

Ann Frances Dorricott 17 September 1958 – 15 August 2003

Ann started the AFD Enterprises business in 1983 at the very dawn of the “Personal Computer” revolution. It was a home-based business, since it needed to meet her twin objectives – of being a good Mum, available to her young family, and the need to earn a living. The firm was started in the loft of the Dorricott semi in West Kilbride, Ayrshire, with a few hundred pounds and access to the family’s hobby computer – a Sharp MZ80K.

In its early years the business sold office supplies and stationery, did desktop offset-litho printing, and operated a computer bureau specialising in the maintenance of address list databases. AFD began its close association with charities, by looking after the mailing list data for the local Multiple Sclerosis Society.

By 1985, Ann’s firm had grown bigger than could be managed on a part-time basis, so in a significant leap of faith, David, Ann’s husband, gave up his career in Forestry and Horticulture, and threw his weight full time into the business – beginning the new initiative of supplying “turn key” computer systems – combining off-the-shelf components and writing specialist software where required.

Ann and David, keen members of their local church, soon found themselves providing computer systems and services to a wide range of national and international Christian organisations – most of whom were located in the South of England. These included, the Luis Palau Evangelistic Association, The Leprosy Mission, London Christian Radio, Interserve, Crosslinks, the Evangelical Alliance and Spring Harvest. Most of these clients required extensive travelling for David, but Ann maintained her commitment to family and home, as well as the firm, by running the “back room” operations. Needless to say the Dorricott boys grew up as able cooks and housekeepers: it was a matter of survival.

In late 1994, AFD developed their first product in a range of software known as “Address Management” or “Postcode” software – used in call centres and direct sales organisations to make the capture and recording of postal addresses speedy and accurate. Through hard work and enterprise, the new AFD Postcode range was highly successful, and the decision was taken to concentrate AFD’s efforts on this for the future – leading to the launch of AFD Software Ltd to handle the marketing and distribution.

So successful was the new initiative that the business soon outgrew its premises – despite adding extra offices to the property – and kicking the Dorricott family out after purchasing the property next door. On the family holiday during July 1997, the Dorricotts who had been keen yachtsmen for several years, arrived at Douglas and spent a week moored at the visitor pontoon in the outer harbour. They became aware that not only was the Isle of Man a very beautiful place, but that it could offer a very attractive place for the next phase of the AFD business.

Ann was keen that the business should develop profitably, and with integrity, and be able to support the many worthwhile charities and church projects which were in need of resources. In a remarkable feat of hard work and careful planning, the whole business and several families, removed and set up operations on the Island on 3 November 1997 – just 3 months from deciding to do so. The move involved selling homes and offices, find new residential and commercial property – as well as gearing up computer communications for a “seamless” switch over. The whole business was only “off air” between 5pm on Friday 2nd November and 12:00 noon the next day.

AFD chose to locate in Ramsey – making its commitment to the Island’s second largest town rather than fighting the congestion of Douglas, and has grown to employ some 26 people in its integrated operations – which includes all aspects of software supply. Software Development, design, marketing, manufacture and support all take place within AFD’s office on West Quay.

The business has been a great commercial success, and this allowed Ann and David great scope to support community projects – such as the Sailing for the Disabled Yacht, “Pride of Mann”, the Crossags Campsite in Ramsey, and many charities both on and off-Island.

As a deeply committed Christian, Ann was a member of Broadway Baptist Church – and has taken a very active and practical role in Broadway Church and more general Island-Wide church activities. Ann personally undertook much of the logistical work of delivering supplies of the Manx Millennium Candles to local church centres. She worked hard for “Walk Isle of Man” and more recently the Moorland Bible College’s “Mission to Mann”. Ann often chose supportive roles – rather than high-profile ones – always ready to “roll her sleeves up” and get on with the job.

Her work for Ramsey Lifeboat Day over several years included single-handedly covering the Island with notices and leaflets for events such as the Great Ramsey Race – and was largely responsible for the enormous success in getting people to come to the Town during Lifeboat Day.

Still a keen yachtswoman, Ann has visited all the successful yachting centres in the Irish Sea – and was in Whitehaven as recently as the end of July, when she suffered a fall on a slippery pontoon. Subsequent treatment for pain assumed it to be related to this fall, rather than the more serious illness, finally diagnosed only on Wednesday evening last week, after admission to the new Noble’s Hospital on Saturday 9th August.

Ann faced her terrible prognosis with the same honesty, openness and great faith with which she built a business, raised her family and lived her life. It was a tragic loss to these, and indeed the whole Isle of Man that she slipped away to be with her Lord and Saviour on Friday 15th August.

During the past 18 months Ann had given a massive commitment to helping Spring Harvest Holidays establish a holiday centre in the Vendée region of France. She had travelled many times and worked hard and long to make the project a success. The site opened in May this year – with a party from the Island attending the celebrations. This summer has seen Le Pas Opton provide not only quality family holidays, but times of spiritual refreshment and healing for hundreds of visitors.

Ann has left living legacies of her shortened life. She has left a business bearing her name – AFD Software – which now serves over 5,500 organisations throughout the UK – including Trade Unions like Unison, most Political Parties, and even the Bank of England. She has left two fine sons – Stephen and Philip who are now employed in the business which she began. She has also left the work and ministry of Le Pas Opton in France – which will serve generations of people in churches across Europe who will encounter God within its boundaries.

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Spring Harvest Web Site	http://www.springharvest.org
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Accompanying photo shows Ann doing what she loved – giving money to Charity: in this case Manx Landmine Action Group.