

PLAN FOR “DR COELACANTH”

By Jennifer Penrose-Marks

On visiting Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer at the Fairlands Frail Care Home to which she had been transferred, it was distressingly apparent that her pleas to be allowed to return to the sanctuary of her own home could not be either ignored or brushed aside. With her doctor's blessing and with a support system in place, her friends knew that this would be entirely possible.

A letter I wrote to the Editor of the *Daily Dispatch* [which was published on April 30, 2004] elicited an immediate, caring and warm-hearted response, with offers of help of whatever nature.

Thus it was that a nucleus of seven concerned East Londoners (including a lawyer and an accountant) was assembled with a view to forming a trust which would undertake to provide a full-time companion/care giver and to cover the cost of all her material needs for the rest of her life.

We had found that she was living very frugally on a small pension and, with increasing age and frailty, medical costs were quite beyond her savings – let alone certain home comforts which the average person might take for granted.

We had reached the point where an ideal person had been chosen to move into her home – and in fact had been to see the house and meet Marge's dog. And then the blow fell; Marge developed pneumonia, was admitted to hospital, and on the day that we were planning to tell her that everything was in

place for the great return home – she died. At least she knew that we were doing our best for her wish to be granted, because we had kept her informed of progress all along the way.



Marjorie's home in East London from 1986, when she returned from retirement at Witelsbos. The house is next door to her old family home. Photos East London Museum