

# Anne Yarwood,

## Nature, Planet, Projects, People



Anne and I first met in autumn 1979, shortly after I had started working as Berkshire's adviser for multicultural education. We frequently cooperated on various projects during the following six years. I vividly remember the way she combined unremitting resolution and determination with great calm and courtesy.

Her energy and imagination were awesome, but at the same time she was extraordinarily patient and persuasive. I especially remember, of course, the conceiving and creating of World Education Berkshire (WEB), and the webs and networks which Anne wove and nurtured for it, and on which and through which WEB and worked. And I remember too a mosaic of conferences, meetings and gatherings, and of reports and publications.

In relation to topics and themes I recall how Anne wove and held together both peace education and development education, and both local and global, colour and structure, diversity and wholeness, humour and gravity, creativity and campaigning, pattern and wildness. The people whom she attracted and enthused included many teachers, of course, but also parents and school governors, and members of local organisations.

I left Berkshire at the end of 1985. But Anne and I kept in contact with each other during the following 35 years through visits, cards, letters and (in due course) emails, and I became familiar with the fabulous garden and hospitality at Anne's dwelling near Ascot, and with the great love she had for her children and grandchildren.

From a distance I saw the arrival and journeys and activities of the WEB bus, and the creation of the shop and resource centre which Anne and WEB created in central Reading, and the successive issues of her lively and invigorating online newsletter, *The Imagination Acts*.

Inspired and organised by Anne, WEB's programmes and projects over the decades were concerned not only with peace and development but also with spirituality, and action on climate change, the plight and suffering of Palestinian people, *Wells for India* and *Save Our Insects*, and retreats under the heading of *Quiet Garden*. In the late 1980s WEB played a key role in the successful county-wide campaign to rescue and retain Berkshire County Council's nationally influential policy statement on education for racial equality and justice, published a few years earlier in the Swann Report, *Education for All*.

Looking back to the time when I was still working full time in Berkshire I remember one particular meeting and conversation with Anne. I no longer know where we were exactly at the time, or what the context of our meeting was. But I do remember Anne asked at one stage: 'How's life treating you?'

Replying haltingly, I said 'It's, it's interesting.'

'Yes, being killed is interesting, isn't it, Robin?'

I fought back tears.

Beautifully, Anne was gifted with the remarkable ability to see deeply into people's hearts, situations and surrounding contexts, and to see what at that particular moment was especially interesting therein, and to detect what needed to be said and done, and say it, and do it.

Anne's friend Georgeanne Lamont said of her that 'Anne would see into the potential within each individual and then egg them on to get on and fulfil that potential, believing in them and enabling them to go further than they would have thought possible ... At times she was impatient – there was no time to waste: she had a lot to accomplish within this one lifetime and did it with an unbridled enthusiasm and an artist's eye for detail.'

Georgeanne continued:

Anne planted seeds, both physical seeds that grew into a joyously beautiful garden, full of colour and exuberance, in which many hundreds of friends will have found stillness and space to reflect and wonder at the complexity and minute perfection of life.

She also planted seeds of hope, a catalyst for innovative projects. She would then go on to lightly water and feed these projects for years, sometimes decades, through her faithful encouragement and inspiration.

She is loved and irreplaceable. The ripples of her love for people, for nature, for the planet and her projects will go on far into the future.

At her wake, as requested by Anne, 'The Summer Day' by Mary Oliver was read. People present were requested to turn to face the person next to them to read aloud or recite the poem's last two lines:

“Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?”

**Source:** adapted slightly from an email message to Anne’s family a few days after her death, and incorporating, as indicated, some words written about her by her friend Georgeanne Lamont.

