

JILLY LO-VEL : 1950 - 1997

A most moving tribute to Jilly was the scene of her funeral at Abbotsham on September 11th. The church was full to overflowing with so many friends, some of whom had travelled long distances to contribute to this immensely sad farewell. I am sure there was a common wish to bear witness to the affection in which she was held, to condole with her family, and to give expression to the loss we all felt.

It is a convention to find words of praise for the dead, but in Jilly's case the tributes to her sweet, gentle and kind character have been entirely spontaneous and sincere. One can't remember ever hearing her say anything uncharitable, or hearing critical words about her. She loved her family, she loved Lundy, she loved the animals, especially her cat, Oscar (who, much to her amusement, turned out to be a lady), and the highly popular Guinness. And she genuinely cared that as far as she could help it, all should go as well as possible for both staff and visitors on the island.

Jilly was born in Lancashire but made the move to North Devon at the age of three months, where the Dyke family lived in a delightful thatched cottage at Fairy Cross. She and David went first to the village school, and then transferred to Abbotsham. David says that she was a wonderful and long-suffering companion who joined in all his adventures, and Jilly herself said that she was so lucky to have had a very happy childhood in a loving family. In 1960 the family moved to Barnstaple, David and Jilly both went to the grammar school, and when she left she went to work in John's studio where she learnt screen printing and was initiated into the technicalities of Lundy stamps. Some time later she worked on Lundy during the summer seasons, turning her hand to chamber-maiding and helping in the shop or wherever her help was needed. During this time she also helped Mr Gade when he began to write his memoirs.

In 1970 John, Joan and Jilly went to live on Lundy in Signals North, and there Jilly met her future when Reg Lo-Vel came over to help with the building programme. They were married at Ilfracombe in October 1974. After a time in Ilfracombe (Reg's home town) they went to live in Boscastle, where Jenny and Lucy were born, and where John and Joan had also settled in 1975. Jilly and Reg enjoyed village life - that is, until there was a vacancy for a couple to work on Lundy. It was a big step to take in many respects, but the call of the island was not to be resisted. So the Lo-Vel family moved to Lundy and had no regrets afterwards.

It was a shattering blow when Jilly was taken ill and was diagnosed as suffering from brain tumours in the spring of 1996. Everyone who saw her during the time of her illness was so deeply impressed with her courage, determination and fortitude - she believed in fighting, not self-pity, and when she recovered sufficiently to return to Lundy she was so happy, and made the most of every minute. I never heard her complain about her ill-luck, and learnt that a sweet character can also show a resilience and an inner strength that all of us admired.

Lundy was part of Jilly's life from the time that she was old enough to understand the word. Her ashes are now part of the island, and her memory will stay alive with all of us, who think of her with fond memories, and take inspiration in her courage.

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