

## Tribute to Shirley Bedding



Shirley Bedding 1934 - 2017

Shirley was truly an Essex girl having been born, educated, married and lived all her life in the county. After leaving school Shirley's working career began in London; having taught herself shorthand she quickly learned typing and bookkeeping and was soon promoted to secretarial work. Tony, her future husband, had met Shirley at a dancing school and after marriage they set up their first home in Upminster where their children Graham and Susan were born. Subsequently the Beddings moved to a larger house in Danbury, where whilst enjoying a busy family life they recreated the garden, Shirley studied and completed a City and Guild Floral Art course and with Tony continued to enter dance competitions. In 1982 they discovered their dream home. They bought "Ringers", a beautiful thatched cottage in Hulls Lane and moved into Shalford and a new life.

Once settled in "Ringers", village life became important, Shirley loved being a W.I. member and soon was invited to serve on the Horticultural Society committee as secretary. She helped organise the annual shows, enthusiastically exhibiting in cookery and flower classes, she and Tony were delighted when their lovely garden was judged "best" in the village. After joining the Wethersfield Floral Art group Shirley became secretary arranging meetings, events and visiting speakers, whilst continuing to learn more about flowers and arranging them. Shirley was always willing to "do" St Andrew's church flowers demonstrating a distinctive recognisable style of pedestal arrangements. Drivers were being recruited to deliver Meal-on-Wheels to elderly residents in need of a hot lunch in Panfield, Shalford, Wethersfield and surrounding areas, Shirley, who loved both people and driving, volunteered and for some years delivered meals. Friends of St Andrew's Church (FOSTAC) was founded by a group of close friends in 2006 and again Shirley's secretarial skills were in demand, her involvement, enthusiasm, hard work, floral skills, catering ability and generous use of her home and garden as well as support helped swell the fund raising. In retirement together, she and Tony continued to enjoy ballroom, Latin and Old Time dancing with a wide circle of local friends, their lives were actively full with growing grandchildren duties, friends, foreign holidays, socialising, community clubs and gardening.

Some years after Tony's death in 2008 Shirley moved to Wethersfield and gradually adjusted to widowhood. She bought the adjoining house to her daughter Sue, who was happy to be able to support Shirley, her amazing mother and friend with whom she had shared many days of fun. The grandchildren too welcomed having a loving grandparent living next door. Relatively recently another interest in art gave Shirley a new challenge to enjoy, she was completely surprised when one of her paintings sold and actually tried to persuade the buyer to pay less than the asking price! When the local Parkinson group organiser needed secretarial help, Shirley was delighted to be co-opted onto the committee, her superb shorthand was still such a valuable asset for recording verbatim the meetings' business. Throughout her lifetime in both the villages Shirley's willingness to be involved and her happy, outgoing friendly personality had endeared her to all who met her. She was never too busy to listen, assist or take on another job. Her natural empathy and gentle nature drew people to her. Her sense of fun, ready smile and appreciation of the simple things in life guaranteed her many friends and admirers. Shirley added so much to many lives, she will be sadly missed by her children, grandchildren and all those who knew her.

***Brenda Hanley – Retired Chairman***

***FOSTAC***