

A celebration of life

Margaret Elizabeth Sanderson

11th April 1939 – 16th October 2023

Saturday 4th November 2023
Hutcliffe Wood Crematorium



a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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This ceremony is a chance for you to say farewell to Margaret, not only in sadness at her death, but more so in celebration of her life. Margaret grasped every day with such enthusiasm; she lived like she meant it, from her lifelong vegetarianism to her many, varied and passionately held interests. She was someone who, as the poet Mary Oliver would have had it, didn't simply visit this world; she made the most of her time and left with all of you a legacy of love and happy memories. The connections Margaret made with family and friends are reflected in the faces here in this room, and her son Jeremy told me how glad he is to have you all here, including Margaret's brother-in-law David and her great friend Maureen, companion on many travels.

I consider it a privilege to lead Margaret's ceremony today, but there are many others better placed than I to talk of this lovely lady and the life she led, and first to do so is Jeremy.

Jeremy's Tribute

The last few years were rather difficult because Mum had Alzheimer's and lost confidence in her mobility.

Thank you, Carole, for being so kind and helpful to her over the last few years.

Her declining memory and being unable to drive ate at Mum's independence. which was a defining characteristic. As the daughter of her next-door neighbour said to me, 'Your Mum is one of the most independent women I've ever known.' So where did this independence and strength of character come from?

My mum lost her own mother when she was very young, and her first few years were dominated by World War 2. She had strong memories of rationing, the Blitz and being carried up the garden to the air raid shelter by her father. But she had a protective and caring family around her, her sister Pat, her Grandma and Auntie Alice next door, neighbours, and her Uncle George a few streets away. And she clearly adored her father, my grandfather. She painted a picture of a happy childhood, playing rounders at Lydgate Junior school and being a tomboy playing on the crags.

Perhaps then, a main defining event was the marriage to my father. As a classicist, she'd seen him as an entrance to a new and exciting world. In the early 1960s they took a party of boys from Abbeydale Grammar School where my dad taught to Rome. She loved the Roman ruins and the art - and there are photos of her looking most glamorous in the Colosseum.

But as some of you will know that marriage went badly wrong and life at home was very difficult. When I was 9 or 10 I asked her if she'd thought of divorce, and she told me she'd in fact been planning it for a while, getting her O levels and going to teacher training college, so she had an income. And during those difficult years, she supported and protected me - and she was always open with me about what was going on, as she fought her way through the courts on custody, maintenance and more.

And maybe that's what forged her strong independence. A divorced single mother in the early 1970s with no income and no savings.

I think she loved training to be a teacher at Lady Mabel College at Wentworth Woodhouse. She made some good friends, and it unleashed her creative and academic side.

She taught for many years at Parson Cross Junior School, probably not the easiest place in Sheffield, and I suspect she was pretty good. We've got a book of quotes from her class - when she retired:

'I wasn't very good at art, but you didn't mind, you still helped us when we were stuck, and you never ignored us. When we were in trouble you were very kind to us' - Lindsey

'I thought it was good when we did art because you always told us to never give up and never think it's wrong. You was kind and you was mad only when somebody was messing about' – Lucy Hinchliffe

'I remember I had just moved from Gleadless, and I got Stephen's caterpillar pencil sharpener stuck in my ear – yes, you've guessed - It's Ben Briggs'

Mum always had a great energy and enthusiasm about things, a relentless urge to find out more and to be involved in life – whether it was researching her family history, learning about art and architecture when doing her Open University degree, going off to evening class to do botanical art, flying on Concorde, researching obscure apple trees – or for many years in retirement helping to run the Rivelin Valley Conservation Group – and much more.

Radio 4 and the Guardian were a constant in her life, and she was always proud of Sheffield and her father's work at James Neill.

As my friend Bob said:

'she was fearless, inquisitive – she cared about stuff – your mother meant a lot to me.'

Two final things about Mum:

She sought out holiday locations that were exotic – she went to Communist Yugoslavia in the 1950s – and locations that were cold and wild, Northumberland, the Isle of Skye, Outer Hebrides, Norway and Iceland – often with her lifelong friend Maureen. And she had an interesting taste in music – Johnny Ray singing 'Ooo such a night', rather racy in the 1950s – and Kenneth McKellar – because of his operatic voice and Scottishness.

Margaret was not only a proud mum to Jeremy, and mother-in-law to Carole, but also a delighted grandma to Chloe and James, always there for school pick-ups or helping out with reading in their classroom. She shared with them her love of nature, and watched with delight as they grew to find their own way in life, and their own happiness with partners Ed and Eve.

Chloe and James wanted to pay their own tributes to their grandma today.

James' Tribute

- *Thank you for teaching me to read and write even though my handwriting is still pretty rubbish. I even remember you withholding biscuits until I'd done my letters correctly*
- *Thank you for teaching us how to tell the time*
- *Thank you for coming into my school and teaching my friends sewing. They remember you and call you the sewing queen*
- *Thank you for letting my racket skills flourish by playing swing ball in your garden*
- *Thank you for many Christmas dinners and family parties*
- *Thank for your advent calendar every year*
- *Thank you for your commitment to the environment and conservation*
- *Thank you for all your spooky stories*
- *Thank you for doing arts and crafts with us - me and Chloe both remember making birthday cards, Christmas wreathes and broomsticks at Halloween*
- *Thank you for teaching me the wonders of a cup of tea and almond biscuits at your house - must be Yorkshire, yes, nothing else!*
- *Thank you for showing us the wonderful programme 'Come Outside'*
- *Thank you for all the bonfire parties and picking me up after I fell into the pond*
- *Thank you for raising my dad to be a bit of a legend!*
- *Thank you for teaching Chloe gymnastics!*

- *Thank you for teaching me all about our amazing family history*
- *Thank you for begrudgingly giving me my first car*
- *Thank you for your famous chocolate cake and ice cream and lovely casseroles we used to make*
- *Thank you for teaching us the wonders of gardening and pond life! Me and Chloe remember having our own little garden patch and growing beans!*
- *But above all thanks for being an amazing grandma*

Chloe's Tribute

I just wanted to read a poem that reminds me of grandma. She used to recite the first line to me and then pick the poetry book off her shelf to show me the rest. This is Robert Burns, A Red Red Rose:

*My love is like a red red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Love's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune;
As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in love am I;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry;*

*Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt with' the sun;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.
And fare thee well, my only Love
And fare thee well, a while!
And I will come again, my Love,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile.*

And Margaret was also a doting auntie, frequently welcoming her nieces Jacqui and Susan, along with whole hordes of family, to gatherings for Boxing Day or Christmas. Jacqui, Susan and Susan's daughter Rose have something to share.

Jacqui's Tribute

Lots of words and phrases spring to mind when I think of Auntie Margaret:

- *Bonfire and Christmas Parties*
- *Dad's beans*
- *Haxey Grange*
- *Theophilus Thistle*
- *Anzac Biscuits*
- *Pass the Parcel*
- *Ringstead Crescent*
- *Consequences*
- *Rivelin Valley*
- *Dad always had 'Good answers'*
- *Do they know I'm vegetarian?*

- *And sadly, more recently, 'I'm so fed up'.*

Dementia is a horrible illness and the rapid decline in her health over the last few years has been brutal for her and a shocking and sad thing for us all to witness. Once a highly motivated, energetic and intelligent lady with a naturally enquiring mind and a thirst for knowledge is how I want to remember her today and for the loving and caring person she was and the happy and memorable times we spent together.

My personal memories of Auntie Margaret go back a long way. I was bridesmaid at her wedding when I was 5 and remember the white dress I wore with the blue sash and still have the necklace I wore on the day.

I have fond memories of Auntie Margaret and Uncle Leslie taking us to places like Redmires Dam when we were very small. My mum and dad didn't own a car then, so a ride into the countryside in their white Ford Anglia was very special.

Auntie Margaret took me and Lo, my French penfriend, out in the car to places like Eyam and Derwent Dams, always showing her caring and helpful nature. And when I finally bought my first house, she came and willingly scrubbed and cleaned the bathroom to within an inch of its life, a thankless but necessary task and, with auntie Margaret at the helm, I knew it had been done properly.

She always liked to talk about her travel adventures, something we always had in common be it her envied and epic trip on Concorde to the United States: her trip to the Baltics stopping off to see her long standing penfriend, Ava; or her earlier travels around Yugoslavia. I was always excited to see what wonderful Swedish treasure Ava had sent her every Christmas as it was usually wooden and unusual and we marvelled over these gifts together.

After Laura and Josh were born, I did some supply teaching at Parson Cross School where she worked. She was highly regarded by staff and pupils alike and was able to pass on and share her love and knowledge of art and history with many a young mind.

Laura and Josh used to have sleepovers at Auntie Margaret's house on many an occasion when they were younger. They loved staying there and remember their walks down Rivelin Valley to spot badgers and frogs, baking, and watercolour painting, building Lego towers to the ceiling and were particularly excited by the Kellogg's' Variety Cereals she gave them for breakfast!

In 2008, to celebrate their 70th and 80th birthdays, the cousins clubbed together, and Rob and I took Auntie Margaret and my mum, Pat, to France to visit the Chateau where their uncle Henry had lost his life in the first world war. Auntie Margaret had spent hours researching his last days. It wasn't an easy trip with Mum and Margaret bickering in the back of the car, but it is one I remember fondly. Standing at the exact place where Great Uncle Henry was shot, searching for his unmarked grave, and seeing his name on the Soissons memorial was indeed a poignant moment but it was so rewarding for Auntie Margaret to see the fruits of her labours unfold before her eyes. We had a lot of laughs that trip, and a few eye rolls, and wrapped up the trip with a visit to see my French penfriend, Lo, who made us all welcome and supplied us with a bucket load of French hospitality.

More recently, I have spent many a happy moment with Auntie Margaret returning her kindness over the years and taking her out and about for lunch to places such as Eyam, Castleton and Longshaw Estate as they reminded us of happy times we had spent together in the past or had significant connections to Auntie Margaret. Surprisingly, her memory of these places from the past had not faded.

Auntie Margaret was one intelligent and feisty lady who knew her own mind and wasn't afraid to show it! We all have framed photos of her beautiful and talented artwork hanging on our walls to remember her by. She was kind and thoughtful, patient, and caring and an excellent cook and gardener and I am so grateful for her being part of my life.

Thank you for all you have done for me, and my family and I truly hope that you are finally at peace, surrounded by those you have loved to reminisce about over the years.

Susan's Tribute

Auntie Margaret: a unique and knowledgeable character with a strong but caring personality and I have many loving memories of you.

I admired you for your passion for history, art and especially your love of craft making. Indeed, some of my earliest memories include the items you made; the 1960s bobble hat (very fashionable at the time I might add), the scented drawer sachets, the rag doll and the patchwork cushion. I still possess all these items (apart from the bobble hat of course).

I always remember the other things that pleased you in life: bilberry picking with Dad, your love of salad, Longley Farm yoghurts, having milk delivered to the door and last but not least, your love of Tunnock's teacakes.

I remember when we were little, you took Michael, Jacqui and I out for the day. It was autumn time and we went to Chatsworth. We would catch the leaves as they fell off the tree, followed by tea and cake at The Corner Cupboard in Hathersage.

Other memories include those of Bonfire Night, when we would trek down the garden past your well carved pumpkins that lit the path. We would try and locate the Catherine wheel, still nailed to the tree from the year before and then drink cups of tea brought down in a basket for everyone to enjoy, followed by your signature dish of jacket potatoes, all cooked to perfection. Indeed, Sam has said, we can't forget the bonfires that roared whilst we carefully avoided the sparks and placed our sparkler sticks in the designated bucket. Then it was back for an endless stream of hot tea, not to mention the legendary jacket potatoes that were delicious hot or cold.

When I visited you at home, I would buy us a sandwich from Roses the bakers at Crosspool. We had many a conversation about Grandad, the views over Stannington and when you saw the Northern lights. Inevitably, the conversation would turn to Boris Johnson and his iconic hairstyle!

Christmas, oh Christmas. I would struggle at times with what to buy you, but took satisfaction that Badedas bubble bath, Pears soap, Crabbies ginger wine and chocolate gingers would always be well received. At Christmas parties, we would all practice speaking the tongue twister, Theophilus Thistle. This was often helped by your homemade ice cream, almond biscuits and endless cups of tea. Sam has said that Theophilus Thistle would have us tongue tied for hours! He also commented that Haxey Grange would keep us entertained and he laughed saying he was still untangling the string from 1997! Parties that will be sorely missed.

More recently, I took you to Jamiesons tea room for afternoon tea, when we laughed at trying to get our fingers in the handles of the bone china teacups and then told each other our fortunes from the left-over tealeaves.

We had a party at my house at Christmas, you were quite happy snacking on cherry tomatoes, celery sticks and Christmas cake whilst admiring the view of Millhouses and Whirlow in the distance.

But the memory I will always remember is when I went to see you at home, just over a month ago. You were sat in your chair, never before had I felt such a need to give you a big hug, and as I hugged you, you smiled and gave a little chuckle and it's that little chuckle that I will remember for a long time to come.

Thank you Auntie Margaret for all the precious memories.

Rose's Poem

*Auntie Margaret you were so kind,
We'll never forget what incredible memories you've left behind,
From your homemade ice cream to your tasty chocolate cake, you never missed all of those
important dates*

*Your Bonfire Night parties always went with a bang, and those Christmas parties where we
sang
Theophilus Thistle and Haxey Grange were always a delight, even if we ended up untangling
until end of the night*

Oh Auntie Margaret how you'll be missed X

And it is true, Margaret is deeply missed, and always will be. But that is because of the impact she made, on those of you lucky enough to call her family or friend, and also on the countless children who passed through her care in her years of teaching.