

Nancy Vernede (nee Kendall)

Nancy was born in 1914 in Mussoorie, India, one of the hill stations in the foothills of the Himalayas. Her family had a long tradition of service in India, and her father, Sir Charles Kendall, was a High Court Judge in Allahabad.

She spent her early childhood years in India, but when she reached school age, she was sent to a boarding school in Exmouth, England. At school she showed an early talent for music and, when she left, she studied at the Royal Academy, taking piano lessons from Sir Clifford Curzon, one of the most eminent pianists of that period. At the age of 18, she had to choose between continuing a musical career, or returning to India.

She decided to go back to India and, in 1934, she met Raymond Vernede at a gymkana at the polo club in Naini Tai and that evening at the polo club ball, he invited her for the "supper dance". They were married in 1937.

Raymond Vernede was a district Officer in the Indian Civil Service, and as his wife, Nancy had to organise garden parties, help with the girl guides and arrange meetings for Indian women's groups. However, she had plenty of time to develop her musical and sporting talents - she was an excellent rider and a keen tennis player.

In 2006 Nancy recorded many of her Indian experiences in a 3-part BBC television series "The Lost World of the Raj", during this series, she recalled with nostalgia the intensity of the Indian experience; the noise, bustle and smells of Indian railway stations, the romance of the outdoor life, her early morning rides, elephant rides through the jungle, camping in the hills, the smell of open fires and the sounds of wild animals at night. She also described her feelings about the absurdity, at formal dinners, of ladies trying to eat buttery dishes such as corn on the cob or asparagus whilst wearing elbow-length white gloves that were part of the dress code!

Juliet and Robin were born in India (Juliet in 1940 and Robin in 1943) but Nancy returned to England, in 1946 living first in North Oxford, where Andy and Nick were born, then in Old Marston. In 1967 the family bought New Place, at the top of Ladder Hill in Wheatley, where Nancy devoted herself to bringing up her four children and became closely involved in community, church and charitable work, collecting regularly for Christian Aid and Save the Children.

Nancy was an active member of St Mary's Parish Church in Wheatley, right up to the time of her death. She had a gift for recognising the best in other people, and was highly regarded by all who knew her.

She died in June 2008.

(Information taken from Robin Vernede's memorial address)