sustained a fractured skull when involved in an accident whilst riding her scooter – it was many months before she could return to work. The following year they became engaged – the ring used up most of Tony's savings! (Maureen always blamed the “bang on the head” for her decision to marry Tony). Then in mid June Tony was offered employment as a Solicitor in Ndola, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). There was a rush of marriage preparations for a wedding on the 6th August 1955 the Feast of the Transfiguration, the day was at that time also “August Bank Holiday Saturday” – all the problems were overcome and Teddy Hoar was persuaded to lay on a reception at the Hotel Ryde Castle. At the beginning of September they arrived in Ndola after a three and half days flight. It was an initiation to remember as September was locally known as “suicide month”. They coped and the first of their children, Peter was born on 25th May 1956. In 1958 the little family returned to Ryde and Tony became a partner in Roach Pittis. Maureen was a full time mother and homemaker in earnest with Richard, Susan, Nicholas and Beth occupying her days/nights in the following years.

The family grew up in Maryland, Grove Road, Ryde a large Victorian house with room for family, friends and those in need of a refuge including exchange students

and refugee children; she really did operate an open door policy especially so far as the young were concerned. Throughout this time she was supporting Tony in his work and social activities especially providing culinary delights at committee meetings. Perhaps the best influence on her Family was an elderly caravan located in the woods at Woodside, where there was such freedom at weekends and holiday periods, with campfires and swings from the trees to delight the many children who visited the Gales in their den.

She was a founder member of the IW Multiple Sclerosis Society serving on the committee and as the welfare officer. Later she was appointed a Visitor at Parkhurst Prison and became a member of the Local Parole Board, this involved a forest full of paper work – not her strong point. Several trips with the Across Jumbulance to Lourdes with Maureen caring for the disabled and also with the ABK school pilgrimage to Lourdes. She supported the Life organisation by working in High Street Life shop fund raising to open a house in Newport for single Mothers.

In 1981 a move to a bungalow in Buckland Gardens gave more time to become a committee member of the Isle of Wight Housing Association. The WRVS became another interest and ultimately she was the organiser of the Meals on Wheels service in Ryde. This meant many friends became delivery drivers before Tesco's sold prepared meals. It was during this time that the late Brian Bowyer commented that Maureen was the Island's Eva Peron in getting "things moving".

Whilst the family was growing up Maureen supported the family pastoral meetings organised by the late Molly Lamb at her home and on visits to Pastoral Centre at Park Place, Wickham. The Ecumenical discussion group in Ryde was also supported by Maureen and Tony. Maureen regularly attended weekday mass at St Cecilia's Abbey until they moved to live in Ventnor. Maureen and Tony made pilgrimages to Walsingham, Rome, Medugore; their final pilgrimage being to the Holy Land with the late Sister Dolores. It was then that Maureen's Alzheimers was apparent and with family support being in Ryde the move back to their hometown became the best course to adopt. They moved to Cotswold Court in 2001. Eventually in July 2007 a crisis occurred, Maureen had a spell in Hospital and from there she moved to Cameron House Care Home in Pellhurst Road; throughout her stay she was sustained by her Family and her Church. Maureen lived at Cameron House until her peaceful death on Sunday 21st December supported by the very caring staff at the Home.

Maureen was a Lady at the centre of her Family, with prayer, food, comfort, kindness and laughter, and, as much help as she could give, who has a special place in many hearts, especially those of her Family and eleven grandchildren.

MAY SHE REST IN PEACE