



**VALE**

**Odette Ombler**

**20 January 1923 – 29 November 2016**

It was with the sun shining brightly, and a sparkling blue sea, that family and friends gathered at Kingston cemetery on Sunday 4 December, to celebrate the life of a wonderful mother, grand-mother, great-grandmother, friend, and a very long-standing and senior member of Norfolk's community. With beautiful floral tributes and some of her favourite music, Odette was laid to rest beside her beloved Robbie. Grand-daughter Mardi,

sang a lovely rendition of Ben Harper's "Waiting on an Angel", accompanied by Justin and Aaron; and her grand-sons and sons-in-law carried her to her resting place. The Catholic service was conducted by Father Don Richardson, and the following eulogy was delivered by grand-son, Mitchell:

"Gilberte Odette Martin was born on the 20th of January 1923 on Iririki Island, in Port Vila, New Hebrides. She was the second daughter of Augustus (Gus) and Eugénie (Mardi) Martin, a sister to Phyllis and Gisèle, and a half-sister to Eugénie's children, John, Robert and Simone Carmichael. She said how for years she thought she was French, until the day she discovered that her father had registered her as a "Pom". (her words). Odette had a tough start in life, not only because of her premature birth by several weeks, but she also suffered from malaria, and was not expected to live until her first birthday. The doctor's advice was that she would not survive the tropical climate, so her parents did not hesitate to pack up their family and leave their New Hebridean home. Eugénie, who had spent holidays on Norfolk at Torrie Glen with the late Charles and Ethel Fysh, felt that the climate here would be ideal for their ailing baby, and a wonderful place to live and bring up their children. Odette always told the story that Uncle Charlie Fysh, who also shared her birthday, had the fire-place especially built at Torrie Glen, to keep the baby's cot warm. In 1927 Odette's grandmother Madeleine L'hospital moved to Norfolk, and little Odette was the apple of her eye. She too lays to rest in this cemetery, and throughout her life Odette would often relay stories of her beloved Grand-mère.

The Martin family home in Ferny Lane, known as Vila, was built by the late Jug Adams, and the family lived there until the home was sold in 1962. Gus purchased the Norfolk Island Trading Company  
*(continued overleaf)*

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### *Odette Ombler - continued*

in 1927, and later commissioned a new shop to be built in front of the original. Part of that building still stands today and is known as The Bounty Centre. The family all did their share by helping their Dad in the store, and he instilled in them a high work ethic that remained with them all, throughout their lives. Odette was a highly skilled rider, with saddle or bareback, who loved her horses and often bemoaned the fact that it was her job to ride out to deliver the monthly accounts to the debtors. She spoke of how she would often see a curtain twitch as they saw her approaching, and by the time she got to the door, the house would be quiet, and nobody home! She did however make a lot of friends, and knew everyone on the island.

Odette was educated at several different private schools during her early school years, and later at the Norfolk Island Central School. She loved the outdoors, and had a happy and healthy life growing up on an island, with the freedom to roam and explore. She travelled unaccompanied on the *Morinda* at the age of 14 to attend boarding school in Sydney, and was met at the wharf by two nuns in a taxi. She had never seen a nun before and she remembered that she sat in the back between the two of them on the journey to the Marist Sisters college. She had some fond memories of her time there, but missed her family and her island home. She remained there for one year before returning to Norfolk, as her mother was suffering ill health. Odette often took care of her nieces, nephews and extended family, and formed a wonderful bond with them as their "Tantine".

During the war years, the family moved to Sydney where they all lived together and worked. Odette always loved to relay some of her happier stories from that time. Like a lot of young people during that era, they made the best of a difficult situation, and still managed to party and have some wonderful times.

On their return to Norfolk towards the end of the war, Odette met the love of her life, Robbie Ombler who was stationed at the Royal New Zealand Air Force camp at "Redleaf". At the time of their meeting, Odette was romantically involved with one of the officers, and while they were enjoying a dance one night, he said to her "Have you met Robbie the pianist"? He obligingly introduced them and the rest is history. Odette and Robbie married in August 1949, at the Martin family home, because for many years, their enclosed front verandah served as the Catholic Church. Odette told her kids many times, how when she was growing up she had adamantly told her sisters "there is no way I will ever marry a Kiwi". So much for her well-laid plans, because she and Rob remained in-love, happy and devoted to one another until his sudden death in 1985.

After their marriage, they returned to New Zealand where Robbie managed an 800-acre government property in the Nelson area, farming tobacco, cattle and sheep. They led a happy life there in the early days of their marriage, and after the birth of their first daughter Michèle, they made the decision to return to Norfolk. Initially Robbie took up employment with his

father-in-law, Gus Martin. The family grew with the arrival of another three daughters, Simone, Jacqueline (Jackie) and Gisèle (Gigi), and by the late 1950s Odette and Robbie were the owners/operators of "Redleaf" Guest House. They also managed the airline catering for Qantas and TEAL, which they originally operated from their home kitchen.

In 1969 the family left Norfolk to work and travel. Robbie's work took them to some interesting places, including Nauru, Saipan, Guam, American Samoa, Western Samoa, and Niue Island. They also owned and operated their own businesses on the Gold Coast and in Townsville. They enjoyed trips to other island nations, the USA, Europe and parts of Asia, often travelling by ship which Odette loved and enjoyed.

Odette was a proud and loving mother to her four daughters, and as the girls married and became parents, she was happy to welcome four sons-in-law, Peter, Ian, Craig and Brian who she loved. Sadly, Ian passed away in 2001. She adored her 8 grandsons, Mark, Aaron, Justin, Michael, Robbie, Thomas, William and Mitchell; her only grand-daughter Madeleine (or Mardi), as well as two step grand-children, Chris and Beth. She mourned the loss of baby William in 1994.

In recent years Dettie became grandmother-in-law to Marivic, Danielle, Maara, Katrina and Stewart, and was so happy to welcome 11 great grand-children into the family: Johnnie, Hannah, Jake, Ruby, Odette, Saria, Mason, Matilda, Eli, Abigail and Ryan. She took great delight in their company, and treasured any time she got to spend with them. They all brought her much happiness with their visits in recent times.

Det was proud of each and every one of her family, and she was adored in return. Her honest, unfiltered and no nonsense approach often caused hilarity among the family, and no-one was ever left in any doubt as to where they stood. Occasionally when someone had done something particularly pleasing to her, they would proudly boast to the others "I am at the top of Det's popularity pole", to which someone would usually reply, "well don't get too comfortable, because you're bound to hit the bottom before you know it". Some of Det's words and phrases are now set in concrete in the family history pages, and these are a few of the family faves:

Poori, Plurry, Shickered, To Each His Own, You People (when everyone else was to blame) Well! - I thought you'd left the Island, I'm not senile yet, We've all been through it (referring to some-one else's situation) and this pearler - I'm not bloody stupid you know.

Odette was hard-working, honest, and a true friend. She was a wonderful correspondent, and she excelled in cooking, gardening, and producing beautiful hand knitting and crochet. Every family member, and many of her friends have been given a special blanket, crocheted by her. She took much pleasure in giving, and loved nothing more than to cook something and deliver it to anyone in need, especially her family and friends. She had a very strong faith and it carried her throughout her life.

*(continued overleaf)*

***Odette Ombler - continued***

In recent times, as her failing eyesight and physical ability restricted her independence, she loved nothing more than having friends visit her. She maintained contact with her two-remaining life-long friends, Doreen Olsson and Ralph Holloway until her final illness, and she cherished the regular visits from her two special “girls”, god-daughter Elaine Hughes and Molly Sanderson. She loved to reminisce, and remarked often that she missed so many of her old friends and family who had pre-deceased her.

Odette suffered a debilitating illness in recent weeks, but fought hard and courageously, and was aware that her family and the hospital staff were there, showering her with love, care and gratitude as she undertook her final journey. She had a long, full and happy life, and as much as she will leave a huge hole in the lives of those who loved her, she also leaves us precious and ever-lasting memories of a wonderful Mother, Mother-in-law, Grandmother and Great-grandmother.

Au revoir and rest in peace Det – and in your own wise words “Life goes on”

*The following tribute from grand-son Robbie and family:*

“Whilst you may have gone to a better place, Little Odette reminded us the other day that we could see you whenever we want as your photos are all around the house. We will cherish the memories as they will never be gone, and you will never be forgotten. Thanks fe ucklun, love Rob, Dani, Odette and Saria”

*And from Chris, Beth and their families:*

We will remember Dettie for her kindness, energy and ability to strike up a conversation anywhere, anytime, about anything.

She always treated us and our family as her own, and we will forever be grateful for her encompassing love. The beautiful blankets our children have will be a constant reminder of her generosity and affection”.

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**Thank You**

Odette’s family would like to thank each and every one who have helped in any way since Odette’s illness, and in the days leading up to her final journey. To the ambulance officers Lew Quintal and Lou Donald for their professionalism and compassion when transporting her to the hospital; to Dr Glen and the amazing hospital staff, we will always remember that you cared for her with tenderness, kindness and respect; to Shane and the people who prepared her grave; to Vince for the engraved cross; to everyone who provided flowers - and to the special ladies who prepared the beautiful floral tributes at the usual place; to the Police who provided the escort, to Tardy who drove Det to her resting place; to Father Don Richardson for fulfilling her wishes with a service she would have been so happy with; to Milt and Jan who provided the sound system at such short notice; to the wonderful friends who set up and kept the cuppas flowing under the Poinciana tree; to people who phoned, visited and brought food, flowers, love and hugs; to the staff at Burnt Pine Travel who went above

and beyond to bring her family home; to the people who provided the family with vehicles, and friends and community members who continue to enquire, love and support us. Thank you and love to you all - we are humbled and overwhelmed.

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**In Loving Memory  
of  
Charlotte Odette Gondon.**

27 years long gone.

Miss you every day.

*From your family.*

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“BE SUN SMART”**

For more information contact:  
Tim THOMPSON M.50527

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