

## Ida Beau

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Ida died a week ago today in the hospital at Dinard. She had been suffering from a heart condition for some time but during the last twelve months, her health had clearly been deteriorating. But when Danny telephoned me to tell me that his mother had died that day, I was genuinely surprised. I'd seen Ida on the previous Thursday and she had looked so well. Ida was very much of the old school. She was strong-minded. She had a strong will. She simply did not let on just how bad things were.

Think of Ida and you think of someone who has always been around in Dinard – well certainly she has for the last thirty odd years of her life. Ida had reached a good age, a great age, but age was something about which she was clearly reticent. How old she was, was a personal matter, not anyone else's business, not something anyone else needed to know. And though you could make an informed guess, it is her wish that as in life, so too in death there should be no mention of her age. And so let us respect her wishes and say that she had reached an age few of us here present will manage.

On the order of service, Ida is described as wife, mother, grandmother. Let me add a fourth – daughter and talk about these four aspects of her life and then add the part she played here in Dinard in preserving our heritage of St Bartholomew's as an active Anglican Church in France.

### *Daughter*

I first met Ida at Easter 1995 when I first came here as a holiday chaplain. Over the years, a picture of her childhood emerged, initially growing up in Yorkshire, attending church, an Anglican church, where there was a vicar and four curates. Charles Marshall remembers her telling of a church outing to roll Easter eggs down Roseberry Topping. Sadly, her father had died before Ida was born. While the family was still young, they moved south to the Isle of Wight to East Cowes, to a cottage on the Osborne estate. At the age of twelve, she learnt to play the piano and that same piano which was made in Middlesbrough, Yorkshire, travelled around the UK and France with her and eventually ended up here in her living room in Dinard.

When the Second World War broke out, the family was safe and sound on the Island. But not so safe and sound that there was not a threat from casual bombing. London was the principal target during the Blitz and the risk for those who lived on the Island was from bombers returning from their nightly raids on London which might jettison any bombs they failed to drop on target on their way back home. Sometimes, the Island suffered bomb damage and during one such incident, a close friend and her family were killed. For Ida, bereavement came, too, in the person of her first fiancé, a submariner, killed at sea. But lasting love came in the shape and person of Marcel Beau, a young, Free French, naval officer who, in 1943, met and fell in love with this young English Rose and she with him. Oddly enough, despite the real dangers, these years were possibly the happiest years in their life together.

### ***Wife***

Married to Marcel, after the war in 1948, Ida left England for France much to her family's sadness. But what an adventure! To learn French; to learn about French culture; to move 14 times around the country: to Marseilles, to Bordeaux, the destination depended on where Marcel was stationed. The life of a naval wife is necessarily 'all at sea' and a sense of impermanence was part of the job. It can't have been easy. Certainly at Bordeaux, Ida was part of the Anglican Church there. But true to her English roots, she never became a French citizen. As her 'livret de famille' records, she refused French citizenship that came with marrying Marcel – she remained proud to be British.

### ***Mother***

Danny was Ida and Marcel's only child and when he was born ten years into their marriage, it seemed like an answer to prayer. Marcel was Catholic; Ida an Anglican; but it seemed best to them that their boy should be baptised a Catholic if he were to be brought up here in France. At home, they spoke English; in school, he would learn French. Ida was inordinately proud of her son, not least his gift with languages and his connection with the sea through his professional career. She lived long enough to get to know and to appreciate Blandine, Danny's second wife. She was happy to know that their wedding took place only weeks ago in January this year.

### ***Grandmother***

Ida was also inordinately proud of her four grandchildren, the offspring of Danny's first marriage. Pierre–Emmanuel; Pierre–Clément; Pierre–Olivier; Marie–

Adelaide. She talked enthusiastically about Pierre Emmanuel's success with his graduation from Rouen's Business School and latterly his life and work in Brazil. She was proud that Pierre Clément had travelled extensively abroad studying in Madrid & New York. She loved the fact that he is a gifted musician, playing the guitar and writing songs. She was delighted in Pierre Olivier's sporting success in tennis and his desire to follow in Marcel's footsteps by joining the Navy but when this was found not to be possible, she was excited that he had found what he wanted to do studying first class hotel management in Paris. And she sang the praises of the youngest Marie-Adelaide: a gifted artist and dancer who took a great part in the Coryphée's dancing school Gala held annually in St-Malo. It was much to her delight that three of the four grandchildren have been taught English partially by David Norris. She was proud of what is shared by her four grandchildren: the love and gift for music and the talent for learning and practising foreign languages and in particular English.

### *St Bartholomew's.*

But how did Ida come to St Bart's? The literal answer was by ferry, the Vedette from St Servan. Initially, Marcel and Ida had moved to St Servan and before the Rance Dam was built, the most direct way from St Malo to Dinard was by ferry. But with Marcel's health failing, they moved to Dinard into 32 rue Théodore Botrel. But within the year, in July 1981, aged only 61, Marcel had died. Diagnosed with a rare tropical illness, Marcel spent his last days in Pontchaillou hospital at Rennes. Daily, Ida made the trip south through the towns and villages because then the N137 was yet to be built as a dual carriage way.

Ida was proud of the fact that her husband was a French Navy Officer & decorated as a “Chevallier de la Légion d’Honneur” and she invited me to a dinner and to a reception where it was clear to see the honour and esteem in which she was held. In church, Ida commissioned a kneeler in Marcel’s memory and when once it went missing there was ‘trouble at mill’! But thankfully it was found and all was well .

Ida played a part in keeping the church open in the years before our congregation began to grow – 8 in the congregation was then a normal number. Along with her friend, Elizabeth Hannay, they made sure the church was open at Easter and during the season. Sometimes, Ida might receive a telephone call in the evening and the voice at the other end would say “Ida, it’s Elizabeth. I’m in Paris. Go and close the church.” And she did – after all Elizabeth Hannay had been a major in the American army and she was used to being obeyed. Ida was a member of the Church Council for a number of years (Chris Curtis remembers her as immaculately dressed in powder blue) and she was responsible for our contributions to the Banque Alimentaire. She is remembered fondly by a string of chaplains – John Schaefer and his wife Lorrie in the States and Malcolm and Peggy Cherry in Bury St Edmunds. When Malcolm described Ida as ‘Widow Twankey with a Twingo’ it brought a rich smile to her face!

You may not know this but Ida was a Scrabble fiend. Whether in English at Diana’s with Sheila Frost and Marie-Thérèse Bailly or in French with the family, she had a real talent for the game and usually won! She used to beat her own son and grandchildren even in French !

Ida was a life-long admirer of the Royal family which must have been due in part to her experience of living on the Osborne estate. She told the story of the hat that she lent Elizabeth to wear when she went to the Buckingham Palace to collect her MBE. It was Ida's boast that though she herself had never been to the Palace, one of her hats had! Sad-to-say, Ida died on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary same day as Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth succeeded to the throne following the death of her father George VI.

What can I say to conclude? That Ida had a deep-rooted faith in Jesus Christ who proclaimed a gospel of love: the love of God for Man and our love of our neighbour as we love ourselves. Certainly that love informed Ida's life in the many strands that made up her experience: wife, mother, grandmother to name but three. And with her belief in a God who loves us comes a belief that His love for us as known individuals will mean that death is not an end but a new beginning. Resurrection, life after death, the life eternal, is the message of those Easter eggs which Ida as a little girl rolled downhill at Roseberry Topping and it is in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection that we have come to commend Ida to God today.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the funeral service for Ida Beau  
St Bartholomew's, Dinard  
13<sup>th</sup> February, 2012*

