

IN TRIBUTE TO DR. MARGARET SIRIOL COLLEY

Fedir Kurlak
AUGB

A Memorial Service celebrating the life of Dr Margaret Siriol Colley took place on 3 March at St Michaels and All Angels Church in Bramcote, Nottingham.

Speaking to a packed congregation, heartfelt tributes were led by her four sons, Philip, Nigel, Richard and Graham. Further tributes were paid by Reverend David Edinborough (former vicar of St Michaels and All Angels Church), Kay Powell (Aberystwyth Old Students Association), Fedir Kurlak (Association of Ukrainians in GB), Yuriy Bender (Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in GB), Glyn Yeoman (Nottingham Welsh Society), Paul Balen (Nottinghamshire Medical-Legal Society) and Reverend Paul Reynolds (vicar of St Michaels and All Angels Church).

The service was interspersed with congregational hymns and two performances by the Welsh Choir — Cor y Wawr - singing "All The Way My Saviour Leads Me" and "When We Walked to Merthyr Tydfil".

Below we are reproducing extracts from some of the tributes paid during the service about a remarkable woman who will be very sadly missed. The tribute of Nigel Colley, with whom Siriol worked so closely for many years to unravel the truth about Gareth Jones and the Holodomor, is printed in full on p.9.

PHILIP COLLEY

Though she spent a lot of time here Mum was fortunate enough to travel the world and meet many

of its people and indeed many of its fish. In fact it was thanks to her love of diving that she did literally travel the Seven Seas – but it was always this village that she loved to return to and where she would always find herself among good friends and good neighbours too.

She was an amazing woman with depths of kindness and sometimes uncanny insight that really can't be captured by words... She did indeed have a fascinating life, rich in downs as well as ups, but in the end she



was at peace with all her family and the world and she passed away a happy woman.

My relationship with Mum changed in 2005 when I treated her to a trip on one of my tours in Japan, for which I was the tour leader... I was amazed and overjoyed to watch as she became the life and soul of the group. Always making people laugh, always positive. For that couple of weeks, we were somehow able to escape the boundaries of Mother and son and from that time on we became much more, we became really GOOD friends. And we were able to talk and laugh as such until her dying day...

In her last days she confided to us that although she knew what was coming she wasn't afraid

or concerned for herself. "I just feel like I'm going on amazing journey," she told us one day...

Thank you to everyone from Mum, for being there for her, and for bearing witness to her remarkable life. Lets all cherish those memories of the times we shared with her.

GRAHAM COLLEY

I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for inspiring me to have an interest in so many things.

...She told me about her stamp collection, she had when she was young and the first-day covers that had arrived from all over the world.

Her father had been a Professor of chemistry at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich. She encouraged me to have a chemistry set, but to only to experiment in the greenhouse.

She inspired me to become interested in geology. She had a piece of amethyst from Canada, of which she was very proud. I was encouraged to look at the rocks and collect all sorts of stones on the beach or walks.

She encouraged an interesting printing in me long before MS Publisher. She gave me a pantograph - a device which looked rather like the extending arm of a shaving mirror. Using a tracing process, it made copies larger or smaller than the original. Together, we created a Hectographic printing press, using the lid of an old biscuit tin filled with gelatine and aniline pens. It was a low technology process, ideal for small runs in the classroom - and incidentally used by prisoners in Stalag Luft 3 and Colditz Castle. I used it to create

a Form newspaper in my class at School.

Her family were always interested in Europe and she encouraged that in me. I set up the Aberystwyth Group for Europe and then went to the College of Europe, in Bruges. Eleanor, my daughter, has followed in those footsteps and is now at the College of Europe branch in Natolin, Warsaw, Poland.

Her interest in everything carried on until the end. I remember our very last conversation the day before she died. We talked about the latest news on neutrinos...

It is symptomatic of my mother's life that, on her very last day, she should be discussing the theories of relativity.

Whether she is in that parallel universe or in heaven her interest in all such things was a gift to me, our family and a continuing inspiration to us all.

RICHARD COLLEY

I want to say a few words about my mum, how her parents and earlier years shaped her character and share some amusing family stories

Her Parents:

- Her father Dr Stanley Lewis was strict from his Welsh upbringing. In World War One he was captured and spent a year starving in German POW camp. In 1918, weighing only 6 stone he missed out playing Rugby internationally for Wales. After the war he completed his university education, undertook research into adding lead to petrol and heavy water and taught Chemistry at the Royal Naval College.
- Her mother Erian Lewis was a formidable woman. Despite being a delicate child she swam most days in the sea in the Bristol Channel. Whilst not studious she rose to a challenge from her father - 'I'll show him she said - and got the best matriculation marks in the family. She volunteered as a land girl in the First World War and was the first girl to sell a cow in Lampeter market. Having turned down 3 marriage proposals from Stanley she finally married and they moved to near Greenwich. Throughout her life she forbade any waste and was the queen of left overs.

them out each morning for school lunches. Totally inedible - woe betide you if you had not binned them by the end of the day as they were then presented toasted for tea!

- Teenage years were interesting. After snorkelling in the Red Sea, she joined the Nottingham Sub Aqua Club. Keen to get things right she practiced until perfect. But it was a bit strange bringing new girl friends home to find my mother with her head full underwater in the kitchen sink practising her breathing techniques!
- In latter years she had a rescue dog which was delivered in a Taxi and promptly named - Taxi. This caused great hilarity in Bramcote with my mum chasing after a very disobedient dog through the woods calling out Taxi, Taxi, Taxi.

These are some of my treasured memories of our happy times together - There was never a dull moment.

KAY POWELL

PRESIDENT OF ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY OLD STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Dr Siriol Colley was a remarkable woman who maintained deep and enduring links with Aberystwyth University and its alumni organisation, the Old Students' Association (the OSA) throughout her life. Siriol was a staunch supporter of the University and the OSA, although not herself an Aberystwyth graduate. Her mother and father, aunt and uncle, both grandparents, one of her sons, Gareth, his wife and son were or are Aber graduates. Indeed her grandfather Major Edgar Jones was President of

and fortitude to keep going and not rest until the world knew about the extraordinary previously unseen documents - diaries, articles and letters of her journalist uncle, Gareth Jones. Siriol undoubtedly made an immense contribution to raising awareness throughout the world about the work of her remarkably brave uncle and the horrors of the 1932-33 Holodomor in Ukraine.

One particularly poignant moment, which perhaps best illustrates the scale of how far and wide her message was and will continue to be received was when in April 2010 she gave an interview for the BBC World Service's excellent daily history programme, "Witness", presented by Alan Johnson. Her message that day was heard throughout the world by over 150 million listeners.

We were very privileged to have known such an excellent ambassador that she was for such a worthy cause... And it was extremely fitting then, that in November 2008, at Westminster Central Hall, she should have received the posthumous award "The Order of Freedom" on behalf of Gareth Jones. On receiving it she humbly remarked at how proud his parents, Major and Mrs Edgar Jones, would have been to know that such a prestigious tribute of recognition had been granted.

It was in fact Margaret Siriol Colley's profound dedication and work that had indeed made the award possible...

It was during this period, sadly, that my mother and I had differences of historical opinion, but she was determined to publish the book, for her 80th birthday in 2005, which she duly did under her own name.

From then on my mother became more interested in Gareth's, and her own, Welsh roots including learning, and with some proficiency, the language itself. This resulted in her establishing lasting ties with many Welsh societies and also the National Library of Wales where Gareth's papers now reside.

Over the next few years, Siriol's life became inextricably entwined with that of Gareth. In the few

years after publication of his biography, which coincided with the 75th anniversary of the Holodomor, both received international attention through film, exhibitions and speeches. This culminated in my mother receiving the Ukrainian 'medals of freedom', on Gareth's behalf, in November 2008, from the Ukrainian Ambassador to the UK.

Last November, I was invited to deliver a speech the National Press Club in Washington DC. Literally as I was locking my front door, I heard my home phone ring... Despite the urgency to catch my train, I felt compelled to go back into the house. It was my mother, who was phoning to let me know that her recent operation had been a complete success and she expected a 70% chance of a full recovery from the jaundice which she had then been suffering.

Furthermore, she also wanted to wish me 'Good Luck' in America with my presentation, because although invited to accompany me, she was obviously not well enough to make the long journey.

Those who knew us both, are fully aware that we had a difficult relationship. Luckily in the few months before she died I am very grateful that we were at long last, able to fully reconcile our differences. So, for my mother, to wish me good luck was meant a great deal to me. Sadly only two days later, on the day of my speech I received the news that she had died.

The condolences flooded in from the Ukrainian Community and beyond. Ihor Kharchenko, who had presented Gareth's medals to my mother represents the flavour of many of these kind messages:

"I recall with deep warmth our numerous meetings and working together with Dr Colley on the issue of Holodomor. Her book on life and death of Gareth Jones... is a proud personal belonging of mine, received from her own hands. She will forever remain one of the devoted friends of Ukrainian people, and I will forever cherish the knowledge of being a personal friend of this amazing personality."

I have only had time to briefly describe one aspect of her full and remarkable life. If Gareth is now rightfully seen as a hero of Wales and Ukraine, then I truly believe my mother should be too.



Dr Colley addressing the audience at Westminster Central Hall during the National Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Holodomor. Inset, Ambassador Ihor Kharchenko presents the posthumous Award of Ukraine bestowed upon Gareth Jones.

Photos: George Jaworsky

Thanks to Siriol, these millions of souls have finally been laid to rest. Otherwise, they would have been simply swept under the unforgiving carpet of European history....



Inextricably entwined with the life of Gareth Jones

Nigel Colley

While I could talk about happy childhood memories of my mother, I will leave that for others as I feel that I can offer some insight into a part of her life that touched the lives of many others.

Little did we realise that a burglary in a South Wales home in 1990 would become so significant in all our lives. The chance discovery of her uncle's papers, which coincided with her retirement, opened up a whole new chapter in her own life. Her much loved uncle had been murdered in 1935, when she was only 10. Her main intention was to write his biography and to investigate the circumstances behind his mysterious death.

She began the mammoth task of transcribing his letters and articles along with his diaries relating to his final trip to China, whilst I focused on the background historical research.

Not being able to find a publisher, we privately published 300 copies of the book. I also set up a small website for her on the fledgling internet with the view to selling a few of the books and that is where I thought the story would end....

However two years later, we received an email out of the blue, enquiring whether the "Gareth Jones" on our website was the "fabled" Gareth Jones who had exposed the great famine in Ukraine of 1932-33. For the next two years we worked together like Trojans with a view to writing a joint book about Gareth's role in exposing this little known atrocity.

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Photo: Siriol Colley speaking during the opening of a Holodomor exhibition at AUGB's headquarters in November 2003. To her left, the General Director of the National Museum of the History of Ukraine, Serhiy Chaikovsky.

In Siriol's own words...



Photo circa 1929/30. Siriol aged 4 or five on her grandfather's knee with Gareth Jones standing behind. By kind permission of Nigel Colley.

During the Second World War I was evacuated to Canada. On my return I attended Medical School at Dundee and graduated from St Andrews University. I practiced Medicine for 45 years, nearly 35 of these as a General Practitioner in Bramcote, Nottinghamshire. Sadly my husband, Dr. Nigel Colley died in 1973 leaving me with four sons to bring up. He never lived to see his eight grandchildren for whom I wish to publish this website. Life has to go on, and I have accomplished much in those 30 years without him. Two years after his death I took up Scuba Diving which became an overpowering obsession and the interest

has taken me to many exciting places in the world. When I started the seas were pristine and there were many colourful fishes and corals to see.

In 1987 I obtained the files from the National Archives, the Public Record Office on my uncle, Gareth Vaughan Jones who was tragically murdered in Inner Mongolia in mysterious circumstances. I endeavoured to investigate his death and I have published two books taken from his letters, diaries and articles which he left for posterity. I too have gathered information about the forbears from Wales and this is worthy of collating for the grandchildren.