

Isabel in Aylsham

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I would like to thank Tim, and his family for giving me this opportunity to say a few words about my dear friend Isabel.

What can I say , she was terrific, amusing, intelligent, determined, massively capable and modest and you felt with her you could achieve anything, but most of all she was kind and she cared. And if I continue in this vein I will feel her wrath because she will tell me I am talking rubbish !!

I first met Isabel in the cultural centre and Mecca of Aylsham that is the Friday Country Market, she came in and immediately her elegance and her style drew your eye to her. We bonded over marmalade, I made it and she bought it, she unstintingly supported the Market to the extent that any friend or relative who came to stay was steered, in the most charming way into it's ambit and was encouraged to buy before they even realised what they were doing !!

When the Country Market committee decided in their wisdom to hold a fashion show as a fundraiser we looked at each other in something akin to desperation and with one voice said Isabel and she came to help us without question or hesitation and was fantastic.

She was one of those very rare individuals who could inspire and really inspire, you felt you just wanted to help her to achieve whatever it was she wanted, you wanted to be in her orbit and her focus was always to help open up opportunities to those who would not have them.

It was Isabel's vision and drive that established the Aylsham Picture House, which became so much more than just a Town Hall showing films, it brought the community of Aylsham together, it helped to forge bonds and friendships. But for me wonderful though the Picture House is it was her passion to offer opportunities to the young people of Aylsham and to achieve this she used the full force of her amazing organisational abilities, determination to achieve her goal and of course her wonderful charm.

She had the idea to open up the joys and challenges of animation to the 13 and 14 year olds in Aylsham High School, to open their eyes to her beloved world of art and creativity and she did.

In order to realise her goal she managed to bring together, the School, the Norwich University of the Arts, the Community of Aylsham and the Church, what a great achievement, it is very rare for all these organisations to work together for the good of a project and I believe it was a first, certainly in East Anglia and possibly the country. She got support and commitments from people before they even knew they had committed !!

The first Project was in June 2019, I was lucky enough to work on this with Isabel and even though she was already ill she drove herself to remain

engaged, she loved the fact the school children relished this opportunity and how they rose to the challenge of achieving new skills, some of the group are determined to make their future in animation.

We would have enlarged the number of children involved and developed the project as Isabel envisaged but Covid stopped us, I would hope that we will be able to continue it and keep her dream alive.

One of her last plans was for an outdoor Art exhibition here in Aylsham, she was so passionate about sharing the joy of art that her thoughts were always for others to open their eyes and offer them opportunities.

Isabel was a rare and wonderful person and it has been my honour and privilege to have known her.