

In Loving Memory

Mary Rose Murphy 1923-2017

Miss Mary Rose Murphy was born on the 21st November 1923, in India. Moving to Farnborough in Hampshire at the age of 10, she attended the Hillside Convent, run by the Religious of Christian Education, and her association with the school, which became Farnborough Hill Convent College, lasted all her life, and it was the sisters and staff who were her family, with whom she spent many Christmases, Easter and feast days. She was, as one of her friends put it, “inordinately good company”. Many people were able to attend her Thanksgiving Mass in Our Lady and St Dominic’s church in Cove, testament to the love and admiration for a feisty, determined and highly intelligent lady who was generous and kind and never afraid to speak her mind.

Her teaching career spanned an amazing 60 years and she remembered all her students, many years after she’d taught them, and quite a few of their parents also! After teacher training at Digby Stuart College in Roehampton, she taught at Cove School and then at Whitefriars (now St Patrick’s) in Farnborough, after which she specialised in teaching children with learning difficulties. Although a very capable, efficient and probably formidable headmistress at both Freemantles school for Autistic Children in Windlesham and Greencroft special school in Farnborough, she much preferred “grassroots” teaching.

Calm, kind and concerned about everyone, she was also tremendously brave and heroic. One lunch time in 1946, a plane coming from the airfield caught fire and crashed into the Cove school, where she was teaching, killing the pilot. Seeing the plane plunging towards them, she literally threw the children across the road away from the school. It was her quick thinking and bravery that saved the lives of the seven year old children in her care: all she thought about was their safety.

Shunning publicity, she helped many people behind the scenes, and never expected reward. She was hardworking, yet generous with her time, volunteering with many organisations and societies. She was devoted to her Catholic faith, and to the parish, assisting with the sacramental programs, writing articles for the church magazine, with church fetes and feasts. She will be fondly remembered.

Rest in peace, Mary Rose!