



familycarersgallery

a photographic project featuring family carers in their different roles

by **Elizabeth Handy**

Words by **Charles Handy**

Published by **Suffolk Family Carers**

Suggested donation of **£5** towards Respite Care Appeal 2008/09

Suffolk Family Carers

A family carer is someone of any age whose life is restricted because they are looking after a relative, a friend, a partner, or a child who cannot manage without help because of illness, age, physical disability or mental health problems.

Suffolk Family Carers supports people caring for others at home in the following ways:

Information A helpline for family carers and professionals working with them. Trained advisers listen and give tailored information to callers. Every caller receives our information pack and can then access any of our services. Our helpline is open every work day.

Support Centre The support centre at Claydon (near Ipswich) provides a variety of events and activities to help family carers such as complementary therapies, support groups, information days and social events.

Training We provide opportunities to tackle the barriers to learning by providing focused learning and activity sessions. Free tuition is also available in moving & handling safely by an occupational therapist.

Respite We can organise and fund respite care at home for people over 65 so that family carers can have an occasional break. We offer information on other forms of respite along with sources of funding.

Young Carers Support for young people including one to one, short breaks, social clubs and groups.

Community Support Team Advocacy and support workers work one to one and in groups with family carers. Additional services include the Mental Health project, Hospital Discharge Liaison, Black & Ethnic Minority Project and FACT (Fire & Carers Together).

All our project information and contact details are available from a newly re-vamped website www.suffolkfamilycarers.org

RESPITE CARE APPEAL

Many family carers in Suffolk experience real hardship, and can't afford a break (respite) from their caring responsibilities. Whilst we provide a wide range of activities for family carers we have very limited funds for respite care and little in the way of funds to help with transport costs.

We have a target of raising £20,000

so we can help more than 500 family carers in the next year have a break from caring that they need and so much deserve.

Your donation for this book will go towards this appeal.

Introduction

“On behalf of Suffolk Family Carers I would like to express our sincere thanks to Elizabeth & Charles Handy for their generosity and involvement in this project. Elizabeth's perception of family carers and sensitivity really shines through in these photographs. They are unique in telling a story about their individual lives. Family Carers, like us all, have hopes and dreams, life experiences and challenges – these photographs show that hidden story.

We could all be, or may have been, a family carer at sometime in our lives so I hope that you will enjoy them.”



Jacqui Martin, Chief Executive Suffolk Family Carers

“The very nature of caring means that family carers are isolated, self-effacing and completely humble people. They show a commitment and a dedication in our society that needs to be recognised and celebrated. This book is a wonderful celebration of these people and it is good to know that help is at hand, that there's someone to turn to. I congratulate Suffolk Family Carers on the vital work that they do that provides a lifeline to those that offer a lifeline to others.”

**Joanna Lumley
Patron, Suffolk Family Carers**

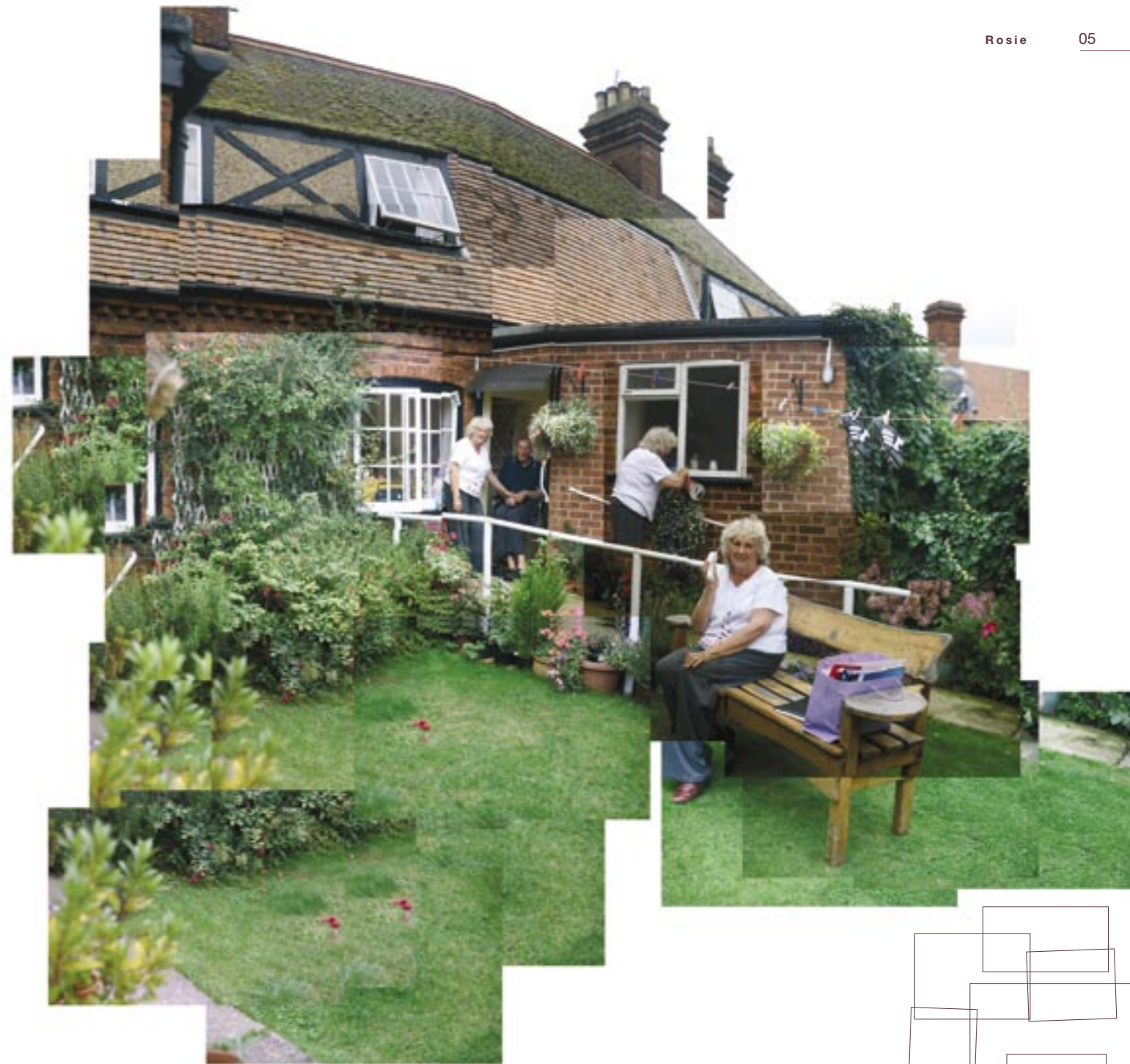


Rosie

Rosie lives in Orford.

She cares for Harold her husband, who suffers from dementia and a degenerative spine. He needs 24-hour care. She also provides a home for Jonathan, the teenage son of her son Sean, who sadly died last year. She and Harold moved to Orford 17 years ago after they got married. Harold has been poorly for the last ten of these. Between them they have 22 grandchildren.

Rosie is the Parish Clerk and secretary of the Orford Trust, and, in her spare time, when she has any, is a keen gardener, although she had to give up her allotment 3 years ago. Harold is too heavy for one person to move so she has the help of a care assistant who, luckily, lives next door. Rosie's cheerful resilience is impressive. She takes life in her stride, despite all its difficulties.



Ferduse

When Ferduse married Abdul Jabbar eleven years ago, his aunt came from Bangladesh to live with them.

The aunt is severely schizophrenic and needs fulltime care. She speaks no English.

Ferduse is studying for a degree in social work which takes her out of the house for most of the day. Abdul Jaffar, however, is a chef so can look after his aunt during the day. They also have two children who go to the local school, but need to be taken there and picked up, usually by Ferduse. Theirs is a complicated and busy life which Ferduse manages with great good cheer.



The Russell Girls

Jessica, Tabitha and Francesca, all in their teens, look after their little brother Cameron, aged three, who suffers from Tubersclerosis.

This genetic condition leads to dangerous fits, when he can stop breathing, and to hyperactivity. Cameron needs constant supervision and attention with occasional immediate interventions, when he has to be rushed off to hospital.

His mother, Jo, was a nurse and is ultimately responsible for Cameron's care, but the three girls look after him when they are at home.

They each, however, have their own lives and interests; Jessica is a budding artist, Tabitha a ballet enthusiast and Francesca a talented footballer and a future guitar player.

Suffolk Young Carers, they say, help by giving them the opportunity to compare their experience with others in a similar situation.





John

John was once a police officer, which was how he met Sue, also in the police. They have been together now for twenty years.

Later he ran a photographic business in Felixstowe, where he was mayor for a time. In 2000 he retired in order to look after Sue. Sue has suffered from acute depression for the last thirteen years, with the symptoms getting progressively more severe over that period. She needs full time care and attention.

John himself has serious knee and back problems which affect his mobility, but, luckily, not when he is flying his airplane, which he built himself. Flying has been his long-lasting enthusiasm, along with a continuing interest in photography. A carer comes in on Monday and Thursday afternoons which gives him the space to find his freedom in the skies. Meantime, he says, the internet allows him to keep in touch with what is going on in the world.



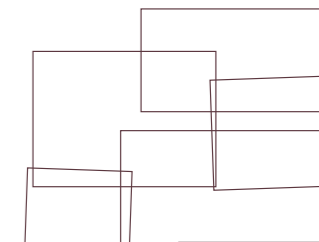


Anetta

Anetta looks after Ramon, her young son.

Ramon suffers from Sickle Cell Anaemia and has a short gut from a twisted intestine. He spent ten months in hospital after he was born. He goes to school now, but needs fulltime care.

Anetta, a single mother, finds that gardening helps her to feel grounded, keeping her close to nature. She is a great believer in meditation and would like, in due course, to be able to offer it to others, to help them to find the inner security and peace that she has found.



Elizabeth Handy



Elizabeth Handy has been photographing people professionally for twenty years. She works with each individual to create together an image that captures who they really are, believing that everyone is interesting and, indeed, beautiful in their own way. She particularly likes to reach for 'the stories behind the face' as she puts it, and has developed unique ways of doing this, including her 'Joiners', a technique developed from the work of David Hockney, and her Still Lives, a modern version of the Dutch vanitas portraits.

The Joiner portraits start from the assumption that there is always more than one aspect to our lives, that we each have at least three roles, although anyone meeting us might only experience us in one of them.

A full portrait of us would therefore need to capture those three views of us. This is what she has sought to do in these portraits of the Suffolk Family Carers, combining their different roles into one composite portrait, to demonstrate the full richness of their lives.

Elizabeth Handy has been married to her husband Charles for 45 years. They met in Kuala Lumpur in Malaya when she was almost 19. Elizabeth was brought up as an army daughter and lived as a child in Austria, Greece, Cyprus, Germany, Bermuda and Singapore. She left school at 16 and has been busily educating herself ever since.

She ran her own freelance interior design business when the children were young. Later she trained with the Marriage Guidance Council to counsel single people or couples with relationship problems. Elizabeth embarked on her third career in her late 40's. She studied at the University of Westminster on a five year part time degree course in photography. Since 1990 Elizabeth has been working a dual career as a freelance portrait photographer and as business partner to her writer husband Charles. In 1996 she self-published her first book "Behind the View" sub-titled "Portraits of a Norfolk village". In 1997 she published

her next book (sponsored by Lawrie Group plc) called "A Journey Through Tea" with portraits illustrating people who work in their "tea" communities in Bangladesh and India. Her next book, which she did with her husband, was called "The New Alchemists" about people who create something out of nothing, using her new style of portraiture of "joiners". This was published in 1999 by Random House. Following that was "Re-invented Lives – Women at 60. A Celebration", published in November of 2002 by Random House. 28 women describe their own stories. Each story is accompanied by two black and white portraits of the women themselves. Then came another book with her husband called "The New Philanthropists" published by Random House. Here she experimented with a new form of portraiture of "still lives". Each philanthropist was asked to select five objects and a flower to symbolize their lives and their values and to arrange them as a personal Still Life, which Elizabeth then photographed, to accompany a more traditional portrait.

Elizabeth's photographs have been published in books, leading journals and newspapers around the world – as well as on the front covers of some of her husband's books. www.lizhandy.net

Charles Handy

Charles Handy is best known as a management writer, whose books on the changing shape of work and life have been published in all the major languages and have sold almost two million copies around the world. He was also, for twenty years, a contributor to Thought for the Day on the BBC.

These days he describes himself as a social philosopher, but he has been an oil executive, an economist, a professor at the London Business School and the Chairman of the Royal Society of Arts. He and Elizabeth work together, splitting the year in two so that they each have some priority over the diary, depending on the time of year. She has the summer months, he the winter. His role in this project is as assistant to Elizabeth and her wordsmith.





The Family Carers of Suffolk

- What we have learnt from the project.

Elizabeth and Charles Handy

It has been, for us, a humbling experience. We have met people who are prepared to give up large parts of their lives to care for someone in their family, and to do it with total commitment and amazingly to us, without complaint or any sense of loss or regret for what life could have been like in other circumstances.

'That's how life is' was the nearest anyone came to acknowledging that things might have been different if the person in their care had not needed them, but even that was said without any hint of annoyance. We could not help reflecting how we might have behaved in similar circumstances and were not at all

sure that we would have shown the same fortitude, resilience and, yes, unconditional love that we met in these people. That was particularly impressive in the case of the young carers who were taking on responsibilities beyond what anyone could have expected of them at their age, and were handling their situations with dignity and total commitment. We only met with 10 families. If the rest of the 94,000 family carers in Suffolk are anything like the ones whom we met, then there are unsuspected reserves of courage, love and competence in this region that must give one hope for the human condition. It also reinforced our feeling that, in the

end, it is the family that is the rock on which a good society is built. Of course, families come in all sorts and sizes and not all members of a family are equally committed or responsible, but if the core of the family is there, then there is the hope of love and care, no matter what. On the evidence of this project, the idea that we are all ready to abandon our sick or old to the care of anonymous others is greatly mistaken.

Thank goodness, one has to add, because if it was not for these 94,000 willing helpers our taxes would be much higher than they already are. It is, therefore, in all our interests to give these committed people as much support and help as we can. Caring for someone can be very lonely. The knowledge that there is an organization ready to help, to provide occasional breaks for the carer, or the chance to meet and

socialise with others in the same predicament, was hugely valued by those we met.

But others, too, can help. That figure of 94,000 family carers in Suffolk alone came as an unsuspected shock to us. We had no idea that there would be so many. Perhaps we live very sheltered lives, but others we have spoken to have also been staggered by that statistic. So many of these dedicated individuals are largely invisible, unnoticed by those of us who pass by, not seeing what is happening behind the doors of many ordinary looking homes, because, of course, many of them can seldom venture out or take part in the ordinary events of life. If this project can help to make these special people more visible to others who might be able to help in one way or another, with money or time, then it will, we feel, have been well worthwhile.

WANTED FAMILY CARER:

Individual required for **physically and mentally exhausting work**. The job may include heavy lifting and applicants should be capable of **working alone for indefinite periods**.

The successful applicant will be expected to be **on call 24hrs a day, seven days a week**, and will receive **holidays if they are lucky** – or able to pay for someone to replace them.

Pay is at a rate **below the official poverty line** or **non-existent**. Social status attached to the job is low.

Applicants are expected to show evidence of a **sense of humor** and the **patience of a saint**. Past experience, training or qualifications not necessary.

No training will be provided.

Job Title: **Family Carer**

(Courtesy: Iris Webb)

Mark

Mark looks after his mother, Jo, who is 83, very frail and needs full time care.

She has had a series of mini-strokes and has psoriasis on her feet.

Mark does all the housework, cooking and caring, but has one afternoon a week to go out to do the shopping etc. when Jo goes to a rest centre.

Mark trained as an actor then worked for many years in the local authority. Now, he says, nothing could give him greater satisfaction than looking after his mother and his home.



Mary

Mary was once the personal nurse to President Kaunda of Zambia, as well as being the mother of seven children.

When Kaunda left office she came to Britain to take up nursing here, along with her teenage daughter, Theresa, who suffers from epilepsy and has an impaired memory.

Eight years later, when Theresa became pregnant, her baby would have had to be given up for adoption, because she was judged to be unable to look after it adequately. Unwilling to let this happen, Mary gave up the nursing work that she loved in order to care for both Theresa and her new daughter, Janette, who is now two.

Mary is a member of the Catholic Women Organization at her local church, and she knows that she has done the right thing, despite missing the life she had. 'That's how life is' she says, with a smile.



Joan

Joan has been married to Rodney, who was once a top kitchen designer for Bosch, but for the last nineteen years has suffered from severe mental health problems with rapid mood swings disorder.

He needs full-time care and is totally dependent on Joan.

Joan once ran a home for the elderly until Rodney's needs began to interfere with her job. As she says, 'when I do anything I have to do it well,' an attitude she now applies to her care for Rodney. When she can, she sews patchwork quilts and tends to her perfect small garden, as well as her involvement with her family, particularly the two daughters who live nearby. She and Rodney have 17 grandchildren.

Rodney goes to a daycare centre one day a week, and joins a self-formed group on Wednesday mornings. He also has a support worker who comes in one half-day a week. This gives Joan the time to do the necessary shopping and to have some time to herself.

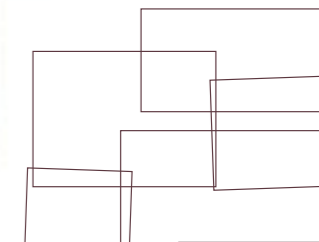
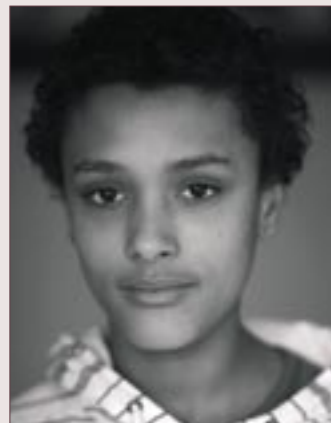


James

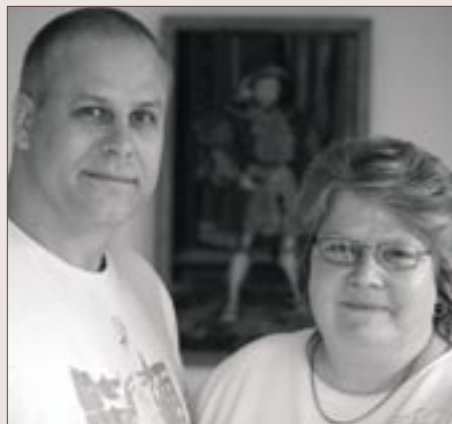
James is thirteen years old, but carries a big responsibility – he looks after his mother, Teresa, who suffers from Cyclothemia and General Anxiety Disorder, which leads to the occasional panic attacks.

In spite of this she has a good job, working for the YMCA in their training department. After a history of domestic violence, she separated from her husband and moved house to live alone with James. James is there to comfort her and to summon help if it is needed.

But James also goes to school every day by bus and also loves riding, being a keen member of the Suffolk Junior Cavalry Group. He has a busy life for a young person but says that the Suffolk Young Carers are a great support, providing him with a mentor and occasional respite opportunities.



Belinda and Michael



Belinda and Michael care for each other.

Belinda was originally a nurse, where the constant lifting of heavy bodies ruined her back, leaving her with severe arthritis, which will only get worse, and constant pain. She walks with difficulty.

Michael is her carer and the breadwinner, but he had a major heart attack two years ago, after a very active life, losing a third of his heart. Earlier he, too, had a back operation. He gets tired easily, is often depressed and unable to work. Belinda, then, becomes his carer.

After fifteen years of IVF their son, Sean, was born. Now three years old, he is the joy of their life and, despite their difficulties, they clearly delight in each other and their life as a family.



- ▶ **Visit** our website www.suffolkfamilycarers.org
- ▶ **Call** our helpline **01473 232679**
- ▶ **Become** a business supporter **01473 835439**
- ▶ **Help** with fundraising, leave a legacy & make a donation **01473 835439**
- ▶ **Become** a telephone befriender **01473 835400**
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