

An Oration for

Mrs IVY KATHLEEN ELIZABETH MONA BORRELL

Given at Crownhill, Milton Keynes.
2nd December 1988

We are here today to pay our respects and to honour the memory of our mother, grandmother and in one case greatgrandmother.

A mother is someone special; a friend wrote to me this week:

"To other people she was a frail old lady whose passing is necessary and perhaps a relief. She is however to you the unique and vibrant personality who is your mother. In your secret place you will bear the pain of love and loss alone. Such is the nature of the human condition; in the end it strengthens".

Mother was born in Derby and christened Ivy, Kathleen, Elizabeth, Mona. She was brought up in London by her Aunt and Uncle who already had several children of their own. She had a strict, hard time; the stories of getting up each morning before six to light the fire were frightening to a young boy. But she always remembered from that time her little friend Mabel whose family, by their kindness, helped to mitigate the harshness of her life.

She spent a lot of her early years in prison – perhaps I should rephrase that – she spent a lot of her early days near prisons for her uncle was a warder at Wormwood Scrubs and she went into Domestic Service with several prison governors. She had the disconcerting habit of saying in conversation: 'when I was in Holloway', or 'when I was at the Scrubbs' and left one wondering what was coming next. She could remember from that time debtors arriving in Handsome Cabs for imprisonment and the flight of one of the first aeroplanes in this country.

She married after the end of the first world war and her story about climbing out of Kew Gardens with her future husband after the gates were shut reminds us all that old also once enjoyed the passions and fun of youth.

She brought up her children in London; in 1939 she came to Bletchley evacuated with her son in a bus with hundreds of others. She has stayed here ever since, living for many years in Water Eaton and then from 1964 in Baisley House. She was a Home Help and always helped others; I recall when I was a boy, her going out in the night to deliver a baby for our next door neighbour who had made no provision for a midwife or doctor. More recently she has been on the other end and being helped and we are all most grateful to the Wardens and Home Helps at Baisley House for their loving care of her.

She imbued us all with a strong sense of right and wrong and of financial propriety. But in outlook she looked on the bright side always with a smile and a laugh. She had an immense sense of beauty; she loved flowers and would have loved those sent today; she liked all natural things and could appreciate things in such detail.

Her courage in facing a largely lonely life in later years was immense as was her endurance of the increasing debility of old age – she always made the best of what she could still enjoy.

She was proud of us all and loved us all deeply; she was keen to know what we were doing even if she could only vaguely comprehend the ways and jobs of our modern complicated world.

A firm Christian, she was a regular churchgoer when able to go. In my opinion, she had little to fear in Christian terms when judged on her life.

So this was our mother who loved us all and whose memory today we respect and honour. Having endured and enjoyed such a long life, she deserves the peace she has now found. Her life is an example to us all and we must, in celebrating her life, and her gift of life to us, hope that we shall be able to give as good account of ourselves when we reach the end of our days.

Peter Borrell