

**MEMORIES OF RUTH SHAWE (23.02.1954—08.08.2022)
TEACHER AT THE NAZARETH HOSPITAL SCHOOL, 1986-90**

From Irene Murray

Living with Ruth in the Nazareth Hospital

Along with local Midwife Afaf and Nurse Isaaf I had the privilege of sharing Flat 66 above the Nazareth Hospital with Ruth from her arrival until her departure. From there we observed this lovely, kind, gifted, musical friend.

Her job

It was fascinating to observe Ruth's involvement in her job as teacher for the mish-kids, and all the preparation that went into that. I remember the excitement one day when the first computer arrived! She was way ahead of her time! She loved the children in her little school and poured everything she had into teaching them. The music, plays and concerts she choreographed were amazing! She was very gifted as a teacher and as a musician and gave her all to the children in endless hours of preparation, often over-extending herself, but the end result was always another wonderful concert with the children performing. Her attention to detail, always going the second, third and fourth miles, never ceased to amaze me.

Her faith

Ruth was devoted to the Lord Jesus and without fail started every day with Bible reading and prayer. She longed for others in the local community to come to know Him too. She was very involved in and made strong friendships with those in the local Brethren Assembly, and also in the Jewish community. Her deep longing was to share Jesus with both Arab and Jewish friends. When her health was failing and weakness increasing in her last years she loved our phone calls when we would sing together some of the old Sankey hymns that are full of sound doctrine. Particularly meaningful to her in her illness was the hymn: *'She only touched the hem of his garment as to his side she stole ... Oh touch the hem of His garment and thou too shalt be whole ...'*. During those years of illness and failing health she composed some beautiful songs based on words of Scripture, her 'songs in the night' – in which she expressed the depths of her love for and dependence on the Lord through it all. These have since been released in two CDs. Even after her diagnosis when not well herself, her compassion was evident when she got into conversation with a man on the beach walking his dog. He was distraught as his dog had been given a cancer diagnosis. And there was Ruth – praying with that total stranger in the middle of the beach for him and for the healing of his dog...!

Her friendship

Ruth was a very loyal, considerate and supportive friend and her point of reference in every situation was based on Scripture. Coming from a very loving, hospitable and God-honouring family, Ruth demonstrated love and compassion to all, and nothing was ever too much trouble. She often had an air of 'being on another planet', yet when there was a crisis or a need somewhere, she was a very wise counsellor and friend, always bringing to mind an appropriate verse of Scripture to encourage.

After she left Nazareth, I was privileged to have many visits to her family farm and then to her own home after her marriage to David Shawe. The enthusiasm of Nazareth nurses and midwives to bring a picnic to the beach on one of her return visits to Israel in 2014 demonstrated the depth of appreciation they had for her even after so many years.

Her legacy

As much as Ruth and her friends and family prayed for her healing it has pleased Him to bring her that healing now that she has stepped into eternity, in glory, face to face with Jesus whom she has honoured throughout her life. Her zest for life, her commitment to the Lord and for the honour of His name and His Word, and her resilience through years of much suffering, her encouragement and her wise words and prayers have been such an example. It was an honour to have been one of Ruth's friends and I will always treasure our friendship.

From Beth Hampson (Turnpenny)

I remember the first time I met Ruth Shawe, who to me will forever be Miss Burrow. As one of the very small group of children making up the Nazareth Hospital School, we were so excited to meet our new teacher, who would come and live on the hospital compound with us and become much more than our primary school teacher. I remember thinking how pretty she looked, with long, brown, wavy hair, and a colourful, flowing skirt, and she surprised us by giving us all the biggest cuddles. Miss Burrow instantly loved us as her own.

We would walk down with Ruth from the hospital to our school in downtown Nazareth every morning. She would talk and make friends with so many people who lived on the route in the souk, and we often got way laid going into somebody's house or shop. Opposite the school was a carpenter's workshop, and Ruth loved that we were growing up exactly in the footsteps of Jesus, and she would get us to imagine Jesus working with his father at that carpenter's bench. Ruth loved taking us through the souk, to the library, to different local schools with which she developed links, and she was far more enthusiastic than we were about the overwhelmingly smelly butcher's shops where whole carcasses hung, and the equally smelly but incredibly colourful fruit and vegetable stalls.

Ruth gave us so much more education than the Scottish National Curriculum dictated. I giggle remembering her demonstrating gymnastics, or trying to set up educational games on our new school PC. Our school shows, plays and concerts were the highlight of our school year, everyone having a chance to shine. She took us on amazing school trips to the Sea of Galilee, a kibbutz, the Hula Valley nature reserve. Her skill and passion for music filtered through every part of our day, but I equally remember her love of nature, farming, wildlife, and also her love for Jesus which was so vivid in the way she enthusiastically shared her faith, and taught us how to explore the Bible and pray. Of all the lessons she wanted us to learn, the greatest lesson of all, to Love one Another, shone through Ruth in the encounters with everyone she met.

I have so many funny, and loving memories of Ruth in Nazareth, but we were lucky enough to build more memories visiting her family farm in rural Devon when we moved to Exeter, where her love for farming, the countryside, good food and hospitality, music, her husband and family, and her living, breathing faith, fill my memory bank.

From Ros Khalil

The first time that I met Ruth, I was in a hospital bed in Nazareth Hospital having just given birth to our daughter a couple of days before. She breezed into the room and introduced herself and instantly I felt that we'd known each other for a long time! (Someone must have told her that I was English, married to George, a local believer, and went to the Brethren church.) We connected straight away and formed a firm friendship, in fact we were still deciding on a name for our daughter and liked 'Ruth' as her middle name. After meeting her, that confirmed it!

Over the next few years we were delighted to meet her parents when they visited and even stayed twice at their beautiful farm on visits to the UK. Our second son, aged 5, had a 'gap year' between kindergartens and she lovingly accepted him to join the school and she taught him the basics of reading and writing (I was so thankful I didn't have to do it since he was pretty hyperactive!). He remembers her with affection to this day. Her love for her Lord spilled over into her love for children – it was so evident.

When my mother died in London in 2010 she travelled all the way from Devon to come for the funeral. That really touched my heart.

I went to visit her a year after her diagnosis and, despite the pain and discomfort she was experiencing, she was still cheerful and praising her Lord and even looking forward to seeing Him face to face, and her beloved father whom she greatly missed. George and I will miss her a great deal but are comforted knowing she is free from suffering and enjoying heaven.

From Miriam and Afaf (local midwives)

“So kind”

“She would offer drinks or something to eat to Afaf, who was working double shifts between the French and English Hospitals”

“She was always offering to help”

“She shared meals she had cooked” ...

Sweet memories!

FROM RUTH'S FAMILY (spoken tributes at Ruth's Commemoration Service, Barnstaple, 05.09.2022)

From Sue Burrow

For those of you who do not know me, I am Sue Burrow, former wife of John, and mum to Mark, Ian and Alice. Ruth was my sister-in-law, our childrens' aunt, and our next door neighbour when we lived in Treneere. I speak on the behalf of Mark and Ian.

I first met Ruth at Tree Farm in 1972, and I was immediately impressed by her beauty, and cheerful optimism. Her over-riding positivism was further proven when she invited me to meet her in London, where we were both studying to be primary school teachers but in different parts of the city. She led me on a cycle ride to The Isabella Plantation in Kew Gardens – quite an adventure for me – but Ruth showed confidence and capability, although when she crossed a level crossing only just in time, I began to realize how much faith Ruth had in prayer! Prayer was a fundamental imperative throughout her life, and she shared her faith by example.

She was a music teacher of consummate skill, with infinite patience and endurance to seek perfection, always generous with her talents to enable others to excel. She was ambitious for all of her music pupils, and my own three children had, in their Auntie-next-door, an unparalleled champion of their musical abilities, for which I know they benefitted immeasurably, and for which I will always be grateful.

Another of my fond memories of Ruth is when she attended Ian's installation as Exeter Cathedral Chorister. After the service the immediate family were invited to a Deanery reception, and I saw Ruth's expression as we walked away, it was as if to say "He's on his way now ...", which seemed appropriate as the anthem just sung had been, 'Thou shalt keep him ...'. It was Ruth's initiative in seeking Ian's voice trial, and Alice's, also, that with her encouragement and guidance showed that she wanted the best fulfilment of all of my childrens' potential, with spiritual guidance as a basis for them to follow.

Ruth always conveyed the certainty of her faith, and when combined with her joy of music, it was truly memorable. It is to her enduring credit that she composed, sang and recorded not one but two CDs, since her diagnosis and even during her treatment. To have such faith, and especially whilst being tested in such a debilitating, painful and worrying illness, is surely the ultimate message to learn from Ruth's purposeful, productive and exemplary Christian life. I am so glad our paths crossed when they did, as Ruth's life, and now her death have enabled me to see strong faith in action.

Thank you, dear sister-in-law, for your never-failing friendship, kindness, generosity and love shown to me and my children. You brought us so much happiness, and we will be forever in your debt.

From Chloe Hutton (née Burrow, niece of Ruth)

I saw on social media a little before Auntie Ruth passed away, one of those inspirational quotes. It strangely came to mind a few days ago.

“Be the adult you needed as a child” (repeat if necessary) – for me that was Auntie.

Her passing has served to remind me what sort of parent I want to be. To spend time with them, to take them to places, to be a good role model, to be patient and fun.

Auntie Ruth did all those things. I have memories galore of Auntie Ruth, our very own Julie Andrews, organising Christmas fun and games at Tree for us as far back as I can remember. She was a born organiser, somehow managing to get us kids playing tunes on her set of hand chimes, directing us in musical nativity plays at nearby Littleborough Chapel, and always making sure to get the whole party to stand for photos to mark the occasion. If it wasn't for Auntie, we would probably have far less family photographs, or occasions to photograph for that matter! Another of her special qualities that enriched our lives.

They say you remember most how people made you feel. As a kid, I'm sure I am not alone in this, I remember feeling very safe and cherished with Auntie. You really felt like she paid attention to the little person you were inside, she tuned in to your perspective, and really cared. I know now that she was being like Jesus, showing us unconditional love through her patience and kindness. She once gave me a copy of the Corinthians 13 verses on ‘Love is’, which I kept on my mirror at home for years while I was in London, before I came to faith. I'd love to read it now, and encourage you to check it as a standard for true love:

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (NIV84)

We are so lucky to have known her. As nephews and nieces, Auntie occupied a special role in our lives. Often, she is described as an extra mum, and if she had had children of her own, she would have been fantastic as a mother, no doubt about it. She lavished so much energy on the children in her life, spending time thinking and praying for us all, shopping for presents, even on holiday she was thinking about what to bring back each of us as a souvenir, planning games and trips for us when we were together. A truly dedicated Auntie Mum.

In truth though, we were some of many children that had their lives enhanced by Miss Burrow! There are many of you here now, like us grown up, and wanting to say thanks for a brilliant lady. Brilliant, yes, because she shone. She shone a light, which I understand now to be God's love, and that was her best work. Pointing to the love of God, by serving the children in her life. As an Auntie and as a school teacher, as a Sunday school leader and as a friend.

So, as I think about how I want to be as a mother, I look to her example, I realise how profound it is to be the adult I needed as a child. How restorative that has the potential to be and how simple it can be.

From Alice Burrow (née Burrow, niece of Ruth)

I was thinking about what I would say today and was finding it difficult to compress a lifetime of memories into a few minutes. It's been difficult to find acceptance of the enormous void that's been left, but on my journey to Devon after hearing the news, I noticed a van with big bold letters 'PTL' overtake me on the motorway. For all of those who received a text from Auntie, they will be familiar with her own personalised acronym: PTL for 'Praise The Lord', that she would sign-off her texts with. It was in that moment that I had to smile to myself. Auntie may no longer be here with us in person, but she will always be in our hearts and she lives on in us with all the things she's taught us.

Last time I was with Auntie, she spoke of when the time comes that she will be 'called back to the Lord'. This unwavering faith was Auntie's rock. Her positivity and gratitude, even in her final weeks of suffering, has inspired me to reframe this overwhelming sadness into gratitude.

I'm grateful for having an Auntie Ruth.

An auntie who loved unconditionally like a mother.

For encouraging us to follow our dreams.

Always there to share the burden of worries and offer guidance through challenging times.

An auntie who prayed for us all. Every. Single. Day.

For being mine (and others) favourite music teacher.

For all the warm and loving hugs and kisses.

And for being such an incredible role model throughout my life.

Just two nights ago you were in my dream. I walked up a staircase, following the sound of an orchestra tuning up to play and as I turned the corner at the top of the stairs, you were there. Sat amongst the instruments, with a beaming smile, enjoying the pre-performance din of the instruments tuning-up, in-your-element. It was how I imagined you, in the throngs of angels in heaven, surrounded by the joyous music and happiness and long-awaited peace.

You were a daughter, a sister, a cousin, a sister-in-law, a wife, a godmother, an Auntie

... .. and you were a **Great Auntie!**