

# Joan Sylvia Beales 1920-2017

Joan Waites was born in Cambridge into a family that was well established in that city. Her father ran a tailoring business and her grandfather was a former mayor of Cambridge. It was a comfortable upbringing, and Joan spent a fair bit of time living with her grandparents. She had two younger siblings, Gordon and Diana.

She went to the Perse School in Cambridge and did well in her exams. But by the time she had finished her schooling, her feisty independent spirit had become evident, and when asked whether she wanted to go to Oxford or Cambridge she said she would prefer to go to the London School of Economics. This seems to have been prompted less by her choice of subject matter than her desire to leave what she considered to be provincial life and experience the challenge and excitement of the big city.

Ironically, no sooner had she won a place at LSE than she found herself back in Cambridge as the LSE was evacuated there to avoid the German bombs that were falling on London. This was where she met Mick Beales, a fellow-student at the LSE, at a dance, probably at the beginning of 1940.

It was by pure chance that they found themselves dancing opposite each other. Their eyes met, they fell in step, and an enduring love affair had begun. In November of that year, Joan had a terrifying wait for Mick's return to Cambridge from Coventry, which was the subject of one of the most devastating bombing raids of the war.

They got married in 1941, a wonderfully happy marriage that lasted for more than 50 years, until Mick's death in 1994. Joan got on exceptionally well with Mick's parents, Lance and Taffy, and they lived together when she and Mick moved back to Finchley just after the war, to Bibsworth House, the family home. Lance Beales was an influential social historian, and Taffy a thoroughly progressive woman. Mick's elder brother Philip was to become a leading surgeon, specialising in the treatment of deafness.

Joan and Mick had a very LSE-based social group – many of whom moved to Hampstead Garden Suburb in the 1950s. Among these friends were Mac and Nell McGregor (he was one of the foremost social scientists of his day, later Lord McGregor, Chairman of the Press Complaints Commission among other things);

Kate and Peter Thurtle, who were to become regular holiday companions; Edith and Morrie Finer; Gordon Brunton, later Sir Gordon, who went on to run Thomson Newspapers when they owned the Times; Vladimir Raitz, who founded Horizon holidays and pretty much invented the package holiday; Pat and Frances Jeffries; John and Dorothy White; the Gregories, and Lutz and Pam Haber.

They also made many friends through the Labour Party, the Fabian Society in particular, at a time when the Fabians were a hugely influential source of progressive thinking. It was an intellectual hothouse, within which Joan flourished.

The Beales family remained close when Joan and Mick settled on the Suburb in Bigwood Road. Enid, Taffy's sister, moved in nearby with her husband Eric, followed by Lance and Taffy – whereupon Bigwood Road absorbed many of Lance's books. Other frequent visitors were Mick's siblings Philip and Mary, as well as Joan's sister Diana and their growing families.

Old photographs capture many gatherings of family and friends with adults, children and dogs enjoying themselves. The adults would usually drink wine, and occasionally there was dancing. Joan loved to dance and she often told the story of how their beloved Labrador Max would get jealous if she danced with any man other than Mick.

In 1952 Peter was born, followed by Jeremy in 1956. Joan and Mick were common-sense parents, who cared about their children's academic achievements, but left them to sort a lot of other things out for themselves. Certainly, Joan was never going to abandon her own excellent career in psychiatric social work.

It had begun during the war when Mick was an engineer in Coventry and she, at only 21, became head of welfare in a Hawker Siddeley factory, helping the women especially to adjust to the big changes in their lives.

She built on this experience when she began working in Barnet and the major new estate of Borehamwood as a psychiatric social worker, with Peter Gregory, under Dr Mannheim. When Dr Mannheim stepped down, she decided to move on and became a research worker with Donald West. He was doing research on Juvenile Delinquency and Criminality in

Families. This work was based in Camberwell. Here she had interesting colleagues in Joan Court and Eve Road.

Joan Court was openly lesbian at a time when this was less accepted, and she had spent time working with hillbillies in the Appalachians. She also cemented her place in the Beales family's affections by buying the tickets that enabled Caroline, Peter and the two Joans to see the Beatles at the Finsbury Park Astoria.

Joan's next career move was to go to Bedford College where she ran the Social Work unit within Mac McGregor's Sociology Department. She prided herself on creating rounded social

## JOAN: A MEMORY

Joan was a dear friend and I missed her dreadfully when she moved out of the Suburb. Quite often we used to share a bottle of wine, some little cheesy biscuits, and all sorts of stories. How Joan learned to drive in a hearse (she never explained why), the scandalous tale of her father-in-law and the bottle of drink in the sideboard (if only I could remember the whole story), and all the details of her long running feud with the Trust

workers trained in all areas of the discipline. It was a close-knit department and Joan worked closely with Colin Gibson, Gavin Drewry, Louis Blom Cooper and Ivor Burton among others. At the heart of the department was Mac's formidable secretary – a tough chainsmoker called Midge.

Things changed for both Joan and Mick in the early 1980s. Mick lost his job at Laings and soon after that it was announced that Bedford College would move out of London. They both decided the time had come to retire. Peter and Jeremy were grown up and starting their own families. Mick and Joan kept themselves fit

(something to do with an apple tree and a garage). My family stories didn't get so much of a look in, but she was great fun to talk to and we laughed a lot.

And then there was the incident with the fuchsia. Joan's house in Bigwood Road had a big bay window in the sitting room with fitted bookshelves under the window, and outside a large fuchsia. One evening Joan went out to the kitchen for more wine and I looked idly at the shelves. Strangely there

with daily swims at their local pool, and started to travel. They went on a few long-haul trips and also took to renting attractive Italian villas where family and friends could join them.

Politically, times had changed, and after much soul-searching they joined the SDP when it was launched and subsequently the Liberal Democrats, for whom Joan hosted summer parties at Bigwood Road.

Mick died in 1994 and from this point, although she kept busy, Joan's life was never as happy or rewarding. She played an active part in the life of Hampstead Garden Suburb – becoming a school governor and an active member of the

Residents' Association. She also continued to thrive on the cultural life in London and went often to the theatre and cinema. She saw a lot of old friends like Frances Jeffries, John White, Elizabeth Monkhouse and Leonie Stevens, and regularly visited her siblings Gordon and Diana.

She continued to travel, for example with Diana to Gran Canaria amongst other places, and with Mary to Jordan. In her later years she moved to Worthing and then Brighton. Peter and Jeremy were able to be with her throughout her final days and her death was peaceful after a very full 97 years.

RUPERT MORRIS

seemed to be a bit of plant poking out from behind the books. I looked closer. Joan came back and I pointed out the curiosity. We moved a few books... we moved some more. Apparently a whole plant was growing up inside the bay. Once I'd looked, it was obvious from where I had been sitting but Joan would never have seen the plant from her usual chair.

I was invited back the next week after her builder had been called in. Armchairs and sofa had

been moved out, the fitted carpet rolled back as far as possible and most of the floorboards removed. There were fuchsia shoots growing underneath the entire room and making for the dining room beyond.

Fuchsias are very soft plants, easily broken, and you would never imagine one plant could cause so much damage. Joan stood in the doorway surveying the scene of devastation. "It's all your fault," she said crossly.

GEORGINA MALCOLM

# Mary Caroline Tyler (née Southcombe) 1921-2016



Mary was born into a family of Somerset glovers. Sadly, aged 10, she lost her father. Largely raised by servants, she became a committed socialist in her teenage years, much to the horror of the remaining members of her family. A chaperoned visit to Paris on leaving school resulted in a romantic attachment to an Hungarian diplomat which meant that she nearly became trapped in France at the outbreak of hostilities.

Mary went to study Philosophy at the University of London in the autumn of 1939 with the pioneering professor Susan Stebbing (author of *Thinking to some Purpose*). Bedford College was evacuated to Cambridge where she experienced the humiliation of Wittgenstein refusing to lecture female students.

On graduating she was recruited directly into Bletchley Park with many other future Suburb residents including her good friend Rhona Wood (Obituary, Suburb News 128). She described how she was told (with a pistol on the desk in front of her), that any mention of the code-breaking could be deemed to be too important for the courts to be involved, so for

decades she would only talk of her boring wartime "office work".

Later we discovered that Diana Clark and John Lloyd had also worked there and would make second marriages in the Suburb together. At the end of the war she returned to Cambridge where she met Pat (FL Tyler) whilst secretary of the International Students Association: he was Secretary of the Cambridge University Labour Club.

Pat followed her to an International Socialist Students' Conference in Czechoslovakia in 1947 – after she had returned from a disappointing trip to Hungary where there was no food. They lived at 2 Corringway from 1948 to 2010, although Pat died in 2008, and paid just £4,000 for their six-bedroom house.

Pat and Mary enjoyed a wonderfully happy marriage and spent over 60 years as the mainstay of the Hendon South and Hampstead Garden Suburb Branch Labour Party. Pat had been a scholarship boy at St Albans School and Cambridge and he was keen to make a career in Politics; he stood for Labour at Knutsford in the 1945 election.

The arrival of four children in the next 10 years – all home births – kept their political

ambitions local. Pat served on both Hendon and Barnet Councils, and on the HGS Trust, while Mary narrowly failed to be elected to represent the Childs Hill ward. Mary spent years fighting the communists in the London Co-operative Society. She was also the lone demonstrator outside the Russian Embassy when their tanks rolled into Budapest in 1956 while huge crowds were in Trafalgar Square protesting against Suez. Pat made his career in the Law.

Mary campaigned for a 1972 Labour Party Conference resolution on Home Responsibility Payments for mothers (with much valued help from Frank Field in his Child Poverty Action Group days) – this evolved into the Tax Credit system.

For many years Mary worked with the National Schizophrenia Fellowship, creating and successfully analysing a questionnaire of nearly 100 families who had experience of the disease. She found statistically significant evidence that there were (at least) two distinctively different groups of patients.

There was highly suggestive evidence that exposure to a

virus (especially influenza) in utero was a causative factor. Her friend Dr Josephine Bruegel of Temple Fortune Lane helped her in this significant and complex work, which pre-dated the availability of statistical packages for home computers. This research was published.

Mary and Pat spent many years of retirement enjoying time in the Suburb, and in the Dordogne with many Suburb friends. After the loss of her husband and all her close Suburb friends, especially John White, Dorothy White OBE and Barbara Taylor, Mary returned to the Dorset and Somerset border. She downsized to near her youngest daughter (the award winning jeweller Liz Tyler) and her Milborne Port birthplace.

She lived to meet her first great grand-daughter and great grandson as well as nine grandchildren. She died at 95 in her own home with her family, still in active contact with her friends at the Golders Green Unitarians, less than a month after celebrating her birthday with over 30 members of the family.

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