

## Tributes paid to Ghanaian 'Queen Mother'

SHE is known as a Queen Mother in Ghana – and as a dedicated worshipper here.

Tributes have been paid to Linda Forster, from Holy Rood Church, Stubbington, who died recently after a short illness.

She was an enthusiastic member of our Inter-Diocesan West Africa Link (IDWAL) committee, and had visited Ghana 14 times. She edited the regular IDWAL newsletter, bringing alive the links our parishes and schools have with their Ghanaian counterparts.

In 2009, worshippers from St Mark's Church in Essikadu, which is linked to Holy Rood Church, paid her the ultimate tribute when they made her a Queen Mother and given the name 'Nana Efua Kodu' in a ceremony that honours someone who has done much for their local community.

Linda and her husband



Linda and Stuart Forster as Queen Mother and Chief

Stuart also shared the role of PCC treasurer at a vital time of change in the late 1990s.

"She was a lovely person, with a great, outgoing personality," said Stuart. "She was very caring, and she brought the best out of other people, including me. She seemed to be able to bring

enjoyment and pleasure out of every situation."

Linda had been living in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in the USA before she met Stuart, who was working for the Ministry of Defence here. Both had lost their first spouses in 1988, and they became penfriends.

After visiting each other, they began a transatlantic relationship before Stuart jetted over one weekend to propose. They were married in October 1995 in Holy Rood Church and continued to worship there.

The pair became involved with Ghana from 2005, when Linda became IDWAL representative for Fareham deanery. She encouraged congregations to raise money to buy Bibles, and to help to create a new nursery school in Essikadu.

IDWAL chairman Canon Graham Morris said: "Very quickly into my time as chairman of IDWAL, I came to appreciate the enormity of Linda's passion for Ghana.

"Such was her fount of knowledge she became the resources person for IDWAL Portsmouth. She gathered information together, gave

advice and very quickly gained the confidence of those who were planning trips to build fellowship links of their own.

"Her involvement in producing the newsletter became a lynch pin for the IDWAL committee. Her technological skills and seemingly insatiable appetite for news from Ghana informed and educated all of us.

"I speak for all of my colleagues in recognising Linda's passion and deeply held love for Ghana and its people. Travelling with Stuart to Ghana on a very regular basis provided her with thousands of photographs, and many stories that brought the links with church and schools alive.

"We give thanks that we have been able to share something of her enthusiasm, and practical working out of the gospel."

# Ten years of Friday Fridge

**IMAGINE walking home late at night and wishing a church was open so you could ask someone about faith and say a quick prayer?**

It was to help meet that need that Friday Fridge first opened its doors back in 2006. It has now just marked 10 years of ministry and outreach to Southsea's night-time community.

Based at St Jude's Church at the top of the main shopping centre, it gave those walking home from pubs and clubs the chance of a spiritual chillout at a time that suited them.

Bacon sandwiches, real coffee, atmospheric lighting and ambient projections made it attractive for people to pop in between 10.30pm and 2.30am each Friday. Volunteers were happy to listen to questions about faith or personal problems until the early hours. Prayer installations gave guests the chance to engage directly with God.

Over those 10 years, the focus of Friday Fridge has changed. Several of Southsea's pubs and clubs closed or moved elsewhere. Individuals with mental health

problems, who were homeless or were dealing with drug or alcohol addictions came more regularly. The opening times altered to 9pm-11.30pm to suit them.

The free food and drink, the chance to chat, and the prayer installations remained. And a Bible study was launched for those who wanted to find out more.

Many volunteers have been regular helpers over the past 10 years, but three have been ever-present – helping out at each Friday Fridge unless they happened to be ill or on holiday.

Anne Manship has typically been behind the counter serving tea or coffee, and Andrew Malbon and Vida Weaver have been ever-present on 'defrost' duty – dismantling the Friday Fridge set-up early on Saturday mornings. The three of them were presented with thank-you presents at recent St Jude's Church services.

They also celebrated at a 10th anniversary party held at Friday Fridge last month. The Rev Mark Rodel, a former curate who was involved with the initial idea, returned along with other volunteers and guests from the past 10 years.

The current Friday Fridge



Above: Andrew Malbon and Vida Weaver; left: original leaders Nikki Chester, Catherine Benford and Mark Rodel cut the cake with Jim Campbell

talk to them about anything.

"Over the years, there have been many people who have only ever dropped in once. But I hope

leader, Jim Campbell, from Devonshire Avenue Baptist Church, said: "I love it. It is a fantastic to be able to say to people that 'church' is available for you at a time that suits you. People have been amazed that we are open at that time, that we are giving away bacon sandwiches or cheese toasties, and that we are happy to

they went away knowing that Christians are generous and that God is interested in them.

"One of its strengths now is that there are a core of regulars who keep coming, because they are lonely, or want to go somewhere at night that doesn't involve alcohol, or just because they have made friends here.

"I'm also pleased that those from other local churches have also been volunteering, and that we have made contact with Street Pastors who patrol Albert Road, and those who offer the Breakthru groups and Sunday Suppers at St Simon's Church, because sometimes we meet the same people.

"Our 10th anniversary celebrations were great. I just hope we can serve people in this way for at least another 10 years!"

For more details, or to volunteer to help, see [www.stjudes-southsea.org.uk/join-in/friday-fridge](http://www.stjudes-southsea.org.uk/join-in/friday-fridge) or ring 023-9275 0442.