

MEMORIES OF AUDREY C

Audrey was born on 15th January 1938 in London Hospital within the sound of the Bow Bells. Her parents, Joseph and Frances lived in two rented rooms in Bow after Audrey was born.

Audrey's grandfather was given £100 for selling a winning Irish Sweepstake ticket. He then put a deposit of £5 on 'Lilac', a bungalow in Victory Avenue, Dunton, which became the family's holiday home until the outbreak of the war, when they moved to Dunton permanently. Six adults and three children lived in Lilac, a four roomed bungalow.

Audrey attended Sunday school at Dunton church and went to Dunton Primary School before moving into their own bungalow at 349 Victoria Road.

Audrey's memories of Dunton were very dear to her and she felt she had, in spite of the war and the hardships her parents endured, a privileged childhood enjoying the freedom that children today no longer have.

In 1949 Audrey attended Laindon High Road School and her favourite subjects were English and drama.

She joined a dance troupe in Laindon called The Earlettes, where she began tap dancing. She had a natural talent and she was still tap dancing in her 70's. Audrey found her love of performing when she joined a concert party in Langdon Hills, called 'The Revellers'. They performed pantomimes and Audrey had many principle roles. It was here that she met and fell in love with Len, he was in charge of stage lighting.

When she was 18 she began working as a shorthand typist at Rotary Hoes Ltd, where Len had an apprenticeship as an electrician.

Audrey and Len were married in Dunton Church in 1957. They moved in with Len's father in Hill Croft, Dry Street. By now Audrey had become a member of The Laindon Players and had started teaching tap dancing at The Popular School of Dance. She had also joined a concert party ran by called Sophies Concert Party. They performed songs and sketches at care homes and even entertained the prisoners at Chelmsford prison. Audrey was so busy she told Len she would have to give something up, so she gave up work!

On 5th November 1965 they moved to Vowler Road. Audrey and Len were members of the Methodist Church where they would devote so much time throughout their married life organising a crèche on Sundays and was a Sunday school teacher with Len.

In 1967, the Minister, formed a drama group consisting of church members and friends. They would perform pantomimes every February. Mrs B wrote and directed them and Audrey was the choreographer and performed many principle and character roles. Len was lighting and special effects man. When Mrs B moved, Audrey took over the directing and producing. MADS (Methodist Amateur Dramatic Society) put on many plays and pantomimes and ran from 1968 to 2012. The group raised large amounts of money for the Church Fund. Audrey put her life and soul into MADS and it was a huge part of her life. Some of the children carried on performing in the pantomimes into their adult years with their own children in them too!

When putting on The Wizard of Oz, Audrey wrote the script word for word from the original film. There was even a real life Toto the dog!

Audrey also started a concert party called Patchwork, entertaining in care homes locally.

Audrey was Secretary for JMA (Junior Mission for All) and helped the collectors raise money. She also created a children's singing group call The Jempsie Seven who toured the local churches signing up tempo hymns.

For 15 years Audrey was an integral part of the girl guides. She was Leftie at guide meetings, and she was QM at many guide camps. She was like an auntie to the guides and many remained her long life friends.

In 1974, Audrey produced and directed a gang show on a large scale, involving the brownies, guides, cubs and scouts from the church, a few years later she organised other gang shows on a smaller scale.

She also organised the Women's World Day of Prayer for many years and arranged services in various local churches.

Audrey and Len would organise strawberry cream teas in their beautiful garden to raise money for the church. She would enjoy showing people around her garden which she had re-designed and tended to over the years. She was famous for her home made jams and pickles that she sold at church bazaars.

She volunteered at the Plotlands showing visitors around The Haven Museum, also organised Dunton School reunions at the Plotlands which became a local famous event.