

Moyra Caldecott



Moyra at Avebury by Mikki Ansin

Moyra Caldecott (1st June 1927 to 23rd May 2015)

The Guardian, Friday 12 June 2015

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jun/08/moyra-caldecott-obituary>

My friend Moyra Caldecott was a prolific writer of poems and novels, creating epic tales of adventure set in the extraordinary worlds of ancient Egypt, ancient Britain, ancient Crete and pre-Roman Bath. Her first novel was published in her early 50s and she went on to see more than 30 books make it into print. Her best-known work is the *Guardians of the Tall Stones* (1994) sequence, inspired by the world heritage site of Avebury in Wiltshire. She was fascinated by prehistory and by the Celts, but was also knowledgeable about other traditions, as her non-fiction collections, including *Crystal Legends*, *Myths of the Sacred Tree*, and *Mythical Journeys*, *Legendary Quests*, illustrated. Another well-received trilogy, about ancient Egypt, focused on Akhenaten and Hatshepsut and resulted in Moyra being contacted by the pop star Tina Turner, who paid for her to accompany her to Egypt, acting as a personal guide to the ancient sites – an experience that Moyra spoke of with great fondness.

Born in Pretoria, South Africa, Moyra studied at Natal University, where she was awarded a degree in English and philosophy and a master's in English literature. In 1950 she moved to Cape Town and became a lecturer at the university there, where she met Oliver Caldecott, an anti-apartheid campaigner. When the crackdown on the anti-apartheid movement made it too dangerous for him to stay, they moved to the UK in 1951 and married. Oliver worked in publishing as chief editor for Penguin Fiction in the 1960s, before starting his own publishing company, Wildwood House, in the 70s. But Moyra, who started to write in her late 40s, was published on her own merits, building a reputation as a vivid writer on the adventures and experiences of the inner world of human consciousness as well as the outer world of history and society.

In 1987, with Oliver's health failing, the Caldecotts moved to Bath, a city whose Romano-British heritage she wrote about in two of her novels, *The Winged Man* (1993) and *The Waters of Sul* (1997). Oliver had become an artist in his later years, creating pictures that Moyra treasured, and she herself began to take up pottery, batik and stained glass making. She was also a founder member of the (now dormant) Bladud Society, dedicated to raising awareness of Bath's Celtic heritage, and in her later years she liked to perform her visionary poetry at local open mic events in the city. She was made an honorary bard of Bath in 2005 and a memoir of her life, *Multi-Dimensional Life*, was published on her 80th birthday by the Bath-based firm Mushroom Books.

Oliver died in 1989, and their son, Stratford, predeceased her in 2014. She is survived by two children, Rachel and Julian.

Kevan Manwaring

Moyra: a Recollection

I first met Moyra before I had even begun to go out with Strat. During the Easter vacation of my first year at Oxford, in 1975, he invited me to tea at his family's home in West Dulwich. His mother made a vivid impression on me. An intelligent, articulate woman, full of warmth and interest in others. It would not be an exaggeration to say that she played a crucial role in bringing me together with her eldest son. The ethos that she created around her: the welcoming atmosphere of the home she made with Oliver, full of books and paintings, the sense of freedom and enthusiasm that permeated the constant conversation - all these things were profoundly attractive.

So many impressions, woven into the anamnesis of those years. Moyra picking sugar peas at the bottom of her garden, surrounded by the flowers she loved, while her husband and children vied hilariously at the ping-pong table near the house. Moyra in her somewhat chaotic kitchen (she never threw anything away, so cooking had to vie with tottering piles of newspapers and old flora cartons), serving the 'fry-up' which always tasted so delicious. Moyra sitting in her study, the light refracting on her sweet face through the stained glass and crystals she loved, holding my hands while I poured out some tale of woe. She encouraged me as a writer, though she clearly felt my first duty was a domestic one; and she encouraged me as a person, though she clearly did not agree with every aspect of my evolution. She was a real mother. Such things are rare. Her words were always words of encouragement and affection.

The last time I saw her, she was beyond utterance, trapped in the deep aphasia which so tragically overwhelmed a woman who had never before found herself at a loss for words. Her much adored eldest son had pre-deceased her, something neither she nor I could have imagined in those early years so full of hope and potential. I knew how bewildering she would have found this. Tears robbed me of speech as we sat holding hands once more. Everything had become unspeakable. Even Moyra's face - now so similar to Strat's at the end of his life - could no longer summon the wonderful range of emotion I associated with her. She was beginning to depart into that mysterious realm she had conjured so vividly in her novels. The realm beyond the visible, tangible, personal one.

Strat believed in the indestructibility of the soul and the resurrection of the body. Moyra's metaphysical perspective was far from identical with his. But all three of us shared a fundamental conviction about the power of spiritual things. When Moyra died, on the eve of Pentecost 2015, I was in Italy, following in her footsteps by writing my first full novel late in life. But I felt her leave. A sudden lurch of the heart, a moment of sight, lightening and clarifying, a feeling of serenity, hope amid despair. Later I saw Tessa's message, giving me the time of her grandmother's death. With a single, silent beat of her wings, this dear, enduring presence in our lives had finally departed, almost exactly forty years after I had first met her.

In that moment I knew she had given me her final gift, a gift that needed no words. It was a whisper, similar to that of a mystic we both loved, Julian of Norwich. All shall be well: all manner of things. And the sense of wonder at this beautiful world we inhabit, that Moyra embodied so powerfully, began, slowly, to return.

Leonie Caldecott

This is a moment of great sadness for Lorna and me as we go back a very long way with Moyra, to the time (pre-Oliver) when she was giving talks at the University buildings in the Gardens in Cape Town in the late 1940s !!. I think the subject was Dylan Thomas. And of course we have remained close friends ever since - despite the distances that separated us over many years. The Caldecotts were always a close part of our lives and it feels initially as though an era has finished. But then, there are still Caldecotts to whom we feel close - and so perhaps this is an ongoing saga not an end point.

Gerry & Lorna Shaper

I learned from Moyra the most important lesson of all - *what it is to love and be loved*. I still remember Moyra every day and say a prayer for her.

Michael Smith

We salute Moyra. She was a powerful influence in all our lives.

Lynette & Bruno Gusman

Wow! What a wonderful and special person.

Zoe Rathus

I have so many happy memories of the time we lived near each other.

Nanny Wardle

I knew Moyra in the later years of her life, meeting her through poetry events in Bath. Even when she could no longer talk it was lovely to be able to cheer her with a monologue account of things or talk about books, films, poetry. I have many of her books and enjoyed all the different genres. I also have many cards sent by her of Oliver's paintings and, on my cork pin-board, I still have the piece of paper on which she wrote 'I love you'. On the fly leaf of *The Breathless Pause* that she gave me, she wrote: "25 May 2007. For Nikki – to a poet, a survivor, and a good friend ... with love and gratitude from Moyra Caldecott". I would, equally heartfelt, love to once more say those words to her.

Nikki Bennett

Hers was a large life well lived.

Shanti & Ian Wong

I will miss knowing that Moyra is still in the world. She was very special and will be greatly missed.

Martyn Folkes

I loved her deeply. Both Moyra and Ollie were so kind and welcoming to me. It was a real privilege to have known them. Both have a very special place in my heart and my mind.

John Warwicker

Remembering Moyra

I remember a gracious lady visiting our home for the first time
I remember her readiness to make friends
Sharing her story with willing listeners.
I remember her determination to walk the short painful way from her house,
Her chattiness as she settled, her appreciation of our simple meal.
Another day she took us to *The Forester and Flower*,
Where she was well known.
I remember her home, her den, her chair,
The crowded room of memories,
Coloured glass, crystals, stones,
Oliver's pictures filled her walls,
Everywhere mementoes of the family she loved.
I remember the small space organised
For her reading, her writing, her records.
I remember her garden, the riot of plants
Her pleasure in one yellow rose.
I remember her conservatory, the extravagant growth
and the South African plant she gave me.
I remember her shopping lists, her need
For honey, shortbread, runner beans and medium sized carrots.
She loved chocolate and strawberries.
Birthday treats on the first of June were easy.
I remember her fierce independence and her growing need for support.
Glad when she found a way to accept some help.
It seemed so unfair that her ability to communicate stalled, then left.
I remember her little notes 'TV not working, undo jar'
She welcomed with her eyes.
The tired old lady has gone
Her boundless imagination, her great spirit lives on
In her stories, her poems, our memories.

Now her spirit is free. She was a very special person and I will treasure her writing - especially her poems.

Jan Rippin

Moyra - with her two books on Aquae Sulis and King Bladud - inducted me in some way to the legendary history of Bath, my then newly assumed home. I can't be the only one who owes her such a blessing. Anyway, I salute her for widening other people's worlds, beyond the commonplace.

Nicholas Ostler

Glad to have spent time with her, and reading the books were wonderful!

Harold Fatnowa

Moyra had a long and wonderfully productive life. I have so many memories of Ollie and Moyra, particularly their regular, splendid parties in Turney Road. More recently, and the last time I saw Moyra, was the excellent exhibition of Ollie's work in Oxford a few years ago. Moyra looked just the same, her sweet face didn't change over the years.

Jenny Maimane

Moyra was a very important person in my life. I loved and admired her very much.

Gerhild Hangel

I had many memorable years of friendship with Olly and Moyra and they were both such extraordinary people.

Rebecca Hughes Hall

Really sad for all your family and the huge number of people to whom she gave her love and wisdom. I hope she realised how much others loved her in return. She gave so much to the world she inhabited, actual and imagined.

Sue & Ed Neufeld

It has been such a privilege knowing her and having such close friendship with her for more than twenty years.

Kirsten Bolwig

We had such good times with you all; first with you and Strat at Dulwich - I loved teaching you both. Then great memories of times with Oliver and Moyra - visits to Barry Adalian's Upper Street Gallery, fine meals with them and their friends, I remember a memorable Dragon Procession through the Streets of Dulwich.

Chris & Liz Owens

Moyra was always kind to me, she was witty and always a joy to be around. She's in heaven now with no sorrow and no pain and I hope she puts in a good word for me to God!

Jeanie Erbacher

To me she was a gentle mystical person who opened my eyes to the wonders of this universe and I loved visiting your home in Dulwich, packed with interesting books and paintings, the smell of fresh coffee and tobacco, the squeaky floor boards and Persian carpets, all of us sitting around the big dining table eagerly awaiting some interesting programme on the TV. The visits to the museums in Exhibition Road. The stories she wrote, my fav. being the tall stones, her travels with Olly and the books they created from their journeys around Britain. Moyra will always be remembered with love and affection.

Andy Haughton

Around 1976 my parents had a dinner party which included your parents and also several more 'conventional' people, including some IBM executives (you'll remember that my dad worked for IBM). I was 14 and sat in on the dinner table for a little while. The conversation was wide ranging and at one point veered into a discussion which if I remember rightly had something to do with objectivity and subjectivity. One of the IBM people said something about intuition not being trustworthy, something like that. And Moyra, with great passion in her voice but also a very sweet tone said, 'Oh Greg, I couldn't agree with you less'. Right up until she said the word 'less' I was convinced she was going to say 'more', because that's the course polite conversations took in my young experience. I was shocked and thrilled! It was the first time I'd heard somebody express absolute disagreement with an open heart and because of that it was a formative experience: she showed me how to disagree gracefully. I always remember that moment - and Moyra - with a feeling of gratitude and warmth.

Bobby Neufeld

She was a warm, deep and considerable person. We would love to attend the celebration of her life on the 11th of July in Bath. I regret that I never got to know her as well as Olly – she always took the supportive role in his presence, even though she had so much to offer, as her writing shows.

Geoffrey & Carolyn Chesler

It was a great privilege to get to know Moyra at various events of the literary and spoken-word underground in Bath. She continued to support such events to quite an advanced age and was always extremely appreciative and encouraging of my efforts as a storyteller. We felt her absence when she was no longer physically able to come out to public events, and I for one will always remember her in memory and via her book of poems, *The Breathless Pause*, on my bookshelf. The last time I saw her, in the hospital, I had the privilege – with her agreement – of reading to her a number of her own poems from this book.

Anthony Nanson

Moyra's husband, Oliver Caldecott, was my mother (Joan Wolstencroft)'s first, and only cousin. They were in occasional letter contact, so when we visited Bath in 2002 from Australia we searched the local phone book to find a Caldecott. In retrospect, a very tentative phone call was the start of a special relationship.

Immediately Moyra invited us to visit! At home we found a lady who sat and smiled a lot and watched TV and wrote letters. She was very generous in giving of herself. Cocooned around her were special photos, books, paintings and special artefacts (including glass blown by her son in law).

Moyra loved to go out to lunch when we visited. She shared her special parking pass which allowed us to park on a double yellow line close to the restaurant.

Moyra also shared some of Oliver with us - his love of Jazz, books, ideas, conversation and his prodigious art output. Sometimes we heard stories of her children and their remarkable lives. Sometimes we heard fantastic stories like her relationship with Tina Turner. Moyra also shared with us her special Zerffi archives. Hungarian ancestors suddenly 'came alive' when photos and diaries were revealed. Florence Zerffi's art sang from the walls.

One special weekend we were taken to the 'upper room' in a Bath pub where we shared with her creative group - song and story.

Moyra received us with open arms, we were embraced, she made us feel special. Birthdays were remembered.

But, I felt that words, written and spoken, were often not needed. It was enough to be.

We will miss her deeply. Thanks Moyra.

Ivor Wolstencroft & Anne Richmond

This is my tribute to the remarkable Moyra whose life will not be forgotten. I quote here and there from her autobiography, *Multi-Dimensional Life*, and her collection of poems, *The Breathless Pause*. In the first, she writes: "Each one of us extends well beyond this life, before and after". She believed we were in a continuum, and each act we do has an extension. "There are no isolated acts. No acts without cause and effect long beyond the life-span that we usually consider to be our lot."

Moyra and I shared literary interests and mutual friendships, particularly in the Storytelling Circle at *The Raven* in Bath. She was a great listener, appreciating each teller and believing in the metaphors behind myths and legends and folk tales. In the course of time she showed me how many layers there are to existence. Her need to express herself in poetry and writing was still live in her, well into her eighties. She wanted her poetry to be kept alive and enjoyed hearing others deliver her work to an audience. I remember her saying that she liked to get her poetry to be as succinct as possible. A good pointer to aspiring writers.

Often, when I visited her in her latter days, I read to her from her collection, *The Breathless Pause*. I gained a great deal from that, feeling myself transported by her words and images. In the earlier days in her Southdown living room, I also read stories and poems of my own, sometimes practising a poem I had learned by heart so that I could pass it on in public. She was always encouraging and appreciative.

In particular, we had a shared understanding about the geography and physical moods of South Africa. She could empathise with what I said in my attempts to write a memoir of my early life growing up on a Transvaal farm, and later in the shadow of the Drakensberg mountain range in Natal. She heard many a chapter of *The Morning of My Life*, and encouraged me to finish it and get it published. Perhaps we shared a feeling that we were also ‘mourning’ something irrevocably lost.

She says herself that she wrote story after story trying to understand life's mysteries. “I never have any doubt about the mysterious different levels of existence – the visible beings and the invisible, the mind, body and spirit; the ultimate Unknown that lies beyond the Known to which we all strive and of which we are all an integral part”. Moyra was fascinated by co-incidence. This is a repeated theme in her books. Her research into history was a live thread.

She had enjoyed many practical years of being a wife to Oliver Caldecott and mother to her children, and yet also had this strong inner life. She led a multi-dimensional life. Her writing life was a driving force within her. Her lovely glass-work and the nurturing of plants also gave her great pleasure. At her home there was always the evocative scent of flowers in her greenhouse...

We are left with the memory of Moyra as a gentle, kind and creative person, and we have the words she left. I treasure my books, and the scraps with her handwriting that I find here and there as markers.

“Teach me the currents of the air...
the high spiral
of the sky's heart...
the breathless pause
as the earth holds still
for the god to speak.”

From *Prayer to Horus, Egypt 1982, The Breathless Pause.*

Verona Bass

I was deeply moved by the passing of your dear mother Moyra. As you know, I met Oliver and Moyra in the early seventies, and our professional association soon turned into a long-lasting friendship, sustained by an abiding interest in the wonders of human consciousness, deep ecological awareness, and a passion for social justice. And although my contacts with Stratford, Rachel, and you and Mary, were less frequent, I have always felt, and continue to feel, great affection for you all. I will never forget Oliver and Moyra, and I hope that we will stay in touch.

Fritjof Capra

My strongest memory of Moyra is of sitting with her in her conservatory, so stuffed with beautiful flowering plants that it felt like picnicking in a bit of rainforest, and talking about art and creativity and myths and stories. We shared a fascination with glass and she always wanted to know what I had made recently, what my next project would be. I loved talking things through with her because I could

guarantee she would see them from a new angle, would add ideas I couldn't have thought of. She had such wide experience and such enthusiasm for life. I always came away from her conservatory feeling inspired, encouraged and refreshed. I missed her very much when we moved away from Bath and still do.

Amanda Lawrence

Meeting: In Memoriam Moyra Caldecott

We met in the shadow of stones,
Flew with the Birdman,
Chased the myths of trees
Down all the shadowed walks of time.

You were always sunny,
Smiling in welcome,
Gracious at parting,
Happy to renew old dreams.

We spoke of myth,
Of heroes and quests,
Danced in the circles
Of Druid time.

Always remembered
In the wards of dream,
On the roads of blessing,
In the compass rose

John Matthews

I have only been acquainted with Moyra for the last ten years or so, but from the little I knew of her, she was clearly a wonderful and extraordinary person, witnessed by her writings, her presence and her enjoyment of all things literary. I can clearly see her willingness to take part and to encourage others at storytelling, poetic and spoken word events in Bath. The delight on her face and her words of praise were considerable for all. It also seems we may have coincided at poetry events in Dulwich in the late 1960s. For me, one of the most extraordinary parts of Moyra's story was the work and the time she spent with Tina Turner, instructing and researching Tina's interest in Hatshepsut. Reading of her experience in *Multi-Dimensional Life*, it is fascinating to learn how these two people came together. I am sure it was Tina Turner who learned and gained most from the experience. I suspect Moyra would have been too modest to acknowledge any such thing.

Richard Selby

Moyra was a wonderful, gifted person. She had lived an interesting life in South Africa and England. I will always remember the lively parties in Dulwich. Interesting discussions and ice-cream out of a packet. Oliver was already ill when they moved to Bath but they had some happy years together on Southdown Road before he died. They were a great couple. Different from anybody I had ever met in Sweden.

Monica Small

Moyra is someone I'll remember with love my entire life. She was a very wise woman and I'm sad to think I won't see her again. I'll add her to my daily prayers immediately.

Mark Gatter

The Rose

The rose with its curled petals, for every which way you may turn it, the rose always smiles. A hope for everyone to find joy, the rose to soothe and kill off the pain, somewhere in the journey of time, romance a little, but through the femininity, our god will always keep this flower of life eternal, the rose a flower to hold and always be blessed between us and our god, a helper and a comfort in both time and eternity for everyone, a hope? a promise? Why, indeed this is a promise!

Shelley Clay-Wiltshire

Ollie's Tree

Sitting in love
 encompassed by love.
 Sensing those who have been here with us on earth
 temporarily sharing their beings with us.
 Now existing in a different channel
 felt by those who can connect.

The boughs touch the earth
 rich humus, leaves and soil.
 Nurturing greatness of spirituality and art.
 The love that is tangible between heaven and earth,
 felt in those quiet moments of reflection and connectedness.
 Transcends the beauty of this earth.

Margaret Woodward

Moyra and I went out on many of what we called our ‘magical expeditions’ when she was living in Bath. Every three or four weeks, I’d pick her up in the car and we’d set off – for Wales, Dorset, the seaside or wherever took our fancy. There would normally be a special site or mythic element that drew us, such as an ancient monument, but often the magic just happened anyway. My favourite memory is of the day I rang Moyra up in great excitement, saying that we had to get to Silbury Hill fast as it was flooded all around. Moyra was game, I dashed over in the car, and off we went. When we arrived, we saw the hill rising up out of the shining waters, perhaps as it used to be in prehistoric times. But to our delight there was an extra magical element: seven swans were swimming on the waters there!

Another time, when Moyra was still reasonably mobile, we walked up to Stoney Littleton Longbarrow, near Wellow. It was the first time either of us had visited it, and I took what I thought was the best route according to the map. This involved a steep struggle through thorn bushes! (Later, I found out that there is a lovely and more gentle path up the other side.) When we reached the top, we looked out across the autumn countryside – deep red hawthorn berries, I remember – and indulged in a Writers’ Moan about how awful publishers were and how we were never going to write again. By the end of the conversation though we had reversed our decisions, and taken vows that we were going to write our best books yet! (And we did.)

Moyra looked like a sweet old lady, but she had that extra something about her that made people take notice. I persuaded Moyra that we should travel to Jordan together (this was in about 1997) so we booked on a remarkably cheap package holiday to see the sites. At the airport, it was Moyra who got pulled to one side by the security officials and given a thorough search! It was a difficult trip for her, as she was suffering from side effects of a new arthritis medicine, and was quite unwell. I was terrified about her heart, but luckily the group of travellers included about three doctors and a couple of nurses on holiday, one of whom was a cardiac specialist! They assured me that she was fine in this respect. (Moyra’s luck again!) There was an unseasonable heat wave in May, which made walking into the famous souk at Petra very difficult. However, we organised that a kind of horsedrawn ‘surrey with a fringe on top’ should convey the two of us, and so we rode in regal splendour into the ravine. At least, it would have been, only the horse, who was named Maradona, had an excessive dose of wind, and poor Moyra received the effects full on, which didn’t help her nausea. Enough said. She was radiant though, as she achieved her dream of visiting this place, where she sat surrounded by the ancient rocks that she loved so much.

As time went on, our visits had to be shortened and made easier for her. We still managed to have fun. I blame my addiction for Magnum ice creams on her, which she introduced me to one summer’s afternoon in Clevedon, where we’d been discovering Poets’ Walk. We kept up our custom of going out to lunch in country pubs and riverside cafes, even when she couldn’t really walk any more. For all her apparently soft and yielding manner, Moyra was a determined, courageous lady, and she fought to keep her place in the life that she loved so much.

Cherry Lee-Wade (formerly Gilchrist)

Tea by the river, Bathford



The Breathless Pause page 74 '15th July 1986' - spiritual truth of the poet and author Moyra Caldecott. Be Blessed - Peace and Thankyou.

Shelley Clay-Wiltshire

I remember her laugh always seemed to be a confidential giggle. I remember going to see *Meet the Fockers* with her, and how hilarious she found it, and how surprised people seemed to be to see me there with my Granny. I remember when she had almost lost all her words - the last full sentence I remember her forcing out, very deliberately at a family gathering, was "I love you".

Tessa Caldecott

When I was small and she visited Cambridge she'd entertain me by going along with a childhood fantasy where we were on some kind of archaeological expedition in Egypt. Discovering new artefacts, temples, tombs and so forth. I guess I'd be the overexcited digger who would bring back something to our jeep (which was, in fact, her bed), and she would explain that the slipper (or whatever it was that I had found) was actually some kind of magical stone belonging to a Pharaoh from the Middle Kingdom (or something...). These adventures would resume every time she visited. There was also the time that she was being picked up by Tina Turner's limo to be taken to Egypt with her. She thought it would be fun if I had a drive in a limo, so I was taken from Turney Road and driven around for a few minutes solo. But I thought I was being kidnapped so became hysterical, frightening the limo driver, and undoubtedly making her, Jenni, and mum very amused.

Ben Caldecott

A great treat when we visited Gamma used to be that we were each allowed to pick one item from her overflowing cabinets full of curiosities from her travels and adventures. We'd then sit at her feet and take it in turns to hand her the thing that we picked out so that she could tell us a story about it. Sometimes it would be the story of how she came to have it, or what it was, and sometimes she would make up magical tales of her own to tell us. I chose things that I thought must have had great stories attached to them, like an ancient stone arrowhead, or a little pot of sand from Egypt.

Rosie Caldecott

I remember when she used to come and visit us when we were little and in the morning we would jump out of bed and run downstairs to get into bed with her. She had this pair of beautiful embroidered slippers that she called “Flotsam and Jetsam”, and she would make up stories about their adventures as we snuggled up next to her under the blankets. Later, when her spoken words were already starting to fail her, she was still the most empathetic person and open-hearted communicator – one time while I was at university and had just gone through a bit of heartbreak, she wrote me a letter about a heartbreak that she remembered from when she was young, telling me that the man in question had ridden a motorbike, and how even now the sound of a motorbike made her heart jump a little.

Sophie Lippiatt

The first few times I met Moyra I was in awe of her – she was one of my favourite authors and I couldn’t believe that I was getting the opportunity to get to know her. One of the things I quickly realised was that she was so much more than just a writer. She helped me find a confidence in myself and in my spiritual journey which I much needed at that point in my life. She also gave me several plants and although I didn’t share her green fingers two of them have survived and I think of her when I water them. It was a great sadness for me that as my children’s needs grew it became harder and harder for me to visit Moyra. However, as a priest I so often hear people’s stories of their regrets about not seeing people before they died and so I probably need to take my own advice and rather than waste time being sad about that, put my thoughts to cherishing the memories of her I do have. Thank you Moyra for all of the inspirations, friendship and plants you have given me and my family.

Alice Kemp

Thank you Moyra for your love, your friendship, and your eternal inspiration. Blessed Be.

Sally

Thank you for all our joint expeditions and for the fun we had over our burned meals at No. 76 prior to Poetry + a Pint.

Misha Carder

Dear Moyra. We wish we could have met you sooner.

Paul & Sue Brokensha

Life is woven out of Stories ...

warp and weft

the threads interplay

and interact ...

Moyra has been a strong and brightly coloured thread - ‘was’, I should say - in my life. She has been woven firmly into the fabric of my being for over twenty-five years, yet here I am unable to express any of

those moments now that I am given the opportunity. Moyra *is* a dear and very important friend ... All I can say now is 'until we meet again' dear friend, bright thread in my story.

Anonymous

Dear Moyra you were such a special friend. You are not gone from here. We feel you - you are with us. Thank you for the wonderful talks we had - *STILL WATER - adopt Time Distant* - is still being published - you always wanted me to do it and I have - I love you.

Caroline

Memories of long evenings back in the 80s in Dulwich, a vibrant presence welcoming us to the house. And an incredibly positive and compassionate response to an idiot girl who sliced a page in her beloved *Book of Kells*. A woman of warmth and charm - we were lucky to have known her.

Kim

Moyra encouraged me as a writer and was very supportive of my fledgling bardic career. I found her inspiring, wise and modest. A gorgeous presence and a great spirit. I feel lucky to have known her and enjoyed many bardic chats around her home over a cuppa. We planted a rowan tree for her in the Millennium Grove [...] and whenever I see one (as in Scotland recently) I think of her. Her words and wisdom live on, and her soul soars free.

Kevan Manwaring

3rd Bard of Bath

Memories of Turney Road whilst at Southampton & beyond. Somewhat out of my comfort zone - (not just being south of the river). An amazing house full of energy. Sitting in the garden drinking delicious (Caldecott own blend) coffee from the Monmouth Coffee House. Really pleased to have had a long chat to Moyra at the retrospective of Olly's painting in Oxford a few years ago.

David

I read M. years ago, and can't remember what but I remember she inspired. She held the light for our generation and helped us on our path.

Night before this memorial, preparing, I got a vision of Horus, he golden light, looked up on tinternet. He a being of light, golden, of the dawn, so I know that Moyra is in his golden light. Time to re-read her.

A wonderful service.

Linda

Bard of Ynys Witrin

Celtic Christian on Druidic Path

To Moyra

You spun webs of words that spanned eons
 and built bridges between dimensions.
 Your heartfelt truths and intuitive wisdom
 so powerfully expressed, so humble.
 With golden wings, beloved of Horus,
 your words, your soul, takes flight.
 As we who love you celebrated your life,
 cherished and shared our myriad memories of you,
 we were drawn together in a beautiful composition
 much like your stained glass,
 And your golden light illumined our rainbow hues.
 Your heart, so strong, now beats in all of ours
 and the wind whispers of your glory.

Vashti Mayne

So tell me about this – was this a lunar eclipse you saw? If that's the next eclipse you'd like to talk about?

“Yes. This was on the 17th of August 1989, and we knew Oliver was dying, because he had liver cancer and lung cancer, and a brain tumour, and the lunar total eclipse was coming, and we both wanted to see it. But it came at 3am in the morning, so we set the alarm, and we walked up to that little hill, the round hill in Southdown, and he was pretty struggling to get there, because it was the last walk of any distance he managed, you know. And we were holding hands all the time, and struggling. And it was a great effort to get up there. But finally, we did, and we had it all to ourselves. And it was magnificent! I mean – I can't see the stars from my house because street lights interfere, but on that hill, there were no street lights so we saw a magnificent star panoply. But also this huge ball, bronze ball, rolling across the sky. I mean – it was three dimensional, and like a ball, you know, sort of slow motion, rolling. And we also saw a meteor, and I – we felt we were the only people in the world, like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The whole show was just for us! Ah – so the wonder of the existence impacted on us powerfully, and we realised more than we had ever done before just how lucky we were to be given a chance of life. So it was an absolutely memorable occasion. And I wrote a little poem about it:

The first man

Witnessing
 this bronze ball
 rolling across the sky
 must have feared
 the vengeance of the gods.

But we,
 alone on this hill,
 knowing that we are dying,
 rejoice in the beauty
 of the universe
 and our part in it.

Science has left
 some secrets unresolved
 So the mystery of life
 is still intact...
 and we,
 alone on this hill,
 knowing that we are dying,
 don't lose heart in it."

Are there any points in the poem you'd like to chat about?

"Well, it's what we were thinking at that time. It was very poignant, because we were on the edge of death. And realised how magnificent the universe was, and how lucky we were to have a chance at it. And we weren't sad, because we were just sort of so moved by it all...I think science has proved a lot to us, that the eclipse is not going to destroy us. But it reminds us how magnificently working the universe is. And science hasn't solved the mystery of life, you know. So that is a moment in time when we thought about that."

Cherry Lee-Wade (formerly Gilchrist)
 interviewing Moyra on the subject of people's
 experience of viewing eclipses in March 2005

Dear Mum, I miss you.

Everyone who has ever known you, but particularly your children and grandchildren, have all benefited from your passions, enthusiasms and great, great love. Your love is limitless, warm, and unconditional and is still felt by us.

You taught us to find beauty in the world and appreciate the arts and sciences which illuminate it. Through you we learned to see the potential for good in people and the silver lining behind each cloud. Your lessons are now being passed on to our children... don't be afraid to be different, don't be afraid to explore ideas, and don't be afraid to love and forgive.

I have absorbed more of you than I would have thought possible and I am proud. As I struggle to write and bring up a family I feel closer to you than ever before.

But the truth is I never really said goodbye to you. How could I do that? I never wanted to let you go. I still need you. I still need to ask your advice about things. I want to hear your opinions, I want

to share my triumphs and fears with you, I want to be able to boast about my children's achievements and know that you will understand my pride. I want you to see how much of you has been passed down to them. My heart never wants to let you go and my words of farewell will always refuse to form themselves on my lips. I hope that by writing this somehow you will know how much I love you. Stranger things have happened. You believed in the power of thought. My thoughts of love will reach you.

Dear Mum, I miss you. There is nothing else to be said.

1927-2015

How bald and bare
 The hyphen is
 To express
 Such a multi-dimensional life.
 We remember you climbing volcanic slopes and
 Strolling through the ruins of antiquity.
 At home in the legends of the past,
 But desiring always to meet the future.
 You enjoyed so much,
 Your enthusiasm for life
 Touching all who knew you.
 A notebook ever ready in your purse or by your bed
 To capture that moment
 Or idea
 To be considered and explored...
 Whether in poem, prose or visual form
 You encapsulated
 Your love of nature, symbol, light and spirit.
 Brilliant, witty, caring, loving...
 You have taught many people,
 Not least your three children
 To think and see.
 We remember you
 For more than the hyphen
 That divides 1927 from 2015.

Rachel Caldecott-Thornton

When I think of space and the beautiful mystery of life, I think of her. I remember her, in her conservatory, telling me about the stars and the magical wonders of the universe. Whenever I have inspiration to write a poem, I ask myself how she would phrase it. I wish I could have spoken with her now and shared my life, debated philosophy and many other things. I am proud to be her grand-daughter and I hope I can gain even a percentage of her wisdom and enthusiasm in my life-time.

Florence Thornton

I met Moyra in the last decade of her remarkable life, when her words were already slipping away. She was very generous to me, offering me precious mementoes as well as her books and limitless supplies of chocolate cake. The connection between the old lady that I met and the creative, vibrant person she had been came alive for me when Julian and I visited Egypt. I read her Egyptian trilogy as we made our way from Cairo to Luxor and then along the Nile to Aswan. I felt that she was being my personal guide to the ancient world, through sage words that she'd written many years before.

Her final gift to me was the most precious. On her last day of earthly life we were backwards and forwards to the home all day, little realising how close she was to the end. We joined her in the evening after a call from the home that told us she was fading. Julian sat and held her hand and I stood at the foot of her bed holding her feet. She very soon relaxed and her breathing began to slow. I felt the eternal part of me connect with the eternal part of her and, after a few minutes, I seemed to accompany her across the bridge as her breathing slowed to a halt. How generous of her to share this special moment of transition. I treasure the gift of experiencing such a graceful and beautiful death.

Mary Caldecott

Moyra in Egypt

The Cairo Museum! “Suddenly I know I was right to come. I had to come. My fear sloughs away and I rush from object to object feeling the prickle of something more than the object in the air.” [*She mentions the importance to her of Zozer and Imhotep, and her intuition that the ancient Egyptians ‘opened the mouths’ of statues as well as mummies.*] “That is why some of them still ‘speak’ millennia later.” [*She wondered at the rock crystal eyes of Old Kingdom statues*]- “eyes that were intended to see forever”.

The Akhenaten¹ room! “I felt totally that I knew everything there. Powerful dominating figures of Akhenaten himself. You can feel the individual life pushing through and freeing itself from the constriction of convention. He is beautiful to me.”.

At the Pyramids. “Surely I have been here before. And I have been happy here. Beautiful as it is, it is Fear that is in my heart. Fear and awe and ... something else. Was I at the building of them? I think so. But also later. The silence was there under the human chatter. I could feel it, hear it.”

¹ Akhenaten was a Pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty, founder of solar monotheism, descendent of Hatshepsut, partner of Nefertiti, grandsire of Tutankhamun. They and their world were the subjects of Moyra's *Egypt Quartet*.

Night in the Great Pyramid. “I dreaded being left there in the dark! I had even decided not to go at all because the fear that I had known as the Nameless Oracle was so strong and real. But I did go although half way up I nearly turned back convinced I would die. When I got there I was weeping and shaking. It was totally as I remember it and even though I could almost see the secret hieroglyphs that had been there in ancient times and they were still there though half obscured by the bad emanations ... and in some places faded not by Time but by the continual erosion by the battering they receive from the millions of people’s lower thoughts ... I still could not bear it. What a coward I am. I am totally convinced that the experience as the Nameless Oracle happened in that very chamber. I am totally convinced the bare walls and ceilings are filled with invisible inscriptions only to be read when one has left this plane.

Understandings are lying in my heart like a small kernel and will now start to grow where my fear had inhibited them before. I am also convinced that I had to come back to this chamber with these particular people to help me rid myself of a 3,000 year old ‘block.’”

Musing about her fear. “I had the thought this morning that I have held myself back throughout the centuries - certainly in this life - no, perhaps only in this life - by fear. I am meant to be much further along the Path than I am - I am capable of it except for this Fearful nature. I had never noticed it about myself before, but I am a mass of inhibitions and terrors. I can trace them all back to exact experiences and reasons - but it is time to conquer them - to let them go and on this trip this is what I have to learn.”

A prayer at Luxor. “The prayer in my heart as we stood in a circle within the inner Sanctuary at Luxor: *Lord God creator of all the universes and all the planes within the universes, who sends servants of light throughout to do Thy will, to help and guide those who are struggling ... Horus of Light and the Angels fill us with Thy light that we may go out and send it forth. That fear will not hold us back nor any of our weaknesses.* It felt as though I was floating up in light and wings of light were enfolding us all. When I opened my eyes afterwards I found the frieze of Horus wings above us. As we left the Temple, a hawk wheeled above us three times, light shining through his spread wings.”

A vision at Edfu. “In legends there are often clues given for the future as there are for the past. The Isis, Osiris, Horus legend is full of clues. That wall relief in the temple to Horus at Edfu, with Isis giving life to Horus the child by the light of her Spirit (i.e. fluttering her wings) from the seed of the non-human (i.e. dead and dismembered) Osiris, the huge, tender, brooding presence of the ancient mighty spirit of Horus watching over them playing a vital role in the engendering. I think it is significant that the one missing piece of Osiris that Isis could not find was the genital and she could not find this because it was eaten by a fish. The fish is the symbol of Christ. The one vital generative part of the old religion is now contained in the Fish (Christ) and it is there we must seek it.”

Insights. “I have the feeling that a tremendous amount has been gained on the deepest levels by this trip which I am not ready to put into words yet. One thing I must not lose is the growing confirmation all the way through that the Christian religion and the ancient Egyptian religion are not two separate things - but are both part of the continuous process of revelation that has been unfolding for the conscious mind since the beginning of Time. Whenever I’ve slipped into deeper consciousness on this journey I’ve been aware of the Horus Spirit in tune with the Christ Spirit. Whether they are the same I don’t know. I don’t think so. But they are in harmony working together for the same end - the illumination of mankind which will help him to see God - and in seeing, Love - and in loving, return of his own free will.”

The sun. “Another thing that has emerged on this trip is how utterly understandable, given the natural environment, is ancient Egyptian symbolism. As I watched the sun set last night, I was moved beyond words by the hugeness and silence and power of it. I could feel it enter the chambers, one by one, of the Amduat [*otherworld*], illuminating and bringing life, leaving, and the chambers falling dark and dormant without it. So are we without our God. Dark and dormant. Waiting for life and light. With our God - contained in a blaze of beauty. Of course the sun is not the God! But what a perfect symbol!!!”

Beyond fear. “To me this has been a journey on many levels. One of them was an initiation through fear. Just about everything I have ever feared or disliked has had to be faced. It has left me very drained, very humbled, very ashamed and very lonely. I hope when I return to my own environment it will have served to strengthen me, because I know I am not fulfilling my potential - that I am holding back through fear of the next step. On another level - I have been given so many confirmations of the reality of the Spirit, and of the truth of the perennial revelation from God that is always the same yet is clothed by us in different forms. As I am writing this I can see the sun rising, a huge golden disk. **I am glad that our ‘journey’ ends with a sunrise - and not a sun set.**”

Selections from **Moyra’s diary of her 1982 visit to Egypt.**

Read at Moyra’s cremation, 29 May 2015.

At the Celebration of Strat’s life, I read part of the ending of *The Lord of the Rings*: “the grey rain-curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back, and he beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise”. This speaks to me of a theme of both their lives (perhaps of everyone’s lives): **an overcoming of fear and a rebirthing in calm, grace and light, at a new world’s beginning.**

Julian Caldecott

Gateway

There is a round hill
in the south of Bath,
off Mount Road,
that may well be
a gateway between the worlds.
On a clear day
you can see Glastonbury Tor
twenty miles away,
and the Bristol channel
gleaming red in the sunset.
On Good Friday Christians put crosses,
like Golgotha, on its summit.
Once I saw the great bronze ball
of the eclipsed moon
roll across the sky
from there,
and, another time, I counted
twenty-one hot air balloons
passing by...
strangers waving and shouting
as though we were long lost friends.
In spring
it is clothed in May blossom
like a bride.
In November
my husband died
and I went there to watch him pass
into the other world...
disappearing into the autumn mists
like a legendary king.

Moyra Caldecott

Moyra and Oliver Caldecott

“But we, alone on this hill,
rejoice in the beauty of the universe
and our part in it”

Plaque on Moyra’s bench, summit of ‘Moyra’s Knoll’

(High Barrow Hill, Southdown)



Olly’s rose by Mary Caldecott

Publisher's note: Moyra Caldecott

Please visit www.mushroom-ebooks.com or www.bladudbooks.com for more information.

Moyra Caldecott earned a reputation as a novelist who wrote as vividly about the adventures and experiences to be encountered in the inner realms of the human consciousness as she did about those in the outer physical world. To Moyra, reality is multi-dimensional. Her books include:

- **Fiction:**
 - *Guardians of the Tall Stones: The Tall Stones; The Temple of the Sun; Shadow on the Stones; The Silver Vortex.*
 - *Egypt Quartet: Hatshepsut: Daughter of Amun; Akhenaten: Son of the Sun; Tutankhamun and the Daughter of Ra; The Ghost of Akhenaten.*
 - *Weapons of the Wolfhound.*
 - *The Eye of Callanish.*
 - *The Lily and the Bull.*
 - *The Tower and the Emerald.*
 - *Etheldreda.*
 - *Child of the Dark Star.*
 - *The Winged Man.*
 - *The Waters of Sul (Aquae Sulis).*
 - *The Green Lady and the King of Shadows.*
- **Myths and legends:**
 - *Crystal Legends.*
 - *Three Celtic Tales.*
 - *Women in Celtic Myth.*
 - *Myths of the Sacred Tree.*
 - *Mythical Journeys: Legendary Quests.*
- **Children's stories:**
 - *Adventures by Leaf Light and other stories.*
- **Thoughts and poems:**
 - *The Breathless Pause.*
- **Autobiography:**
 - *Multi-Dimensional Life.*



Olly and Moyra by Mikki Ansin



The Tree of Life, stained glass by Moyra Caldecott