

A celebration of life Kirsty Fraser Meddings

17th March 1973 – 10th December 2020

12 noon, Wednesday 23 December 2020, South Oxfordshire Crematorium

a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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Memories of Kirsty

I am so grateful to Kirsty's family and friends for sharing wonderful memories and stories of Kirsty. What came over loud and clear was what an amazing person she was.

And the family was equally clear that none of you needed a to hear a biography about Kirsty documenting where and when things happened.

You all knew her and you all loved her and you are all devastated at the loss.

So... as you can imagine the outpouring of love for this fantastic, talented and wonderful young woman has been immense.

So many of you, friends and family, have been sending heart-warming stories, comments, letters, texts and emails and it has been a privilege to read so many of these.

What a dear wife, mother, sister, daughter, colleague and friend she has been.



I spoke with Val, Kirsty's Mum, whose wonderful memories of her beloved daughter, were lovely to hear. The love and the pride and the loss was palpable.

She told me about Kirsty being a schoolgirl in the States, where they lived for a few years. Kirsty very quickly embraced the life and the culture over there. She made friends with so many including others from many different countries and cultures, with whom she remained in contact.

Then, when the family left the States, in 1988, despite Kirsty's distress at having to leave all these same friends and activities behind, she knuckled down at school, determined to complete her GCSEs in a single year.

Before starting University, Kirsty travelled with a dear friend, Jane, who was subsequently to become her bridesmaid at Kirsty's wedding to James.

Kirsty and James met when they worked together at CatchWord.

They had a wonderfully happy life together, initially with their cats Bangers and Mash, and then with their beautiful children, Dan and Luke. They shared a love of music, with Kirsty one of the most dedicated fans of James' band, Veda Park – James wrote the song "Red Kite" that we heard earlier today.

They enjoyed travelling, with a particular highlight being their trip to New Zealand in 2004 but they also loved holidays around the UK. They returned time and again to Dartmouth in Devon, and it was there that James' ashes were scattered when his life was cut so tragically short by leukaemia.

Kirsty coped with that grief in the only way she could- by talking about James and confronting her distress and that grief head on and just getting on with life for her adored children. She coped with this new life, now as a single parent with a new baby with huge support from everyone.

Val's pride in her daughter who always did her own thing, but not in a selfish way- always with principled decisions and always with love, comes over so strongly.

And the love. The love and warmth just shone through. Kirsty never held back and she wanted, and needed, to help "sort people out" whenever she could.

Was there anything this woman could not do... and do well?

Well- yes in fact! It's probably not news to any of you that Kirsty was not a morning person! And her friends and colleagues knew to tread lightly and check first with any approaches to her before 10 o' clock!

Val also talked of a time much later, where Kirsty and she managed to take a few days, just the two of them, in Boston, when Kirsty went on business. This was a privilege and a joy for both of them having that special time together doing things they loved, and this time was immeasurably important and precious.



Hearing Martin talk about his wonderful, beautiful wife, and how lucky he was to have met her, was inspirational.

When I asked him to tell me about her, the adjectives just kept coming! Happy, smiling, beautiful, capable, honest, truthful, a wonderful person. A really good, kind Mum. Both he and Kirsty met and fell and love- two bereaved people with young children. "How lucky am I?" he said to me.

And for Kirsty finding this love and support from Martin... and to meet Amy who she adored as one of her own children - was world-changing. Kirsty's love of the new family- two half families who bonded and were even stronger and even more wonderful than the two individual halves. They combined and blended with no bumps in the road.

Well maybe the odd one... Did you know they argued? Yes, they did- about the right knife to cut onions with, and the correct way to fold laundry.



Martin told to me about Kirsty's interests at home. He talked of how she was always doing things, never doing nothing.

Music was incredibly important to Kirsty and you will see some descriptions about this in the Order of Service and you will hear some of her favourite pieces today.

She made tiny, delicate and very intricate miniature houses and this was almost like a mindfulness meditation, to unwind and concentrate on something different.

She loved to garden. It was her calm place.

Holidays with the family were an essential. They packed so much into their lives in the short 6 or 7 years that Martin and Kirsty were together.

He recalled lovely holidays in Dartmouth and Tenby and one of the most special ones where Kirsty had suggested what, at first, seemed a crazy idea. They hired a canal boat to go into London for an unusual city break. It was a genius way to drift gently right through the centre of the bustling and busy city, with a magical slowness and once moored, they showed the children Camden and the city sights and the museums.

She made light of her condition, even joking very close to her death that Martin would have to clear out stuff from under the bed so there would be room for a memory box about her. Martin promised to look after her and their children and he absolutely did.



Kirsty's younger brother, Colin, has written about their lives together, which I will read; Kirsty and I were close from an early age although I'm sure we squabbled like any siblings do. In many ways we had an idyllic upbringing, growing up in Watlington. We both learnt to play instruments in the village brass band. Kirsty was always more talented than me at music, I was always struggling to keep up with her achievements – younger sibling syndrome, I guess. But I'll also be forever grateful to have been the younger sibling as it meant I inherited many influences, musical and otherwise, and Kirsty always had great taste.

Our closeness was probably enhanced when we moved to California. Kirsty was quick to adapt to American life. Even back then Kirsty's ability to form long lasting and meaningful friendships was evident. As a talented musician she formed life-long friendships with others in the marching band she joined. Kirsty and I used chat late into the night and listen to music – Depeche Mode, U2, whatever British indie music we had heard on the radio. Later in life when Kirsty went off to University at Warwick, we remained close. Goodness knows why she wanted an annoying 17-year-old brother hanging around with her whilst she was having the time of her life as a fresher at Uni. But she did; taking me along to nights out drinking at the student union and inviting me down for house parties. Kirsty was always generous with her friendship. And she was always one of my best friends.

Thank you, Colin for writing this beautiful memory.



Jane, one of Kirsty's University friends, wanted to share so many great tales about their time in Warwick.

Kirsty loved Warwick University and they all had conversations long into the night, putting the world to rights, in a way only 18, 19 or 20-year-olds can. But as Kirsty was a Night Owl, on university mornings, there was a tacit understanding that no words would be exchanged during

breakfast or during the walk to the bus stop or even during the bus journey. Only when the university came into view would Kirsty be awake enough to start a conversation.

In their shared house, Kirsty was the tidy one and she apparently went on strike, as she pointed out, that she was doing more than her fair share of cleaning. Around that time, the rubbish in the kitchen bin stacked up to the top of the tall fridge/freezer.

And everyone remembered the Christmas dinner where 20 or more people crammed into the small, terraced student house, bringing roast turkey and roasted potatoes and other delicacies across town by bus!



A special tribute has been sent from Kirsty's dear friends, Charlie, Tracy, Anna and Sam. They called themselves the STACK girls, using the first initial of their first names. They are a very close group who loved her dearly. Having initially met through work, they have shared some highlights from Kirsty's brilliant career. She was a pioneer in the world of scholarly publishing – widely known, hugely respected, and greatly liked. She started her career at Blackwells, but really came into her own at CatchWord, then moved to Crossref.

At Crossref, she product-managed a number of really important developments, such as a tool for tackling plagiarism in research publications, and another that helps to track the effectiveness of research funding. These are vital parts of the research communication process and an amazing testament to her skills and knowledge.

She loved working at Crossref, and was incredibly close to many of the team there. She was so grateful for their support when James died, and during her diagnosis and treatment this last year. Some of Kirsty's colleagues at Crossref, recently set up a message board so those who knew her professionally could be supportive and share their thoughts- These are a treasure trove of comments universally saying how her warm personality shone through and how much fun she was to work with. Charlie says "Everyone felt close to her because she gave so freely of her emotions and energy.

She was also great, GREAT fun, whether in the office, day to day, or while attending the many countless events that were part of her job. She would always be one of the "last standing", deep in conversations about work or family, late in to the night - but with such a strong work ethic that she would nonetheless be one of the few who attended the 8am conference talks, passing around the Fruitella to help everyone with their hangovers."

Some memories of times shared with Kirsty border on farce – losing a massive bit of exhibition kit during an event at London Zoo, having snuck off to see the penguins.

Or a Thelma and Louise moment, shouting "keep going" through fits of giggles, as Tracy drove a sizeable white van down a pedestrian walkway on a university campus.

It wouldn't be right to talk about Kirsty's career without touching on "The Grillings". Every CEO or company director who worked with Kirsty will remember one or more nights in the pub where they were put through their paces.

But Geoffrey, one of those interrogated, notes that "the interrogations were never mean. They were always light-hearted. And she was always extremely funny."



Martin talked about Kirsty's last days- She never wanted to be the centre of attention and even in her last Facebook message she didn't talk about herself, but rather thanked anyone who had donated blood as she had benefitted from a large blood transfusion. Even in her last words to Martin while she told him how much she loved him, and the children - she asked "Please could you all stop staring at me?"

Everyone pulled together to allow Kirsty to be at home with her family- where she wanted to be, surrounded by love, for her last hours.

Kirsty was a passionate supporter of the NHS and in her final need, it delivered, spectacularly and successfully. The Palliative Care Specialist Nurse, Tamara, pulled out all the stops and organised a hospital bed and arranged for Kirsty to be moved home for her final hours.

Martin and Tracy were able to share all the messages that had been received over the preceding days, and she said "I'm listening". She had heard all those messages of love and care and they were a comfort to her.

She was able to listen to Dan playing his guitar for her, hug him, Luke and Amy, and say goodnight to them and goodbye to Martin and Val, before gently and quietly slipping away.



There is one last particularly poignant and relevant message that I would like to read from Ginny, one of Kirsty's colleagues at Crossref:

"Kirsty made it ok to share feelings. She made it ok to blur friendship and co-working. She made it ok to offer a hug at work. She made it ok to be pissed off and not hide it. She made it ok to grieve and to discuss grief. It's both heart-breaking and comforting that we as a group are more able to handle her death, because of all that she taught us."

How can I sum this up? How can I tie together all your thoughts, feelings and comments?

There is only one word out of the hundreds of positive ones that should be used for Kirsty: Love...

She shared enduring, all-encompassing, phenomenal and overwhelming love with you all. For her families, her husband, her children, her friends, for everyone.

She was love personified.