

A celebration of life

Margaret Audrey ('Lizzie') Drew

23 July 1937 – 23 September 2020

11.20am – 12.00pm, 08 October 2020, Mortlake Crematorium

a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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Lizzie was adventurous, strong-willed, refined, organised and, most of all, warm-hearted and kind. This is why she has such a close family and so many loyal friends. She was born Margaret Audrey Bingham on 23rd July 1937 to Samuel and Gladys in Sheffield, a younger sister to John. But she hated both her names and was always known as Lizzie. She wasn't keen on school either – she would have preferred to run off to join the circus, which didn't endear her particularly to the teachers. One of them apparently told her parents: 'There's nothing clever about your Margaret'. The teacher was wrong of course – Lizzie was quite clever enough to do what she thought worth doing, and to apply herself. After school she went to Germany for a year to improve her language skills before joining Nottingham Playhouse as an Assistant Stage Manager on £5 per week, moving on to acting work in rep at Sheffield.

But what she really wanted to be was an air hostess, so as soon as she was able she applied to BOAC. There followed six wonderful years of travel and hard work – she loved it. She made lasting friends among other staff, three of whom she continued to lunch with for many years after.

When she left BOAC, Lizzie started working for her brother, arranging seminars with high profile speakers in smart venues like the Café Royal. Lizzie was just the person to make sure everything was done perfectly. When she took on her flat in Chiswick, it needed a lot of work, and the building contractor was one Bryn Drew. They hit it off rather well! – though she later claimed she had to marry him because he got so expensive!

Thus began a lasting and profoundly happy relationship, one of mutual trust and respect, as well as love. They wanted to work, as well as live, together, and so, in 1977, they converted a house in Chiswick into an 18-bed hotel. It was a perfect melding of skills – Bryn's building expertise with Lizzie's organisational and hostessing savoir faire – she was in her element! They also shared a vision – to make everyone's experience as good as it could be; details mattered, right down to the freshly cut flowers in the rooms. It was hard work, and they hardly saw each other for five years, but they enjoyed it. They had loyal staff, with whom Lizzie fostered good relationships as she did with everyone.

As the business expanded and they handed over more of the day-to-day management, they had more time to travel. Lizzie was up for anything – any adventure or new experience, although she sometimes needed a bit of persuading for the more extreme ones. Fortunately, Bryn could always negotiate with her by

giving her the promise of observing animals – this is how he got her up Kilimanjaro – on foot! And then there was the rafting down the Grand Canyon and sleeping in the open air – not her preferred way of doing things but she was game – helped on that occasion by a promise of ‘post cruise’ luxury at Belagio’s in Las Vegas.

And she did get to see her animals – wildebeest on migration, polar bears and walruses in Svalbard, penguins and albatrosses at the South Pole, orangutangs and Komodo dragons in Borneo, tigers in India. She rode on elephants and camels with confidence, but put her on a bike and it was quite different – she was always falling off and scratching her knees!

The couple shared many tastes and pleasures, but when they didn’t, they found a happy compromise. For their walking holidays, Bryn set off on foot while Lizzie and Catherine drove on to the next stopping point with the luggage. Bryn planned everything for their comfort and enjoyment, even timing their Italian trip to take in local spectacles, from lesser known medieval football-cum-wrestling matches to the famous Siena Palio. Lizzie had always enjoyed the thrill of a race – speedway and stockcar racing when she was younger. But Formula 1 was her real passion – she made sure she was in Monaco whenever she could to watch the grand prix.

Back at home it was all about family and friends. Catherine remembers the enormous care and thoughtfulness that went into everything Lizzie did, the groaning tables of food at Christmas or family gatherings, meticulously planned and beautifully prepared – helped with a reef of post-it notes to keep her on track. Every meal was a treat, from wonderful homemade brandy marinated foie gras or patés to Yorkshire pudding served the proper way, as a first course with lots of special, homemade gravy. Cakes were more of a challenge – Bryn remembers the chocolate one she once made for his birthday, which came out of the oven ‘risen underneath but fallen in on the top’!

Fortunately, there was always somewhere to eat out. They knew how to enjoy London’s best, whether it was dining on lobster omelette at the Goring Hotel or immersing themselves in the whole cultural life of the capital. Music was a shared passion, and it wasn’t unusual for them to go to three concerts a week. When they talked together about how they wanted to celebrate her life, their conclusion, not surprisingly, was: with music.