

Eulogy - Mabel Oliver -- A Life Well Lived
by her son Anthony (Tony) Oliver

Mabel was born on the 20 May 1910. She was the second of four daughters born to Daisy Carr (nee Sykes) and William (Bill) Carr at Tottenham in north London. Daisy, Phyllis and Peg her sisters have predeceased her.

Bill Carr was an insurance clerk at Sedgwick Collins in Queen Victoria Street, beginning as an office boy and ending up as chief clerk with the same firm after 52 years. He had only two significant absences from his desk; in 1901 he volunteered to go to the Boer War and served in Johannesburg as a private, and in 1914 he volunteered to go to the Great War where he served as a Sergeant Gunner into the Royal Horse Artillery serving throughout the War. Mabel remarked in her middle years that he looked as old in 1918 when he was demobbed, as he did when he was far older. Daisy was a milliner by trade and a dressmaker thereafter. She prided herself on dressing the four girls from top to toe until they were adults.

Mabel was educated from 11 at Tottenham Grammar School for Girls for which she obtained a scholarship, which was extremely rare in those days. Unfortunately, her parents moved to South London when she was 15; therefore she left early and never obtained School Certificate or Matriculation. Her father was instrumental in obtaining her employment in Lloyds of London where she worked as a clerk from 1925 to 1935. Her main interest at this time was the tennis club, where in the late 20s she met Jack Oliver, the son of an ex Marine and then a commissionaire, who was working as a junior clerk at the stock exchange.

Jack was born in Cork and had had several addresses throughout the United Kingdom, mostly on marine barracks. When he met Mabel he was living in Bellingham in southeast London with his father and mother. In 1931 his mother died of cancer and his father committed suicide six months later. This meant that from 1932 he and his elder brother Fred were evicted from the house and had to stand completely alone. This had a profound effect on both Mabel and Jack, especially when you consider the economic conditions of

the Thirties in which there was the mass unemployment and lack of opportunities. They were engaged for three years and married in 1935, when Mabel, having worked for ten years at Lloyds, was forced by the then rules to give up her job on the Friday before she was married on the Saturday. She went from her father's house in which prudence and thriftiness were high on the list of virtues, to her husband's house where thriftiness and an ability to manage a small budget was an absolute necessity. She lived at Bellingham Road in Catford very near to her parents who were now in Beckenham Hill.

In 1939 her first child Tony was born and ten days later war broke out. Jack was at this time in the Territorial Army as a lance bombardier. He was not present at Anthony's birth and subsequently was drafted to Belgium to serve in the British expeditionary Force. Mabel had to live on her own for the first time in her life and with a small child. She went to Dorset to relations and then on to Devon, to Shoreham in Kent, to Sydenham in southeast London with her older sister Daisy, to Datchet in Buckinghamshire with her younger sister Phyllis and finally to Eaglescliffe in County Durham to live with a next-door neighbour and her husband who had retired. Finally, she ended up at Deal in Kent where Daisy and Bill had a small retirement cottage just prior to Bill's retirement. Although Mabel had succeeded in living independently for the first time in her life, she had had great help from friends and relations.

Life had begun for the second time, after Jack got back to work having gained his commission and worked his way up to the rank of Captain. A girl Janet was born in 1946. In 1949 the stock-broking firm in which Jack worked was split into two and Jack's brother Fred became the manager of firm leaving check in the 1954 to become manager of the remainder of firm. This increased the family's financial prospects and in 1958 the family moved to a larger house in Beckenham Kent, and Jack bought a Rover car.

On the wider family front, Bill Carr died in 1965 at the age of 82 with having had the last five years really not with us but fighting the Hun from the trenches. Also in 1965 in Leicester Anthony got married to Janet Smith and a year later Janet Oliver got married to Ken Rogers in Beckenham. Almost immediately Mabel and Jack moved to a small luxury flat at Beckenham.

During this part of her life Mabel was keen member of the W. R. V. S. and was a committee member and very keen worker at the old people's luncheon club in Beckenham. She had also quite a commitment to her mother Daisy who was now in sheltered accommodation. In this phase of life Mabel had very strong social interests in the welfare of old people. In 1974, Jack retired and Mabel's social interests had to take a backseat, especially because of Jack's ill health. In 1977 Mabel and Jack sold up the flat and lived in Horley, Surrey where Janet and Ken had taken a small shop selling groceries. Who was looking after whom is a question of judgment; Mabel and Jack said they were looking after the children Michael and Julie, as Janet and Ken had to work long hours to make ends meet. On the other hand, Janet and Ken would be round to see that Jack was still all right and that Mabel was coping with Jack. Mabel and Jack lived in a small flat very near the airport.

In 1982 Jack was confined to Roehampton Hospital for about six months to treat gangrene due to his diabetes. He came out in April 1983 having had his toes amputated. Jack, knowing his life was fairly limited, persuaded Janet and Ken to set up house together with him and Mabel so that Mabel would not be on her own. They moved into a house with a granny flat in April 1983 and Jack died soon after in May 1983. Mabel was devastated! She seemed to have no idea of the severity of Jack's illness. Also, to add another blow, in December 1983 Daisy her mother died at the age of 96.

However, Mabel had her own friends in the town and regularly went on little excursions with the travel agent in town. She had her regular holiday in Eastbourne at the end of the season and came up to Nottingham to see Anthony and Janet at Christmas and in August. About the time of her 90th birthday Mabel became increasingly frail and went to a residential home in the Horley district. Unfortunately, she broke her hip about 10 months later. She was admitted to hospital and at this point it was decided that Landermeads would be the best option for her.

She was a caring and loving mother to her daughter and son and a loyal wife to Jack, especially in his declining years. But she was at her best amongst younger children, grandchildren and in 1998 great-grandchildren. She

delighted in their simple affectionate ways and the trust they had in her. She had a simple straightforward faith that if people were good to each other, then the world would be a happier place for all concerned. She did not want to know about the more controversial things in the world. Tony remembers when she was waxing about the good old days with her elder sister, her mother was whispering in a fairly loud voice, because she was deaf, that she didn't know what she was talking about because the good old days are in fact, the bad old days. She was there and she could testify. In the last 3 1/2 years life has been very good to her in the fact that things have been very simple and very straightforward, which she always liked to say they were. We give thanks for her life and remember with affection the good things that she said, did and was. We cannot in all conscience regret her death, especially during the last six weeks when she had the stroke and lost the positive aspects of her personality. But we look on a life well lived, and everybody here in the congregation will have a story to tell about Mabel. These will be treasured long after you depart from this Chapel, and this will be her real memorial in the months and years to come.

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