

# The woman with the healing hands

By IAN MORRIS

HUNDREDS of people filled a north Herefordshire church to remember a septuagenarian with "magical" skills from a bygone age.

Margaret Ruth James was affectionately remembered as the "bone setter" during a celebratory memorial service at Brampton Bryan church earlier this month.

Known to her friends as Ruth, Mrs James didn't so much set bones as put them back where they belonged - farmers and hips, riders and shoulders, gardeners and backs: all waited to see Ruth James in the sure knowledge that she was "a good un".

There was no brass plate on her door however, for Ruth was a natural healer - a gifted woman who inherited her ability from her father Jim Byewater.

Sylvia Breakwell said her friend discovered her gift as a young woman in her 20s.

"It happened at a party where one of the other guests had earlier sustained an injury," she said.

"Ruth was persuaded to have a go at putting things right.

"She succeeded, though the young farmer didn't fully appreciate the cure until several days later!"

Word travelled and Ruth became very busy with appointments fitted in around her two children, the house and the shared running of a farm.

"She manipulated not only people, but their animals, cattle and horses," added Mrs Breakwell. "There was no surgery, just a wind-out Victorian table and a cushion in her dining room."

But for a woman with such an extraordinary gift, she had little explanation for her ability. "Nothing to do with me, my dear - the energy or the spirit are not mine, I am simply the tool to be used, I claim no credit and I feel very humble," was what she would tell Mrs Breakwell.

"I am aware of the energy moving from the shoulders to my hands and when I used to do pain relief for patients, I would feel



▲ Ruth James

utterly exhausted afterwards."

Mrs Breakwell said years ago, professors in London took a great interest in her special friend and considered her to be a skeletal manipulator of the very highest standard.

Ruth James leaves her daughter Jenny and two grandchildren Alex and Tanith Laurie.