

Cristabel Urry R.I.P.

Early Life

Cristabel was born to Helena and Frank Geldart on 18th March 1937 in Hong Kong. They named her after Coleridge's Christabel:

'The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well'

The Geldarts took their daughter deep into China, where one of her earliest memories was falling into a cess pit!

After WWII broke out, just months before Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, Cristabel and her mother left Frank behind in Shanghai. He was later interned in a Japanese camp. Helena and Cris moved to Canada as refugees. Initially they lived in a holiday cabin on Salt Spring Island, Vancouver and later moved to Petrolia, which Cris described as being 'at the bottom of Lake Ontario'. In 1943, they survived an Atlantic crossing back to England, despite their ship being abandoned by its convoy due to engine failure.

School

Cris went to school close to Cheltenham, where she managed to spill a whole bowl of rationed sugar and wasn't allowed any more for the rest of the term. She remembered that very clearly!

Frank rejoined the family in 1946 and they returned to China by flying boat. Cris went to the Shanghai British School before moving to Cheltenham Ladies College, which she liked and it became her home. The Communists were taking over in China. For several years, the rest of the family, now including William and Kate, were held there. Cris had to spend the holidays at friends or with maiden aunts, without seeing her parents or siblings.

Eventually reunited, the family moved to Wood Street in Surrey, and Cris went to a college in France, followed by Secretarial College in London.

Work

Cris had a fabulous time sharing flats with girl-friends and working as a secretary in London. Friends describe her as a dashing figure bombing about in her Austin Healey Sprite car. She joined the War Office before a sojourn in Salisbury, Rhodesia. She explored central Africa in a Landover with friends before there were proper roads, visiting Zanzibar and Mount Kilimanjaro. Returning to the War Office, she moved to Malta, where she met Hugh briefly. Back in London, she attended a friend's wedding and met Hugh again. This was the start of a lifelong partnership. A year later, on a world tour with her father, Cris diverted to Singapore where Hugh was serving. Here they became engaged. They were married on 25th September 1965.

Marriage and Children

The now Mrs Urry 'packed and followed' Hugh's ship HMS Chichester around the world. Next Hugh was loaned to the Malaysian Navy, and Cris gave birth to both her girls in the Far East: Penelope in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Jocelyn in Singapore. Later Hugh joined HMS Dido and the family moved to the UK, then back to Johre Bahru, Malaysia and then to their first house in Guildford. In 1972, Hugh left the navy and they all moved once again, this time to an apple farm in the Cape, South Africa.

South Africa

With her charm and sense of humour, Cris quickly established herself at the centre of the web of her new South African Urry relations. She shared their dogged opposition

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to the all-pervading inequities of the apartheid juggernaut. She instantly became a much loved daughter in law.

Apple growing, despite the grandeur and beauty of the mountainous area, proved uncongenial. Once the crop was safely harvested, the family moved to Cape Town and settled in the leafy suburb of Tokai. Here Cris devoted herself to bringing up her girls and developing a super garden in the unpromising sand of a new plot. Holidays to Hugh's family home in Plettenberg Bay with its super beaches and roaring surf were a regular feature. (See the photo on your service sheets.) Sadly, as time passed, the future for the country darkened. By 1978, bloody revolution threatened. The decision was made to return to England.

Back to England

The family returned by sea on a Greek cruise liner, arriving in Dover in February 1979 in a howling blizzard with strikes nearly paralysing England. During unloading, the Greeks dropped half of the family's possessions into Dover harbour, where they remain to this day! It was the middle of the 'winter of discontent'. Cris's mother provided sanctuary for the family in her home in Guildford. A difficult year followed. There were moments when Cris had to be dissuaded from rushing off to Heathrow to catch a plane back to Cape Town – revolution or no! Eventually Hugh got a new job in the City. In April 1980, by happy chance, they bought their house in Chappel, where they've lived ever since.

Chappel

Cris supported her girls at St Mary's School in Colchester, and took a job as a medical secretary (she had no specific training but found her A-level Latin very helpful!) Over the years, both Cris and Hugh built very strong relationships with people all over this area. Hugh bought a wooden sailing boat, *Peut-Etre*. In her, Cris and the girls developed their crewing skills. At first, she wasn't confident on long passages, and once chose to return by train rather than cross the Bay of Biscay. In the early 90s, Cris's mother moved to Earls Colne to be near her daughter.

Sea-going Gypsies

In 1995, Hugh changed to an ocean cruising yacht, renamed her *Alma*, sank her (actually someone else did) and rebuilt her. Once *Alma* was ready, they both retired and set off for a decade of voyages – to Spain and Portugal, the Madeiras, Canary and Cape Verdes Islands, Brazil and South Africa. Two lovely summers were spent in the boat in Knysna, where Hugh had lived as a child. Their return passage started in 2003 via Cape Town, St Helena, the Caribbean and the Azores. Cris sailed three of the four Atlantic Crossings. She made bread and survived Southern Ocean storms. But for her, the highlights was making new friends and visiting foreign parts.

Cris learnt to send text messages before her daughters and became a dab hand at e-mail, as many of you will know. She made great friends all over the world, many of them half her age. She also became a grandmother, to Kathleen and Charlotte, and knitted many Aran cardigans for them on the long ocean passages. In 2005, Cris and Hugh celebrated their fortieth Wedding Anniversary.

Home Again

So last year, with their trip complete, Cris and Hugh re-entered life in Chappel. Cris was enjoying her garden and had just joined the Parish Council. She was looking forward to travelling in Europe and was learning to play the piano again.

She could have filled many more happy years, but it wasn't to be. Fit and active, right up to the moment she died, she lived life to the full.