

# Janna Cundall, 1924-2019, Remembered

by Polly Chapman

*Aunt; great and great, great aunt; godmother; friend to so very many. Artist; architect; lover of wildlife; musician; traveller; Church Recorder; sailor; supporter over many years of so many charities. Samaritan; a lifelong Christian who studied and explored her faith. A founder member of the core team which created and developed The Waterside Community; long-term volunteer at The Pastoral Centre and at Emsworth's Museum, of which she was again a founder member.*

Diana/Janna was born in 1924, part of that 'resilient generation' referred to by HM The Queen in her recent D-Day speech.

Most of Janna's childhood was spent in Emsworth. The family home was in Record Road, and Janna and her brother, Rodney, first attended nearby Stanmore School, housed in the former home of P G Wodehouse.

*"In my early teens, I went to a small private school as a boarder. The headmistress was exceptional and had a great influence on my life. She was very human and great fun, but could also be very firm."*

From school, Janna went to study at The Bartlett School of Architecture.

In 1959 Janna worked with her father, Admiral Cundall, to create a new home in Emsworth. Trinity Cottage was born when three cottages which had been condemned as 'unfit for human habitation' were converted into the house we know today. All of the paperwork surrounding that project, including Janna's detailed drawings, have been carefully preserved.

It was when her widowed mother needed live-in support that Janna moved back to Emsworth. From then on, she worked for West Sussex County Council as an Architect.

Initially, Janna worked as part of the team on the 1966 County Council Plan for Chichester

City. This contained detailed analysis of the historic character and, in order to protect it, proposed taking traffic out of the centre and pedestrianising the four main streets. It also proposed the rear accesses to the centre and main car parks which we all use today.

In 1967, a new Act was passed to enable the designation of 'Conservation Areas' and that same year, four important studies were commissioned by the Government to find out 'how to reconcile our old towns with the 20th century, without knocking them down'. Those for Bath, Chester and York were all commissioned from well-established consultants, but Chichester, uniquely, was put in the hands of the County Council.

Janna led the study team of seven architects and planners. The work involved inspections of all the buildings in the historic centre, from attics to basements.

Janna and a colleague then went on to inaugurate all the first Conservation Areas in towns and villages throughout West Sussex.

She spent many subsequent years giving specialist advice on Listed Buildings throughout the County and, closer to home, Janna played a significant role in the development of Emsworth's Design Statement. Her papers have been donated to the Weald & Downland Living Museum.

In the course of her long life, Janna travelled extensively throughout Europe, North and South America, India, Vietnam and Cambodia amongst the highlights. Every trip was faithfully recorded in an album. Her travels often produced details which would then appear on her hand-made Christmas cards, which many of us continue to treasure.

Janna's life embraced so many others. She was 'family' to her neighbours of 50 years, the Jepsens – so much so that she referred to Neil as her 'next of kin'.

## Trinity Cottage

Janna wrote a history of Trinity Cottage in 2016.

"I am not absolutely sure when the cottages were built – but probably the end of the 18th or early 19th century. There was a terrace of four cottages, the most southern (No.47) was probably demolished in the early 1920s.

The three remaining cottages were condemned, and a demolition order served in the 1950s. The last tenants were: No.41, Sarah Wells; No.43, Mr Legget, an inshore fisherman; No.45, Mr Rapson, a rat man who had a family of six.

My parents decided to buy the cottages in, I think, 1957, for £400 each [and turn them into one property]. We planned to retain the basic structure, and find out what was necessary to raise the demolition order.

I agreed to prepare the plans, which led to the layout as it is now ... My father became my 'office boy' helping to measure so that I could draw up the plans, as well as doing all the typing. A number of things had to be done to raise the demolition order, e.g. lowering the ground floor; putting in sanitation (there was one tap in the rear scullery, and three WCs joined together in the garden).

At that time I was living in Brighton, so I worked on the plans in the evenings and weekends. Originally, the sitting room had no south window since it had adjoined the southernmost cottage. Instead, there had been a staircase leading to the first floor. We had to negotiate with the owner of what is now '36 on the Quay' in order to have the window and the view.

We did the garden, often with a party of friends. The area had been used as a dumping ground ... since there were no dustbins then. As the floor was lowered, we moved the 'spoil' to form a raised area in the garden. The soil has now been made from seaweed (which I used to collect from the shore) and compost."



*Trinity Cottage (centre) in the 1980s. Photograph taken from colour slides donated to Emsworth Museum by Janna Cundall*

Trinity Cottage was designed for Janna's parents, but she created for herself a tiny 'flat' on the top floor, consisting of a bedroom and sitting room. Janna continued to sleep in that bedroom with its view of the harbour until just a few months before she moved to a nursing home in Prinsted in 2018.

Trinity Cottage was very much as Janna's parents had furnished it, and there were many items that had belonged to previous generations, which Janna felt she must look after. Most especially, the glass-fronted bookcase was filled with a collection of over 100 books which had been published by Janna's great-grandfather, the Victorian publisher Joseph Cundall, renowned as the printer of the very first Christmas card.

In 2017, Janna gifted the house to the parish of Warblington-with-Emsworth. In May 2019, the new Rector, the Reverend Andrew Sheard, instigated two studies to determine the best use for Trinity Cottage that most closely matched Janna's vision. After extensive consultation, it was decided that the property should be sold and the proceeds placed in a Trust Fund, provisionally entitled the 'Trinity Trust' to reflect its origins, to be used as Janna wished and as mandated in the Transfer Deed<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Extract from the Transfer Deed: *The property... shall be used by the [Parochial Church] Council for furthering the religious and other charitable work of the Church of England in the Parish of Warblington with Emsworth in the diocese of Portsmouth as set out in more detail at clause 10.4 of this deed.*