



A LIFE REMEMBERED

Sister Ishbel Veitch FMDM

10 July 1930 — 10 December 2016

MEMORIES OF SISTER ISHBEL by Sr. Jane Bertelsen

Ishbel's life was quite extraordinary even in its biographical details - from her birth on a farm in Wanganui, New Zealand through 86 full years brimming with of experiences to her death surrounded by her sisters at Frimley Park hospital on 10th December.

Her **faith journey** took her from the Presbyterian, to Church of England to Quaker communities and then following an experience on the peak of Cader Idris in North Wales where in her words she 'found God' to the catholic community and so to religious life as an FMDM. Ishbel spent her life deeply reflecting on this journey she found herself taking with a God who was always mysterious to her.

*This search may be captured in the poet
Rainer Maria Rilke's words:*

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Although a Catholic and an FMDM Ishbel was always a Quaker at heart and when, perhaps in the last 15 years or so she came to terms with this she found a new peace.

She described her Quaker spirituality as a call to be '*a 24 hour Christian*' and in her own worlds she felt most at home being a '*village Christian.*'

Ishbel embraced whatever opportunities came her way to live her 'village Christian' vocation to the full – Friends of Milford hospital, volunteer at the hub, Governor at the Royal Surrey, her Book Club, Women on Wednesday Group, Churches Together. Her many years as a soroptomist in both The Wirral and here in Surrey was another expression of this all embracing Village Christian vocation. Ishbel saw the **Divine DNA in everyone and everything.**

All of us (FMDM Sisters) who lived locally will look back with real fondness on the many gatherings in the community house, Fermain, Godalming. Mince Pie festival after Christmas, Garden Party to celebrate feast of St Anne, Waitangi day, birthdays, jubilees, etcetera. Ishbel (Sr. Ishbel Veitch) and Theresa (Sr. Theresa Tan) - *community members in Fermain*, showed off and shared their garden with pride. They grew fruit and vegetables, made jams and hutneys and shared them generously. Any sister visiting Ladywell would be invited to call by – which they often did - their community was a great example of simple Franciscan hospitality and true fraternity.

In recent years Ishbel's health suffered but she was not to be deterred. However I think we would all like to pay tribute to Theresa (Sr. Theresa Tan) who cared so lovingly and constantly for Ishbel so that Ishbel could convince herself, even if not us, she was not frail!

Ishbel told me in one of our recent chats that she was 'content' – what a beautiful gift to have in old age. She said she had had a happy life despite the many difficult times. In the final days of her life in Frimley Park Hospital she was at peace. Those who sat with her said she was so happy, had a smile on her face and brightness in her eyes.



Ishbel was clearly on the final stretch of the journey and had she been able to write about it in her daily diary she may well have quoted TS Eliot.

*"We shall not cease from exploration,
and the end of all our exploring will be
to arrive where we started
and know the place for the first time."*



Dear Ishbel, rest in peace.

*Enjoy the memories of your happy life and pray for us as we do for you.
Thank you for all you gave to each one of us so generously.*