

A Tribute to Shirley Auburn

November 14th 1957 - December 8th 2018

The Tribute

Heather Shirley Auburn was born on November 14th 1957 at Northampton General. Brought up in Dorset Road with her four siblings, Linda, Peter, Jennifer and Diane, Heather attended St. George's School, followed by Kingsthorpe Upper School.

She left school at fifteen and worked first at Beckett's shoe factory in Kingsthorpe, followed by Telfers on Moulton Park. From here, Heather took up work as a cleaner at a number of local schools.

Then, one day, aged nineteen, she bravely agreed to go on a blind date. The venue was the Abington Pub. Her 'intended' was none other than a young Paul Rowland. After a six-month courtship, the young couple were married in 1977. They soon started their family, Melanie born in 1980, Curtis in 1982 and finally, Jeanette in 1986.

It was with her young family that Heather truly came into her own. As a Mum, she was a true natural - doting on her children from the day they were born. She was one of those wonderful 'feeder' Mums. There were treats of all kinds a-plenty - sweets, cakes, proper food too. The Rowland kids never went short.

Once the children were of school age, Heather took up work again. This time as a cleaner. She moved from school to school, working at whichever one the kids attended. Most children are greeted by their Mums at home, when they arrive home from school. Not so the Rowlands. Walking home from school, they'd bump into their Mum, on her way to work.

With the children growing towards adulthood, Heather took up work at B&Q as a 'meeter and greeter' at the front door. Then, aged 41, Heather retired from the world of work, devoting herself full-time to her rapidly expanding sphere of hobbies and interests. And what an incredibly varied range of interests there were. Many of them revolved around her wonderful craft skills. Heather taught herself knitting, crochet, painting of all kinds, - oils, water colours, pastels. She learned how to make blankets, teddy bears and dolls. For most of these skills, Heather was self-taught, making excellent use of YouTube.

With family occasions so important to Heather, should would occasionally venture into cake-baking. This was possibly beyond her scope of talents, as someone unkindly suggested that her attempt to bake a cake in the shape of a Teddy Bear, finished up with a more than passing resemblance to Peppa Pig!

Amongst Heather's other interests were dogs. She absolutely adored them. She almost always owned more than one. In fact, at one point, she had as many as four! She was especially fond of her current pair - Archie and Murphy.

So, what kind of a woman was Heather Rowland? What of her character? Well, you don't need me to tell you what a wonderful woman Heather was. Immensely friendly to everyone she met. She was chatty and hospitable. Pop round to visit and you'd be plied with cups of tea and sticky cakes. Heather was the archetypal bossy mother-hen figure - forever fussing over her children. She'd be phoning, texting - always wanting to know how everyone was getting on, always there to support and to provide advice and loving warmth and kindness whenever it was needed.

As for a sense of humour, she had it in spades. And was blessed with a wicked, and not always appropriate, sense of fun. Whatever was going on, she'd join in with gusto. She rarely touched alcohol, which is probably why, on the few occasions she did, it didn't take much to get Heather tipsy.

There was a famous occasion when Heather and Paul went out to a Karaoke night with a few friends and family members. The night was indeed memorable, though not for Heather, who would recall little of what happened that night. Suffice to say that, fueled by copious quantities of Watermelon Bacardi Breezers, there was much raucous singing by Heather and the girls - and not quite of the quality that would have got them passed round one of the X Factor. It should be said that it was some while before Heather felt like taking another sip of alcohol.

Of course, Heather absolutely adored young Connor. She attended his birth and loved him to pieces.

Heather had many friends. She was particularly close to Jane, who she'd known all her life and more recently, Sally, who she first met, dog walking.

The decline in Heather's health was shockingly rapid. She first fell ill on her birthday, just a month ago. She was suffering from a complication from an operation she'd had way back in 1991. There were visits to the hospital, but within a couple of weeks, it was clear that her life was drawing to a close.

Finally, on December 8th, Heather died.

So ended the life of a wonderful woman. A woman who clearly loved life. A woman who was unfailingly cheerful and friendly with everyone she met. A woman who made the most of her talents. But a woman, who, above all, simply lived for the company, the affection and the love of her family and friends. Yes, it's true - Heather Rowley was, in every sense, a good woman.