

# FLOWERS ALL THE WAY- Memories of Gwen Coppin

By Sue Short-2012



Figure 1 Gwen with her dog Yallah in 1963

Gwen, husband and sons moved into Flettons on Rushmore Hill, Pratts Bottom in April 1962. Malcolm, Gwen's younger son, attended the village school from 1962 until 1966.

Sadly, Gwen passed away in hospital this summer; I would like to commemorate her life by recording a few of her many contributions to Pratts Bottom. I know that she kept a photographic record and over the years she played a very active part in village life.

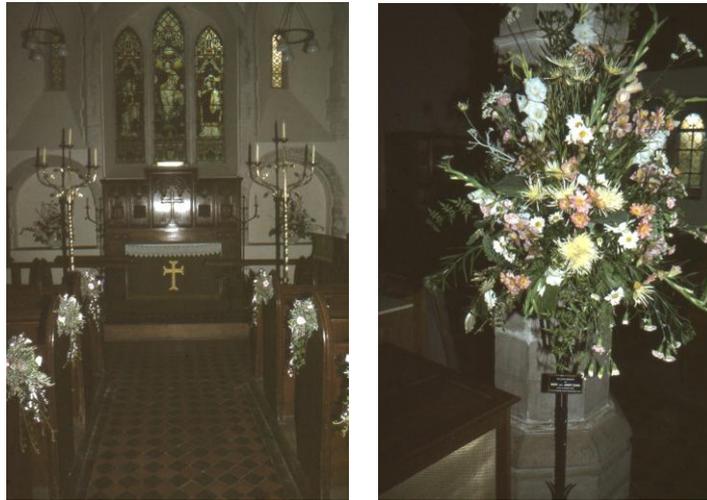
When I started to collate the information for my book about the village, she, like Ernie Bowen, was one of the first villagers to help me. We had many meetings and she was very generous with her time as well as her coffee and biscuits.



Figure 2 Gwen (far left) with Jill and Rob Allan at the Book Launch

When Gwen first moved to Pratts Bottom she was worried about the speed of the traffic along Rushmore Hill. She got up a petition to urge the Minister of Transport to reduce the speed to 30mph from the top of Rushmore Hill. Gwen was successful in getting 290 signatures on the petition and was mentioned in The Kentish Times dated September 18th 1964. The 30 miles per hour speed limit was eventually passed, helped by Councillor Ernest Norman and Mrs Rose Hammond.

Gwen particularly loved flowers and was a very keen gardener; I often saw her just standing in her front garden admiring her plants and watching the world go by. Pat Cook and Gwen arranged the flowers in St. Katharine's, Knockholt when John and I married in August 1982.



Figures 3, 4 and 5 the flower arrangements in St. Katharine's, Knockholt in 1982



Her fondest memory was of the wonderful Flower Festival to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977. Many people from Pratts Bottom, Knockholt and Green Street Green were involved in the flower festival. All Souls Church and the United Reform Church, Rushmore Hill, were decorated with flowers. The event was open for three days and many people visited the display. Her collection includes the visitors' book, photographs of the event and posters.



Figure 6 one of the floral displays at the Flower Festival in 1977



Figures 7, 8 and 9 the Flower Festival in the United Reform Church-1977



Gwen played an active part in village life; she was a member of the Pratts Bottom Residents' Association for 25 years; on the Village Hall Maintenance Committee for 15 years and the Village Fete Committee for several years.

Allen Hill of Coxwold started a Children's Club which met in the village hall; villagers gave box games for the children to play with. Gwen baked cakes each week for the club and was very touched when the children sent her a thank-you note; the club folded after four years.

She repaired the purses used for collection in All Souls Church and used to cook bread for the harvest festival.

At one time the Pratts Bottom section of the Conservative Association held a flower/fruit/food and vegetable show in August/September in the village hall. The local MP presented a silver bowl to the winner of the best in show.

While on the Village Hall Maintenance Committee, Gwen suggested that there should be a new fence around the perimeter, as the old one was falling down. She thought that it would be a good idea for bushes to be planted there too. Mr Colyer, who lived at Forge Cottage, planted small bushes that were, until recently, fully grown trees. Gwen also suggested that there should be a path around the village hall and this too was accepted. Mr Bruce Sweet, of Fairtrough Farm, provided the cement mixer and worked for two weekends with other men of the village to lay the path.