

Obituary for Susannah Bradley (21st April 1944 - 20th August 2008)

Given by Cllr Peter Hill, former Wivenhoe Town Mayor

Thinking back, it seems like I have always known Susannah. She has always been there. Always happy to see you, a broad smile on her face and always the first to say how are you, and would always say fine when you got the chance to ask how she was, even though in the last few years of her life we both knew it wasn't a truthful answer. But still that smile always seemed to be there. Even recently, when I saw her a few weeks ago, sporting her new pixie look after a couple of bouts of chemotherapy, looking surprisingly calm and collected, and, inevitably still smiling.

She came to Wivenhoe in the early 1980s and she soon joined the Wivenhoe Gilbert & Sullivan Society. That was a key passion in her life. She enjoyed being involved in things as well as caring deeply for her two children, Stella and James, brother Chris and her faithful partner Roger.

As well as involvement in painting the scenery for the annual G & S Show, very often she was one of the ladies in the chorus line but I have a particular memory of her playing the part of Little Buttercup in HMS Pinafore. I can still hear her singing Poor Little Buttercup. She had a very distinctive voice. Then how many of you remember the G & S production of Princess Ida in 1996 with a set done in the style of Clarisse Cliff? She was one of the team which created that artistic masterpiece which I wish we could have kept.

Peter Cook, who expressed his regret to me on Sunday that he couldn't be here as he was flying that day to China, remembers her painting a palm tree. We tend to think of Susannah more working with a fine paint brush. But not on this occasion, out came the emulsion brush, and, in true Rolf Harris style there was a palm tree.

She had wonderful skills as an artist and especially as an illustrator with a remarkable eye for detail.

In 1994 the Town Council advertised a vacancy in the office and Susannah applied. We had pre-prepared several questions. I still have my interview notes and Susannah had to answer such questions as 'The cleaner at the William Loveless Hall comes rushing in, complaining about the state of the Hall after a party, the floor in the ladies toilets are awash as a pipe has been wrenched off the wall. The Hall is due to be used by the senior citizens in 2 hours time. What would you do?'

Whilst the temptation must have been to answer 'panic', she gave us a good enough answer to that question for us to appoint her Assistant Town Clerk. She gave us loyal service for 10 years, having to deal with many different sorts of incidents during that time until retiring three years ago in April 2004.

Susannah you will live on through your art. I am sure many of us have examples of your work at home, may be some of you are wearing one of the many badges she designed and made – this one I am wearing was one the first she ever did and done as a surprise for Bonnie and I at our Mayor's Ball in 1996 when she made lots of these badges to sell for the Mayor's Charity Fund. She raised many hundreds of pounds in this way that year and at successive Mayor's Ball and for other events and organisations as they were hugely successful.

And if you don't own a piece of her art, in the Lobby of the Town Council offices you can see the magnificent 'Year in the Life of Wivenhoe' mural which the Town Council commissioned from her in 2005, or you can see some of her creative side by looking at her page on the Wivenhoe web site.

Susannah, we all have special memories of you. Thank you for being part of our lives. We have all enjoyed knowing you. We will all miss you.

Peter Hill

2nd September, 2008