

## **Olive Jameson (née Turney), 1912-1996**

Olive Turney was born in April 1912. Her birthplace, Brooklyn, is now notorious as a rough area of New York, but at that time it was a pleasant leafy suburb on the edge of the city. Her father was English, her mother American. She was the youngest of five children, and continued to be known as “Baby” in family circles throughout her life; a whole generation of nieces and nephews know her as “Aunty Baby”!

The family moved to Nottingham when she was eight. English conditions seemed very primitive to the young American child. In her memoirs of her childhood, she describes what a shock it was to move to a house that had no electricity and always seemed to be freezing cold. However, along with her brother and sisters, she gradually acclimatized, and eventually became fully English, losing all trace of her American accent. A second shock was the death from typhoid of her dearly beloved mother when Olive was only ten. The role of mother was then largely assumed by her older sisters.

Most of her education was undertaken by governesses with very limited qualifications, and she only spent two years at school in Malvern. This lack of education was one of her lasting regrets, and in later life she did a lot of reading to extend her knowledge on all kinds of topics. In particular, she had a really deep knowledge of literature and the Bible. A close friend at Malvern was Margie Howitt, and the Howitts treated Olive as one of the family, which was very important to this girl who had lost her mother. Margie, later Edward, remained a friend for life. Two other lifelong friends from this period were Nan Duncan (later Booth), who is still alive in New Zealand, and Eileen Coward (later Dawson).

In 1933 she married Guy Jameson (she always referred to him as “Jamie”), and they remained a devoted couple for fifty-six years until his death in 1989. For the first twenty-three of these years, Jamie was in the army. Army people move about, and they had at least fifteen different homes during these years. Less than half the time was spent in Britain; the rest was divided between Malta, India, the United States and two spells in Germany. Their four children, Antony, Andrew, Graham and Carolyn, were born during the first half of this period - needless to say, all in different places. India made a particularly deep impression on Olive; the six years spent there had a very special place in her memories.

Just two of the fifteen residences lasted long enough to be remembered later as established family homes, Narang Villa in Simla and Coombe Farm in Farnborough. But in each place, however brief the stay, Olive rapidly built a real home and made lots of friends, so that the next move was always a wrench. In India and Germany, it was normal for people in their position to have servants or retainers such as army drivers. It was typical of Olive that these people were treated as family friends, some of them keeping in touch for years afterwards. At the same time, she gave full support to Jamie in his tennis and squash, which at his level demanded priority over most other things. When they married, he had told her that it would be tough for a few years, but that athletes were past their best when over thirty; in the event, he won the army tennis for the last time when he was 47!

When Jamie retired from the army, he became bursar of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where they stayed for thirteen years. In 1969, they made their final move to Great Mongeham. Olive lived here for the last twenty-seven years of her life - much

longer than in any other single place. She has been deeply involved in the affairs of the village and the church here. Once more she has made many new friends, while still managing to keep in touch with the huge circle of family and friends from former years.

Friends were very important to her, and she somehow found time to keep up a flow of long and chatty letters to an amazing number of them. She was always interested in everybody's news, and had a tremendous memory for it. She was generous: she was always giving presents. But if you gave her the smallest of things, she would thank you so effusively that you began to think you must have given her something big. She put her own needs last, to the extent of denying that she needed anything, even when she plainly did! She nursed Jamie faithfully through his year-long final illness, at a real cost to her own health and strength.

To four of us, she was "Mummy", and quite unique. To ten more, she was "Grandma". To one, she was Great-Grandma. To some she was "Aunty Baby". To countless others, she was a proxy aunt, an advisor, or simply a valued and loyal friend. Could anyone ask for a better epitaph?