

SARAH GRAZEBROOK (born JILL MARTIN) 1947 - 2021

Jill was a pupil at King Edward's between 1957 and 1962 in Elizabeth House – this tribute was written by her partner and appeared in The Guardian on 16th August 2021.

My partner Sarah Grazebrook, who has died aged 73, was an actor and novelist.

She was born Jill Martin in Guildford, Surrey, to Leslie Martin, a bank official, and Pamela (nee Grazebrook), a civil servant. Following their divorce, her mother moved several times, which led to a peripatetic education at a number of schools. These included Stafford girls' grammar school and ended with her being a boarder at King Edward's Witley, in Surrey.

Despite achieving excellent grades, Sarah decided not to try for university in favour of Guildford School of Acting and a name change, by deed poll, to Sarah Grazebrook. From 1969, six years working for various repertory theatres, including in Crewe, Ipswich, St Andrews, Harrogate and Chester. Her final theatre job was a two-month long tour to Hong Kong and Australia in 1982, with the Old Vic theatre company under Timothy West.

On television Sarah played Alice in The Onedin Line (1971), the secretary Marion Entwistle in the first series of The Brothers (1972-73), Martha in Cranford (1972), Abby Kingsley in Hunter's Walk (1973), Beth in A Journey to London (1975), Mathilda in Ripping Yarns (1976) and Amy in Sophia and Constance (1988). On film she was Wilfreda in Jabberwocky (1977).

Recruited in 1970 to write for the current affairs sketch show Week Ending on Radio 4, she became the first woman to join the team under Simon Brett, which included John Lloyd and Andy Hamilton. She also contributed material to another Radio 4 comedy programme, The Burkiss Way, until motherhood took her into longer forms of writing.

We met in a west London pub in 1977, when Sarah was acting a female part with the prisoners in a production of Dry Rot in Wormwood Scrubs.

Sarah's first comic novel, Not Waving (1987), was the winner of the Cosmopolitan fiction prize, and four others followed: The Circle Dance (1994), Page Two (1997), Foreign Parts (1999) and Mountain Pique (2000). While writing them she penned a monthly column, Notes from the Garret, for Kent Life magazine, and she also became a creative writing tutor and mentor at Canterbury Christchurch University, where she remained for five years from 2005.

Her last novel, Crooked Pieces (2008), was far from comic, and detailed the life of a working-class suffragette. By that stage, however, she had become disillusioned with the publishing world, and in 2011 decided to turn to teaching English as a foreign language. Her acting skills, allied to her sense of fun, made her classes original and entertaining.

Sarah was diagnosed with a virulent form of leukaemia only three weeks before her death, but she kept her acerbic wit to the end. She is survived by me, our two children, Thomas and Charlotte, and two grandchildren, Lewis and Alex.

