

Pamela Morgan

a tribute given by David Morgan

8th January 2013

Mum was born just 20 months after the end of the First World War. My grandparents, Noel and Molly Downing, had both been deeply involved in the war and I am sure they tried to put all that horror behind them and carve out a haven of peace in which to bring up their family of three little girls, Pamela, Hazel and Jill. Pam was the eldest, and Jill, the youngest, is here this afternoon. They lived in Edgbaston in Birmingham, and were looked after by much loved French speaking Nan. My grandmother had met her in France when she was nursing in the war; she stayed with the family for 20 years.

Mum didn't speak fondly of her time at Edgbaston High School, but she retained a circle of school friends that she kept in touch with for the rest of her life. One, Dr Cath Eliot, reminisced last week about how Pam's artistic bent was apparent even aged 11: 'she used to paint lovely pictures of rather plump cleaning ladies chatting in a street doorway with the odd child playing in the dirt.'

Pam gained a place at Birmingham School of Art, but by this time war had broken out again and something even better than university beckoned. Our grandfather was chatting one evening during a game of poker with a group of friends, one of whom was an academic at Birmingham University. He must have talked proudly about Pam, and probably complained about her doing nothing more than attending art school when there was a war on. A few days later, my mother received a letter which instructed her to take the London train. She was to alight not in London but at the junction with the Oxford Cambridge line; a small village called Bletchley and there she was to report for war duty.

She was assigned to shift work in Hut 6 at Bletchley Park. She would sit at her desk in front of an Enigma machine, set the dials and type in the gobbledy gook that had been intercepted by radio from German Morse code signals. She would monitor what came out of Enigma. Most of the time it was gibberish, but every so often German suddenly appeared! I remember asking her how she knew when the code had been cracked. I mean I had learnt German and she hadn't....

Mum gave me a withering look as only mothers do. Any fool can recognize German as opposed to gobbledy gook. The excitement and thrill every time they broke the code is hard to imagine. She often spoke of these days as being the time of her life. She worked with an amazingly talented team of course, people like Asa Briggs, Bill Bundy, Bob Roseveare, (Helen's brother) Harry Hinsley and Dennis Babbage, some of the finest young brains in the land. They worked 24/7, in close knit teams, with clear goals that they all profoundly believed in and which were of the greatest national importance. Churchill was the operation's greatest supporter. He famously said of the staff that they were 'the goose that laid the golden egg, but never cackled'.

It was top secret of course. Ultra secret! No one was to know, not even Pam's father whose conversation had led to it all. In fact, it was drilled into her so strongly that she was never, ever to talk about it, that she never breathed a word until the whole world was talking about in 1976. So we were all rather surprised when we found out that our mother had worked for Military Intelligence! But it is really only more recently that we have all woken up to the fact that what these women and men did had huge significance on multiple levels. My daughter recently took part in a maths trip to Bletchley Park: the work there was crucial in the development of computer technology; Bletchley code breaking underpinned most of the major military operations of the war; every war documentary I see makes reference to Bletchley Park, but I also take pride in the fact that the work at Bletchley is credited with shortening the war by two years.

So Nick and Emily, your granny worked for MI6!

After the war, things seemed dull by comparison. But she had a good time working with the Land Army in Somerset, where she again made several life-long friends. She then worked as a secretary for a Harley Street doctor in London and it was in London that she met one Donald Morgan, who had coincidentally also worked at Bletchley Park. She married Donald in December 1950. They had looked around for somewhere to live where Dad could easily travel into work in the city and they alighted on Ruislip. 50 Elmbridge Drive. I arrived in 1952 and my brother in 1955. Mum contracted polio in 1956. This must have been worrying; I know as a toddler I was distressed at not having my mummy around. But Mum made a full recovery with no lasting damage. I can then recall well the house searching that my parents did in Northwood in early 1957. My mother did not want to move to Bourne End Road, she preferred

some of the other streets, but Dad said that the dingy, brown house at number 15 was the one to get. He was right.

Early life in Bourne End Road was another of those highlights for Mum. I recall lots of coffee mornings, at no 6, the Astons, no 16, the Haymans, no 10 the Wilsons, no 34 the Jareds and so on. There was a lovely open community of young mothers, who helped each other and did things together, from sharing lifts to school to going to the pantomime together. The road has changed of course, but that sense of care and love is still there. Thank you, Joanne, for all the visits you made to Mum at just the right moment; thank you to Ushma for being there too. Thank you, Joy, for the delightful tea parties you invited Mum to. Indeed thank you, Bourne End Road for being a wonderful part of Mum's life for 55 years!

Now when we moved to Northwood, Mum was keen to get us boys to go to church. She arranged with Maureen Wilson that Sid Wilson would take us all to Emmanuel Children's Church. In those days, Mum was the church goer, not Dad. Mum was involved with a whole lot of things at Emmanuel, starting with Young Wives, as I recall. I do remember Joan Alsop being there. Much later both Mum and Dad were in the Alsop's Home Group. Thank you for the help and guidance that you, Keith, provided during Mum's life. Mum took part in all sorts of things at Emmanuel, but in recent years she was part of the Wednesday Group; she loved coming to that; thank you to all who helped her get around (Barbara and Valerie and many others and Northwood Live at Home scheme).

Mum was also someone who looked out for opportunities to serve others, especially the frail and elderly. I recall how for many years she and Fynvola James would arrange for an elderly couple, Stan and Daisy Clark, to come over for coffee each Thursday. Mum even got hold of a piano for blind Mr Clark to play.

As we got older, Mum took up Art again. She went to art classes in Eastbury, joined the Northwood Arts Association and produced many lovely oil paintings. She was also very active in the Townswomen's Guild. And of course, she was a keen gardener. She loved her garden and it was always a very beautiful place to be. Thank you so much, Milan, for looking after the garden in her last years so that she could still enjoy her earlier work. That meant so much to her.

Mum may not have spoken German but she did speak French. She loved France and the French. I think this all began when in her late teens she spent some extended time in the south of France. She would happily read novels in French

well into her 80s. And of course she adored those camping holidays in France with Dad.

The final chapter is the Eastbury story, one which really began where Dad left off. Dad had very much wanted a church for Eastbury and just around the time of his death, a church finally did get off the ground with the help of many of you present here this afternoon. Mum loved her time with Eastbury Church. I think it was a time when her faith flourished and a time when she was served by so many of you. Daniel Chae will lead us in prayer later; he was the first pastor at Eastbury; I shall not forget how he came along and shoveled snow off the front drive for Mum, amongst many other acts of kindness. Chrissie has come with meals; Valerie with news, Ken with flowers, Joan with reading and many others but especially Elaine with medical help at the right time. Mum could not have gone on living at number 15 if it had not been for Elaine, if only for the confidence it gave Mum that there was a doctor nearby who would help when help was needed. Elaine has been an adviser and helper at Mum's side for 15 years and more, but especially since Mum's heart operation of 2001 and the consequent complications that resulted in loss of balance. Mum adored the work you do with SOS Bosnia; the way you seek to provide help in an appropriate and timely manner was exactly what she wanted to happen. Elaine, you acted as an angel of God to Mum. Bless you and your ministry! And thank you Richard too for all those walks you and Elaine took Mum on round the aquadrome!

I cannot end without referring to the fine work of Northwood Nursing. Mum needed a lot of care to stay on at Bourne End Road this last year and a series of carers became very close to Mum in her last months. None more so than Jenny. My brother and I want to thank you very, very warmly. Life was not easy for Mum in her final years but she faced it without complaint. She did not sit there moaning about things; she was always grateful for what she had. She had her many friends, all of you, and she had her family.

She loved us all deeply; she was delighted in our choice of wives, one from Russia and one from the USA. She loved her grandchildren and was far more patient with them than I am. She loved her husband of 47 years and missed him greatly. She loved her wider family too. And she loved her God and Saviour.

Thank you Mum!