

Address for Dora Lockett. 27th January 2010.

Dora, the younger daughter of Ben and Helen Lockett was born on 8th February 1916, almost 94 years ago, in London; a little sister for Vera. At just a few days old Dora was taken by her father to the local church, where she was placed on the altar, prayed for, and her life dedicated to God. And from that moment onwards Dora's life has always been in relationship with God, and intertwined with the church; a relationship that she shared so readily and easily with many of us.

Dora's family came originally from Staffordshire. It was when Ben entered the Metropolitan Police that they came down to London, where Ben was in charge of Gower Street Police Station, which was where the family lived. Dora and Vera would regularly go up to stay with Grandmother Whalley in the Potteries for some good clean country air; especially during bouts of childhood illness.

Dora was educated at Greycoats Hospital School in Westminster, which had an important and valued influence on her life. She especially enjoyed music, having the gift of perfect pitch. Dora became head girl, and was very close to the Headmistress, who fondly referred to Dora as 'legs'. Can you imagine the processions to Westminster Abbey, where the girls were marched two by two, headed by the Headgirl with the youngest girl – 'legs' Dora, and a tiny little thing beside her. Dora told me how proud she was to read the lesson at school services in Westminster Abbey.

Dora's schooling was clearly made such a profound impression on her that she herself became a teacher. When the family moved to Northwood in 1936, Dora firstly taught at the Pinner Road Infant School; there she stayed throughout World War II. Latterly she became Head of the Primary School in Harefield. One of her maxims in education was "get them to laugh and then you can deliver the punch lines of the lesson". She was much loved and respected; many ex-pupils over the years would stop Dora in the street to talk. She had a good rapport with all sorts of people, especially children.

Dora was a committed member of the Guiding and Scouting movements. With Vera she ran the 1st Northwood Cubs in Hillside Road; she ran 1st Northwood Ranger Guides, was District Commissioner, ran the guiding orchestra for many years, and received the Beaver Award in 1959 – that is the second highest award in guiding. Dora was involved in introducing the song Kum ba ya, originally as a camp fire song, to England. She even took part in guiding in Buckingham Palace with the two princesses. Dora's guiding career continued, alongside her teaching career, and she was made an MBE before retirement. She was a great supporter of the building of The Willow Tree Guide Centre at Harefield .

But perhaps even more significantly that her teaching and guiding and scouting, Dora and her family made a huge contribution to the life of this church, involving themselves in many aspects of this parish's life. Back in 1936, when they first came, they were quite revolutionary: their own experiences of church life in Central London did not always sit comfortably with life in the country parish of Northwood. Ben quickly got himself onto the PCC in order to abolish pew rents which the family

disagreed with fiercely. They came to church as a family, not only to Matins, but to Evensong. When the Vicar commented to them that Evensong was really for the servants, Helen replied, 'But we're all servants of the Lord, Vicar!' Dora and Vera set up a Sunday evening social club for the servants, with whom there had previously been little social engagement.

It was in the 1970's that Hugh Fearn, Vicar and Area Warden of Readers, asked Dora to be a Reader in the Church. Dora became the first woman Reader in the Diocese of London, and was, I'm told, only pipped to the post nationally by the then Archbishop's wife! Dora's ministry was centred upon this church from then right up until she died, whilst also helping out at St John's Hallowell Road, and St Edmund the King. Dora has been a real pillar of this church giving much loving support, encouragement and guidance to many people here today, including our own two Readers, Margaret and Ann, whose vocations to that ministry Dora fostered.

The Bishop of London said this week: "Dora epitomised the life and service of the baptised, as well as being a trail-blazer for women in Reader ministry. We thank God for her life and witness".

Dora, it must be said, was une dame formidable! She had very firm views, she knew what she liked and what she didn't like; and she didn't suffer fools gladly. It has been a great privilege for me to read this week about Dora's ministry from some of my predecessors in ministry here: Peter Hancock wrote: "I got off to rather a shaky start, being rather too evangelical and low church for Dora. The previous two Vicars had been sensibly anglo-catholic; I was definitely a come down! However, I discovered before long that underneath that somewhat solemn exterior there lay a warm heart. My errors in churchmanship were forgiven. I found myself accepted and loved. On almost all policy decisions – Woman and priesthood as the prime example, we found ourselves in agreement"

John Spinks, the budding young curate back then, writes of the beginning of his ministry here "having been interviewed at the vicarage by the then Incumbent it was apparent there was a second filter waiting in the wings – Dora! Dora immediately assumed the role of the Headmistress and explained in rather forthright terms her role in the parish as a Reader. This approach belied one of the most delightful, loving and respected people in the parish; someone you could go to not just for information on just about anyone in Northwood, but how to handle them and providing sound advice as well as a confidant".

Olwen Field, whose ministry was both here and at Mount Vernon, wrote: "I have fond memories of Dora's kindness and encouragement. She was totally supportive when I was made a priest, on that occasion gave me a little gold cross and asked me to keep it in my cassock pocket, I keep it there, even today. We prayed together regularly, and I know that during my ministry in Northwood she prayed for me every day".

That spirituality which comes from deep rooted prayer has been a hallmark of Dora's ministry. The prayers which she led were always carefully selected and beautifully worded. She made a significant contribution to the Holy Trinity Book of Prayers. She

prayed at the Eucharist, at Evensong, at Baptisms and Funerals and with many people individually, with an extensive pastoral ministry. The ministry of prayer continued for Dora well past the time when she could physically be present here in church. Prayer – connected to the telephone! Those of us who shared in taking her Holy Communion at home over these past few years would often leave feeling far more spiritually enriched ourselves, than when we went it. On those occasions I always used the Gospel reading for the following week, so that Dora's good ideas that we shared after reading the Gospel together, could be incorporated in the sermon here the following week.

Being deeply spiritual certainly didn't make Dora unworldly though. She was rooted in family life, and when Vera and Dora moved from Dene Road to the bungalow, it was parts of the names of their dear family that they chose to name their new house – Ben Hel-ve-dor. Dora was very interested in the lives of those around her – knitting special blankets for grandchildren of friends, being concerned with the ordinary everyday aspects of family life. She was most amused when right at the beginning of my ministry here, before discovering her name, our Thomas, who was then 5, called Dora 'the high lady with the sandals' and sat down with her at the Parish Lunch. I've not made a single visit to Dora since then when she has not commented with such joy about that; she always asked about each of the children by name and how thrilled she was at the times when I took Katie to visit her. Dora came from a loving family and made the 'family of God at Holy Trinity' as she often used to say, her own extended family. I know that many from this church extended family have been very good to her, especially in these last years; and without the support of Colin and Sally and many others, life would have been difficult for Dora.

Dora loved the Eucharist; it was her specific request that this service should be a Requiem Eucharist and that she should enter the church to the Halleluiahs Chorus. We share with her in the Eucharist today. For this is the meal that unites heaven and earth – this is the foretaste of the great heavenly banquet, which Dora, at rest from her labours, now enjoys. And we will have a visual reminder of her every time we celebrate Holy Communion during the festival season here, for this chasuble, completing our Trinity set, was given by Dora just three years ago.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'I have come that you may have life, and have it abundantly'. We celebrate today a life that was lived and shared abundantly with us, and with many others. As we give thanks for Dora's life and ministry, so we rejoice with her at the greater abundance of life that she now shares, with all the saints of God, in glory. To God be glory and praise now and forever. Amen.