

OBITUARY and TRIBUTE - The Honourable Jill Ganzoni - 1931 – 2022

Jill's life and influence spread way beyond our local community. A tribute in the EADT described her as a "philanthropist." She lived for some time in Playford, then Woodbridge, while her brother, John, similarly philanthropic, lived in Great Bealings. We, in these parts have particular reason for being grateful and for paying tribute. Jill's goddaughter, Marian Hedgley was particularly close to her, and to her brother, her mother having been nanny to the two of them for many years. Marian has composed the major part of this Obituary,** and contributed two of the photos.



Mary Jill Ganzoni was born on 27th March 1931 at Stanford House in Ipswich. Her father was the Conservative MP for Ipswich for 24 years from 1914 – 1938 (apart from the coalition years 1923-24) and was very well-thought of in Ipswich. He was knighted in 1921 becoming Sir John Ganzoni, given a baronetcy in 1929, then raised to the House of Lords in 1938 and took the title of Lord Belstead. He went on to serve in the House of Lords for 20 years from 1938 until his death in 1958 when Jill's beloved brother, John took on the title of Lord Belstead at the age of 25.

The family moved to the newly-built Stoke Park House in the early 1930's. Jill was very fond of horses and both children enjoyed playing tennis from an early age. They would also be taken out to tea parties and sometimes visited Sutton Hoo to have tea with Robert Pretty (the son of Mrs Edith Pretty) who was of a similar age to them.

Jill was encouraged to take up voluntary work when she left school. She joined many charities and organisations, helped out with the Red Cross, assisted in SPCK bookshops and got involved with Church work. Jill's religion was always an important part of her life. Following the death of their parents, Jill moved to Bentley and John bought some land at Gt Bealings.

Jill settled into life at Bentley. She'd been a keen member of the Guides and went on to become a Guide Commissioner and later became Vice-President of the Suffolk Division. She'd always enjoyed camping and whilst at Bentley, allowed the local guides to store their camping equipment in her garage and hosted guide camps in her garden. In 1965 it's reported that she sold off some of her land for £1 so that a new village hall and car park could be built for Bentley.

Jill did much work with the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, including helping to launch its annual cycle ride which raised more than £5m over the years. She became a Lay reader, joined the General Synod in 1982 and in 2007 was awarded the Cross of St Augustine by the Archbishop of Canterbury at a ceremony at Lambeth Palace, marking her 25 years' service. Jill was also on the Diocesan Synod and in 1997 she was recorded as being on

no less than 15 of their committees and she was the Deanery Synod rep for Playford. It was through the Ganzoni Charitable Trust that Jill was able to help many charities in Suffolk and together with a similar trust set up by her brother, they were able to help a huge range of causes. Jill was also a Deputy Lieutenant of Suffolk.

From 1994- 2006 she was chairman of the school governors at Ipswich Girls' School and supported them throughout their move to Woolverstone Hall and their change of title to Ipswich High School. The new school swimming pool was named the Ganzoni Pool to recognise the significant donation she gave towards it.

Jill had moved to Playford towards the end of 1980's and lived in Spring Meadow for the next 16 or so years. During that time, she was a member of the WI and served on Playford Parish Council from 1999 – 2006. She was renowned for producing Suffolk rusks for WI teas. She gave a generous donation when Playford's village hall needed refurbishment and opened the newly extended hall in 2003. Her brother, John, was the major benefactor contributing to Bealings Village Hall Playing Field, so it was more than appropriate that Jill should have been invited to perform the opening ceremony. The *History of Bealings* would probably have not been possible had Jill not given a generous donation towards it. The book is in fact dedicated to brother and sister, Jill and John.



Opening the Playing Field

Jill's friendly manner won her many friends in all walks of life – like her brother, she did not put on "airs and graces" as she might have done. When John died in 2005, Jill was devastated – not only had she lost the closest member of her family, she had lost her best friend, as they had supported each other throughout their lives. However, Jill continued with her charitable work.

Jill moved to a bungalow in Woodbridge in 2006 and enjoyed five years there until illness struck and she had to regretfully move into a care home where she spent her last eleven years. She became a spokesperson for the residents and took up many issues on their behalf, with the management, and generally sorted things out for them. She continued to enjoy visits from her many friends – indeed, one had to make an appointment to see her as she was so popular! Unhappily, lockdown during the pandemic meant she could no longer see her friends regularly and she would complain of being very lonely. She was really looking forward to the time when she could have unlimited visitors, but this was not to be.



Jill's last Christmas

Many people have been in touch with Marian, offering condolences, relating happy memories and anecdotes and saying how much Jill had improved their lives. Philanthropist indeed. Many in these parts have good reason to mourn her passing – and to be grateful to her.

Jill died on 21st April 2022. Her funeral took place in St Mary's, Woodbridge on May 12th. A large congregation was privileged to hear more of Jill's work and philanthropy, so much of it discrete and personal. Her ashes will be interred close to those of her dear brother, in Great Bealings churchyard.

Norman Porter

*** A full version of what she originally wrote can be obtained from the editor. The eulogy given at her funeral service, given by the Venerable Peter Townley, Archdeacon of Pontefract, and formerly vicar at St Mary le Tower, Ipswich, can be downloaded from the Homepage of this website*