

KATHLEEN'S FUNERAL

Thank you, all, for coming to say farewell to Kathleen.

You are all invited to Astley Bank for something to eat after this goodbye.

If you haven't already done so, can I ask you to please switch off your mobiles or put them on silent. Thank you.

I am Jan, or Janet to family members. I am leading this farewell and celebration because

First and foremost, Kathleen asked me to do so

And secondly, she was my cousin and we were very close: I have known her all of my life, some 76 years. She was more like an older sister rather than a cousin, as me and my brother Stephen spent a lot of time playing at 32 Ratcliffe Street where Kathleen was born, we were, in effect, part of the Turnbull family which included many happy holidays together.

A bit of family history: We don't know a lot about Kathleen's dad's family only that his mother, Mary, was born at Dent Head and she had two half-siblings and eight siblings. The Turnbolls were stone masons and, in fact, built the house where Kathleen was born.

On her mother's side we have Bridget Shannon and Joseph Ward, Kathleen's grandparents; they had five children: Jim, May, Kathleen, Tom and Bessie. So our grandparents had nine grandchildren in all.

Aunt May married Jim Turnbull and they had three children: Tommy, Jimmy and Kathleen.

I, along with my cousins Marion and Christine, were bridesmaids when Kathleen married Jack Parker in 1958. Along came young Kathleen Janet in 1960 followed a few years later by her brother, John. I remember his birth well as I was there, at the Ellenshaw Arms. I was looking after young Kathleen whilst her mother gave birth to John – her screams put me off ever having children. Kathleen has laughed at that story several times!

But we need to go back earlier. As said, Kathleen was born at 32 Ratcliffe Street, Darwen. She went to St John's Primary school, an old Victorian building

on St John's Street at the top of Carr Row. Her favourite teacher was Mr Derek Painter – I think, actually, he was a favourite teacher for all the girls, not least because he was handsome but also because he was a very nice man and a good teacher.

From St John's Kathleen moved to Avondale Secondary School for Girls and her favourite teacher here was Mrs Whalley (when I was there a few years later I was NOT Mrs Whalley's favourite pupil).

When she left school, Kathleen had the choice of going to work at Primrose Cotton Mill on Ratcliffe Street or become a seamstress for the Co-op as she was a very good dress maker. But she chose to work with her mother at Primrose Mill – I remember going in to see her once and the noise of the looms was horrendous, as was all the dust flying around.

Kathleen had many jobs throughout her life – I didn't know until recently that at one point she was a telephonist at South End Mill. She also worked at Darwen Paper Mill and Carus's. I think she had two favourite occupations: one was when she ran a florist shop in Bridge Street with her best friend Audrey, and, of course, when she was landlady of the Ellenshaw Arms. I have lots of very fond memories of sing-alongs at the Ellenshaw, with either the pianist or me playing the guitar.

I remember the floods in Darwen in 1964: I was staying with Kathleen at the Ellenshaw and was terrified as the flood water dashed down Kay Street. I managed to push young Kathleen under the bed but I couldn't fit under it as well. So I went downstairs and there was Kathleen and Jack taking advantage of the flood having a lock in!

Before they got the Ellenshaw, Kathleen and Jack lived at 11 Cleveland Terrace, just over Sough Bridge, next to Audrey and Jim, who were to become her best friends, along with their daughters Gail, Janet and Beverley. Kathleen had a garden at the back - in which a lovely lilac tree grew. Having a garden was something we were not used to.

From the Ellenshaw, Kathleen, Jack, young Kathleen and John moved to 13 Ratcliffe Street where they lived next door to Jack's younger brother Harold and his wife Louise and their children.

From here, several years later, they moved to a new house in Pole Lane where Kathleen spent the rest of her life.

Grief hit the family when their daughter, Kathleen, was diagnosed with cervical cancer – she died at the tender age of 34 in 1995, leaving behind her young daughters Natalie and Tara. That was a hard time for Kathleen and Jack. As Jack said, “your daughter shouldn’t die before you.”

Jack was a coal man (as were several of the men in our family). He died in 2004, aged 71, but he made sure Kathleen was well looked after. Kathleen lived on her own for five years until she met Brian Jepson at her brother Jimmy’s funeral right here.

I remember when we came out of the crematorium, she asked me if I had noticed a chap with white hair who was sitting at the front on the left-hand side? I said I hadn’t noticed him. Well, she said, that is Brian Jepson – he was my first ever boyfriend (Jack being her second) and I always said I would never go out with a man again after Jack died, but I’d make an exception for Brian Jepson.

Well, Brian, who had also lost his partner some five years before, got talking to Kathleen at the wake about when they were kids and Brian invited Kathleen to meet up and to look at some old photographs. The rest, as they say, is history.

Kathleen and Brian fell headlong in love. They married and had ten idyllic years of happy marriage, going on several cruises and generally enjoying the twilight of their years. It was magic to see them, they were so in love. I liked Brian a lot, and he reminded me we had met when I was little as he worked with my step-father. When Brian died a few years ago, Kathleen asked me to lead his funeral and I was privileged to do so, as indeed I am, today.

Kathleen was devastated when Brian came home one day, laid his head on her shoulder and died, but what a good way to go.

I talked to Kathleen about her funeral and asked her if she wanted anything specific played, she wanted ‘Crazy’ by Patsy Cline and a hymn she choose because it reminded her of one of the cruises her and Brian went on. I said I would lead her funeral service on one condition – she is OK with me playing me singing ‘I’ll Take You Home Again Kathleen.’ She needed no persuasion and

I used this to put together a video of photographs of Kathleen's life from when she was a bridesmaid at my mother's wedding – here it is.

I'd like to invite Kathleen's grand-daughter, Natalie to say a few words.

Thank you, Natalie.

Here are a few words Kathleen's other grand-daughter, Tara has written.

Kathleen's chosen Hymn

Commitment: I would ask you all, now, to take a few moments and remember your happy memories of Kathleen.

Here is poem by Christina Rossetti, it is called

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.

Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.

Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,

Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

Kathleen has gone to join her beloved daughter, Brian, Jack and many other members of our family.

She leaves behind her son, John, grand-children Natalie, Tara and Martin, and great grand-children, Tyler, Rehan, Alesha and little Marcia.

As well as nieces, nephews, cousins and family friends.

Goodnight and god bless, Kathleen, till we meet again.