

Dear Friends:

(this is the message about Ruth's passing and a collage of pictures of Ruth as sent by Hanneke. pics are at the end of the text – they may take a few seconds to load. fair winds, dan)

Ruth has gone to join the navigators in the sky.

I'm very sad to announce that Ruth Wharram (nee Merseburger) has departed this life in the early morning of 4th September, at the age of 92, at home in Devoran. Her health had been failing over the last two years after a stroke the day after a fantastic 90th Birthday party.

Ruth has been a great strength in our lives, ever since she met James in 1951 she has guided and supported him in his life's efforts. I first met Ruth in 1967 and have shared my life with James and her since 1973. She has been a great friend to me and close ally in all the work, travelling and sailing we have done together. She never had children herself, but during her life she has been 'mother' to Jutta's son Hannes and 'grandmother' to my son Jamie.

She was a great ocean sailor, sailing with James and Jutta on their pioneering catamaran voyages across the Atlantic in the 1950s, then more Atlantic crossings with Tehini and on Spirit of Gaia she voyaged half way round the world. Other friends invited her to join them on their boats, mostly Wharram catamarans, but also other boats, even a monohull. Thus she crossed the Tasman Sea and made more Atlantic crossings. She was a great navigator, managing to find her way across the Atlantic on their first voyage with just a pocket watch and valved radio. Later she was an expert at navigating by sextant in the days before GPS. Besides this she was also an eager photographer, doing her own darkroom work and she filmed the building of Tehini on a hand-wound Bolex cine-camera.

Since 1980 she ran the Wharram office, communicating with customers all round the world, often writing letters late into the night. The big family of Wharram catamaran owners and sailors was her world, she was 'mother' to them all. Whilst writing at her desk she would be listening to classical music on Radio 3.

She only slowed down in this work in her mid 80s, when two knee replacements and a broken thigh made her no longer able to travel easily, but

she then learned to use a computer and she started to keep in touch with her friends by email, she was also able to follow James and myself on our Lapita Voyage via Internet. This unfortunately came to an end by a stroke at the age of 90, which deprived her of the ability to read and affected her memory.

She had a second stroke last May and after spending 2 months in hospital she was desperate to come home. She has been at peace here and has said her farewells to all her close friends.

We all loved her dearly and will never forget her.

Ruth' funeral will be on Friday 13th - a propitious date in the pagan calendar, dedicated to the goddess. She will be cremated at Penmount Crematorium near Truro at 2pm, followed by a celebration of her life at the Wharram headquarters in Devoran at approx. 3.30pm. No flowers, but donations can be made to the 'Tikopian Canoe Project' at the crematorium, which will be used to help Ruth's beloved people of Tikopia and Anuta in the Pacific.

If you are planning to attend Ruth's funeral, or just the celebration afterwards, please let us know, so we can make an estimate at numbers.

Hanneke Boon
James Wharram Designs
Greenbank Road, Devoran, Truro, Cornwall, TR3 6PJ, UK
Tel: +44 1872 864792

Personal email: hanneke@wharram.com
Office email: wharram@wharram.com
Website: www.wharram.com
Websites on canoe project for Tikopia and Anuta: www.tikopia.org
and www.lapita-voyage.org

