

Brenda Clarke née Honeyman remembered by her children Roger, Gwithian and families.

In her 95 years Mum, Brenda, Nanny has taught us, inspired us. A woman who preferred her own company, was private and had a vivid imagination which she used productively as an author. Brenda had much success having many books published. She was meticulous with her research, recording her findings in her many notebooks and even in her dotage retained a great deal of information.

Brenda wrote under three names, her own, her maiden name Brenda Honeyman and also as Kate Sedley. In Wikipedia, it states: 'Kate Sedley is the pen-name of Brenda Margaret Lilian Clarke an English historical novelist. She was born in Bristol in 1926 and educated at Red Maids' School in Westbury-on-Trym. Her medieval historical whodunnits feature Roger the Chapman, who has given up a monk's calling for the freedom of peddling his wares on the road'.

But Brenda actually published many more novels across three genres –historical novels, romantic thrillers as well as the aforementioned medieval whodunnits. According to Wiki, a total of 55 books.

As we look back on her long life of 95 years, to respect her writing we can link Brenda's life to the titles of some of her novels. For example, the Roger the Chapman series has the same name as her son Roger, her first born. Roger and his younger sister Gwithian (who was incidentally born on her Mum's birthday) simply said that 'Mum was always there and always supportive'. They were both born in Crownhill in Plymouth when Mum and Dad were living there.

There were initially limited funds within the family but Roger and Gwithian remember carefree days as children. A Friday was always memorable as Mum made a special tea when Dad had to work late.

Holidays were enjoyable. Roger has a particular memory of throwing pebbles at a dead jelly fish on Slapton Sands, getting badly sunburnt and then being soothed with calamine lotion whilst Mum sang 'The Skye Boat Song'. Gwithian remembers on one occasion being told she could not see the fireworks on Bonfire Night until she had done her homework. Mum then relented and when she came back inside, Mum had done the work for her. Days out with the family may have inspired books like *The Brothers of Glastonbury* and *The Tintern Treasure*. Precious memories.

She was quietly proud of what her children have achieved in their lives and of their partners Sue and Paul. She liked to spend time with her grandchildren who will remember the magic drawer filled with toys and being treated to pocket money.

But let's go back in time. One Roger the Chapman novel was called *The Plymouth Cloak*. Ron lived in Plymouth but met his bride to be in Yorkshire through work and they later married in 1955. A title written by Brenda in 1995 was *The Wicked Winter*. Roger recalls being taken to Dartmoor in the severe winter of 1963 where the snow drifts nearly came up to his waist. When he got home his legs were blue - not from the cold but from the blue dye of his cheap jeans!

Brenda wrote a romantic novel called *Edward the Warrior*. Her father was called Edward but sadly Brenda never knew him as he died 16 days before her birth on 30 July 1926 at 7pm. Her mother Lilian had a tough start as a new parent whilst also grieving for her late husband. Home was at 18 Bellevue Road in Eastville. According to her memory book she told her granddaughter Laura that having arrived onto the earth, she was dunked into cold water like an apple at Halloween to get her lungs to start!

Brenda's mother Lilian later married again to Ewart and so I mention her novel *Brother Bedford* as she had stepbrothers Colin and Geoff and also '*Sisters and Lovers*' as she had a stepsister, Beryl.

As a result of her upbringing, Brenda spoke well. Roger, Sue, Gwithian and Paul smile as they remember Mum sounded like the Queen on the phone. But she did use some choice language when she was cross or didn't want to do something!

She was educated at Red Mads School in Westbury on Trym.. Members of The Red Maids Society, which is linked to the school, are so proud that Brenda is part of the alumnae and have written articles about her.

Following her time at school, Brenda became a civil servant and worked in Nelson Street in Bristol. She also volunteered for the Red Cross at The Chesterfield Hospital during which time she helped two babies to be born but she always felt like a 'dogs body', as all she remembers doing is changing beds and emptying pans. Through work Brenda was then sent on secondment to Yorkshire and her path in life took an unexpected turn when she met Ron.

Having married, become parents and with family life established, whilst Ron was at work and Roger and Gwithian were at school, Brenda took up writing. She had a vivid imagination and wanted to use it by putting her ideas on paper. It took four years of perseverance before her first book was published nearly forty-two years ago, and this inspired her to write more. She was a loner and was more than happy to get lost in her imagination whilst the real world carried on around her.

Brenda deeply researched so her novels were historically accurate. But throughout her life, Brenda was an avid reader of others works and became frustrated that her eyes deteriorated as she got older. But her own works continued to sell and even reached those who would read in other ways. 18 months ago, she was approached by her agent who had two companies that wanted to publish her novels onto digital platforms, a thing that she found ironic as she thought that her publishing days were long gone.

And so, Brenda wrote her own life story. She finally slowed and stopped writing. She reflected on her life and her achievements. At the age of 95, Brenda said to her family she was ready to go and it was on 28 February, she passed away peacefully.