

Gillian Naish

A Personal Memory - Nicolette Winterbottom

This is not an account of Gillian's life, or triumphs in the mountains, or her many other achievements, it is a personal recollection about having Gillian as a friend.

We were not the sort who talk on the phone every day, who knew what each other were doing all the time, but what Gillian and I knew was that we were there for each other when we needed to be, and when we did meet it was as if we had never been apart. She had the gift of happiness, and when I was with her she gave me the feeling that there was no one in the world she would rather be with, and when she left me her happiness had rubbed off, and I felt happier too. It is very hard to accept that the telephone will never ring again and Gillian say 'I'm coming in to the dentist (or whatever) can I drop in and then we would sit at the kitchen table with mugs of coffee and discuss our plans, our children, whatever was uppermost in our minds, and most of all our gardens.

Oh yes our gardens; mine is just full of treasures she gave me, for so often she arrived clutching a little bit of something she thought I might like, or plants left over from the numerous plant sales she organised that she had no home for, what extra special plants these all are to me now.

I found myself wondering when we really got to know one another. For the new comers to the club I must tell you that we used to have Womens Meets once a year, and there were some who treated them with suspicion and even mocked them but they were so wrong; for that is where friendships were made that have lasted and lasted- that's where ours really started; Before Gillian's funeral began I looked up and suddenly realised what a large group of the Womens Meet stalwarts were there and thought back to their importance, and I remembered Gillian so often being the one to come knocking at the door in her nightie in the mornings with a tray of steaming mugs of tea and of course her lovely smile and cheerful voice. We all had such fun, we all laughed so much and all learned so much about each other, as well of course as going for long walks!

I never knew Gillian to say or think an unkind or cruel thought or grumble or complain but that does not mean she was weak willed or easily swayed. She had a deep religious faith and extremely clear cut moral values which supported her, but made her quite able to disagree with one if she thought she should and to meet out good advice if she thought it needed, and she could be very funny with it! her advice was always wise and I usually took it; I already find myself reprimanding myself for silliness or fussing, my goodness I find myself saying, what ever would Gillian think of such behaviour

All the family have lost much more than we can know, but most of all my heart goes out to Rachel, Emily and any future grandchildren; Gillian's delight in them knew no bounds and she was, and would have continued to be, a loving but not doting grandmother, and the rewards of their relationships to them all would have been so great.

Just after her death I went to Iran. I was kneeling down there looking at wild flowers I couldn't identify, and thought as so often before I will photograph them and ask Gillian and then sickeningly I remembered I couldn't ever again, and I wept in the plains of Iran.

When I saw Gillian just two days before she died she was still able to smile at me; I will never forget that smile.