

Celebrating special people

Grace Rawlins

Newer residents to the villages may not know Grace Rawlins but folk who have been around slighter longer know her as District Nurse, Village Midwife, friend to many and a lovely, gentle lady.



Grace was born to a farming family in nearby Aldsworth where her lifelong interest in animals began. The family moved to Bourton-on-the-Water when she was seven years old. Her only brother still farms in Bourton.

Early Days

Grace grew up and was educated in Bourton and at the age of 16 embarked on her career in nursing, starting as a 'probationer' at Bourton Hospital. From there she moved on to train at Cheltenham General and then did her midwifery training in London and Hereford. In those days there were not enough babies being born in the Hereford area so Grace was sent to Tipton and Dudley for home deliveries. This was a real eye-opener to her as the large families that she attended were often very poor. She remembers delivering a 7th baby to one mother, who turned out to be twins – the poor Mum nearly died of shock!

Grace moved back to Cheltenham General where she worked as Sister on the Surgical Ward and then on the Accident Ward. At about this time she met her future husband Roger. Roger and Grace

were married in 1960 and set up house in Roger's home village of Milton-under-Wychwood. At the back of their house they have an 8-acre smallholding and were soon keeping sheep and a cow. She was even persuaded to keep goats when Dr. Sandy's young son was found to be al-

lergic to cows' milk and needed a ready supply of goats' milk!

Amazing Grace

After her marriage, Grace returned to Bourton Hospital to work, until her daughter, Rachel, was born six years later. She soon returned to part-time work and in 1968 swapped roles and became the District Nurse and Midwife covering the Wychwoods. As District Nurse she provided much more care than the purely medical; she would often shop for old folk who were unable to get out and would even help by bringing in the coal or doing other little jobs.

Initially Grace, as a relative newcomer to the village, was unsure of her way around and there were few street signs or lights in those days, but Dr Gordon Scott's directions were always so detailed that she never lost her way or missed a house.

In 1974 Grace's mother became seriously ill and with Rachel growing and needing more of her attention she reluctantly decided to leave her job. At that time Grace was on-call night and day, without the benefit of bleeps or mobile phones and felt that it was unfair on Rachel. This 'retirement' did not last long though; in 1976 she accepted a post at Chipping Norton Hospital as part-time midwife which she held until she retired properly in March 1998.

Her daughter Rachel was married in 1999; she works as a nurse in the Coronary Care Unit at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. Like her Mum she loves her chosen career and gives herself 'heart and soul' to her patients. On 16th July 2000 Grace's beautiful granddaughter Daisy was born and you can imagine that Grace now loves spending time with her!

Looking back over her career Grace says she loved every job she ever did; whatever she was doing at the time was the one she enjoyed the most. The home deliveries were always very special; the 'icing on the cake' for her. She always thought of the new Mums as 'daughters' and remains friends with many of them to this day. She is much too discreet to talk about her patients in detail but does mention going to Pam Ayres after the birth of her second baby and being asked to check the goat before she looked at the new babe! She can remember precise details of

the days that babies were delivered. She predicted the birth of one Leaffield baby on January 21st and when she was proved right Dr. Sandy's comment was 'if you had lived a couple of centuries ago you would have been burnt as a witch!'

Sitting in her lounge surrounded by photographs of family and friends, particularly the snaps of the many babies she delivered; it is easy to see what satisfaction she gained from her career. She feels that she was very privileged to work with so many wonderful people over the years; she was always welcomed into every house she attended



and what better place

to live and work than this beautiful part of the country?

And Daisy?

Grace cannot remember how many babies she has delivered over the years but there must be many of our readers who have fond memories of her and her quiet, gentle care. We will all be fascinated to see if little Daisy follows in the footsteps of Rachel and Grace!

Christine Halliday

If you are one of Grace's babies, or have a story about her, we would love to hear!