

Betty Collett

A Brief Life Story

Today, we've come together to thank God for a long and fruitful life; to remember some, at least, of the many gifts and talents which Betty had and which she used to enhance the lives of others and contribute to the community of which she was a part. And I'm just going to run briefly through the outline of her 91 years.

Betty was born in Ramsgate, where she apparently spent a very happy childhood with her 3 brothers and a sister, and Ramsgate remained a very special place to her all of her life.

Early on in the war, though, her two younger brothers, Bobby and Peter were evacuated to Shropshire and, in order to be near to them, Betty joined the Land Army. She thoroughly enjoyed the experience and gained a real love and appreciation of the land, and all the practical skills that went with farming and gardening. She certainly put all she learned to good use throughout her life and could build ponds and walls and rabbit cages as well as anyone. She also made her own butter, drove a tractor and fed her family in the good old fashioned meat and two veg way.

After the war, Betty again returned to the country when she came to Oxfordshire, very appropriately, as a housekeeper on a farm. There she met and married her husband Frank and went on to raise four children and, in due course, Betty threw herself enthusiastically in to all aspects of life in Bampton.

Betty worked as a gardener at Weald Manor for many years and her horticultural interests led her to become one of the founder members of Bampton Horticultural Society. She was also a keen member of the WI, served as Secretary of the British Legion, was involved in the Pumpkin Club, helped to organise the Morris Teas at Whitsun and was just one of that stalwart band of individuals who seem to be everywhere in the village where a helping hand and willing volunteer is needed. Betty would never say 'no' to any request.

Betty was also very creative and clever with her hands and had a gifted artistic side to her character. She enjoyed art and poetry, made cakes and wedding dresses and became a weaver when she was given her own loom.

Of independent mind and definite opinions to the end, Betty loved life, loved people and of course loved being a wife and mother and then a grandmother to her 9 grandchildren and, in time, a great-grandmother.

In later years, she lived in the annexe at Calais Oak Farm and as infirmity increased was looked after to some extent by carers until, when Alzheimers took a firmer hold, she moved into Rosebank in May, where she received that fantastic level of care we have come to expect from the staff there, and for which Betty's family are very grateful.

You can't put 91 years into a few sentences of course, and each one of you here this afternoon will bring your own memories and thoughts to fill in all the spaces between these few lines. I now hand over to Jacob to do just that on behalf of himself and the family...