

My Mum - a more detailed description of her last month.

Saturday, 25 August 2007

Her foot developed a sore (a bed sore we suspect) which got worse and clearly turned into a leg ulcer. This started hurting her more and more. A specialist came out to the house to see it and said she needed a sympathectomy - an operation which increases blood flow and circulation to the limbs.

The problem was, of course, she smoked 60 cigarettes a day for 75 years. Asking for trouble and a miracle she lasted so long. But the result was severely damaged veins and arteries.

I was on holiday and she was booked for the operation on August 10th. However I grew more and more worried about the state of her leg in my phone calls, so I cut short my holiday and came home early.

Sure enough she was suffering in agony; so much so that she couldn't sleep. It looked much worse. We rushed her to hospital.

There they did the sympathectomy but the surgeon decided she had to have her leg amputated.

At 91, that was not much of an experience and, literally moments before it was due, I thought the foot looked slightly better. The surgeon rushed up and agreed - postponing the amputation. She was overjoyed not to lose her leg.

But her blood pressure was dangerously low and she had got fluid in her lungs and chest which turned into pneumonia, which eventually killed her.

We managed to have long and intimate conversations with her over the past weeks and she was perfectly happy to go. She felt she'd had the best life anyone could want and loved almost every minute of it, but the last couple of years had seen constant health problems and discomfort if not pain.

She was on constant pain killers including morphine which I hated because it sometimes made her confused and muddled.

We were summoned urgently Thursday night at 1.30am as they thought she was slipping away. She wasn't but my brother, sister in law and I had a lovely hour long chat with her. She then went into a deep sleep at 3.20. We left at 3.30 and I returned at 7am. She was still sleeping very, very deeply. At 3.20pm she awoke but into a confused, shallow sleep without really knowing who we were or where she was. She remained in this unconscious but slightly distressed state, then slept deeper, then breathed more slowly, then stopped altogether at 8.05pm.

And life for the most important person in the world slipped quietly away.