

A Celebration of the Life of

Carolyn Mary Beeley

22 August 1946 – 10 August 2024

11 September 2024, Grenoside Crematorium

Celebrant: Hannah McKerchar



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Carolyn's Life

Carolyn was born in Leeds to Clarice and Brian Earnshaw on 22nd August 1946. The family moved to Suffolk not long afterwards and brother Thomas was born there in 1949. Carolyn had fond early memories of rural village life in Beccles, but they decided to move back closer to the family in Leeds in 1956, with Brian working at ICI and Clarice in the Civil Service. Both children did well at school, with Carolyn attending Batley Girls' Grammar School and going on to Teacher Training College up in Sunderland.

In 1968, Carolyn was introduced to Clive Beeley at a local pub by her parents, with whom he had already struck up a friendship. Clive was by then teaching Chemistry at Firth Park Grammar School in Sheffield and invited Carolyn for a first date to a staff cricket match in Low Bradfield. He must have made a good impression and they quickly became inseparable, spending all their weekends together and many Summer holidays traveling around Europe.

Clive and Carolyn were married on 27th July 1972 – a good choice for Carolyn, who loved the idea of having a palindromic date (27-7-72) and they spent their honeymoon camping in Portugal. They moved to Stannington in 1974, welcoming Simon in 1976 and Fiona in 1978, and were devoted parents. Carolyn gave up work while the children were young, but started back with supply teaching before eventually joining the staff at Shooters Grove Junior School. She loved being part of the team there – the camaraderie and many enduring friendships over the years making up for the stress and long hours spent marking and lesson planning.

Once Carolyn retired from teaching in 2005, a whole new world opened up – foreign holidays outside school time! She and Clive were able to enjoy trips to Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, Ireland and all over Europe, meeting up with Clive's brother Antony and wife Mary, or best friends Barry and Di.

With the birth of Melissa in 2010, Carolyn and Clive became proud grandparents. Carolyn provided invaluable help in the early weeks and spent many hours with Melissa sleeping snuggled into her shoulder. Jessica and Jasmine were born in 2013 and so began many trips up and down the M1 and much enjoyment playing silly games, going on picnics, trips to the park and having fun on the beach.

After Clive was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2019, Carolyn cared for him at home, and throughout the Covid lockdown, with characteristic resilience and stoicism. Sadly, it was only a few short months after Clive died in 2021 that Carolyn was given her cancer diagnosis. Although not curable, with treatment she was able to retain her independence for a while and then stay in her own home with help from Simon and Fiona, or down with Simon's family in Hertfordshire. Earlier this year, however, with no more effective treatments, Carolyn's condition started to progress more rapidly and she died peacefully at home last month. Her family and friends all miss her so very much.

Fiona and Simon shared further memories of their Mum, which reflect the warm, thoughtful and loving person that she was.

Carolyn as a Person

Mum had fond memories of early life in rural Suffolk, often reminiscing about going to feed the chickens, and lately recalling the time when cheeky brother Tom helped himself to a big bite of the precious wartime cheese ration, thought to be safely stowed away at the bottom of the pram.

Growing up in Leeds, Mum was often called upon to help out with serving the cricket teas, and after this early exposure to the sport, she always loved listening to the soothing voices of Test Match Special on the radio and following whenever England were playing – a shared interest with brother Tom and later with nephew James too. It seemed very fitting that Mum and Dad's first date was at a cricket match and that they chose Stannington very nearby as their home.

Having three sporty granddaughters, Mum liked to remind us that they were benefiting from genes from both sides of the family, given that she had been proud captain of both the hockey and netball teams at grammar school. Indeed, she often told us that she was almost persuaded to train as a PE teacher, although primary teaching was always her intention.

Mum seemed to have been born to be a teacher. She was forever keen to pass on knowledge and interesting facts, and would have taught thousands of children by the end of her career. Reminiscing recently about her time at Shooters Grove, it was clear how much she loved it and the many happy memories she had of being one of the team. School trips were always a highlight: she loved joining in with activities like abseiling and she described a particularly memorable occasion when she had to drive back from Derbyshire to Sheffield in the dark and through deep snow to take a pupil with a suspected broken bone for an X-ray – never a dull moment when you're a teacher!

In among Carolyn's notes, Fiona found a poem her Mum had clipped from the newspaper, that perhaps captured something of Carolyn's own experience as a teacher.

Miss Berry - Liz Berry

*I have learnt to write rows of o's bobbing
hopeful as hot air balloons from the line's tethers*

*and watched eight springs of frogspawn
grow legs but never...*

*and conducted clashy-bashy orchestras
of chime bars ocarina thundering tambour
and curled my hand over another hand
to hinge the crocodile jaws of the scissors.*

*I have accompanied a small mourning party
to a blackbird's burial plot*

*and rolled countless bodies, like coloured marbles
across gym mats*

*and conducted science's great experiments
using darkened cupboards, plastic cups and cress*

*and unhooked a high window on a stuffy day
and heard the room's breath.*

*I have measured time by paper snowflakes,
blown eggs, bereft cocoons*

*and waved goodbye in summer so many times
that even in September my heart is June.*

Returning to Simon and Fiona's words:

With teaching as our parents' chosen career, one advantage was that all spare time and school holidays could be spent together as a family, and we both fondly remember long walks, picking blackberries, playing board games and visits to our grandmothers or extended family in West Yorkshire. In the Summer, every spare nook and cranny of the car was packed with supplies and we spent many weeks touring around Europe, usually finishing with time in Switzerland with wonderful friends Barry and Di and their family – a heavenly contrast from the tent and sweltering car! We will never forget their unending hospitality in Geneva and the fun we had exploring the mountains together.

In terms of interests, Mum was a keen lover of history and retained an incredible memory for facts and dates throughout her life, always stunning us with her knowledge in quizzes. Her birthdate of August 22nd was – as she liked to remind us – famous as the anniversary of the Battle of Bosworth Field. (She never stopped being a teacher!) She was a voracious reader – historical novels being a favourite of course, and detective fiction. On the screen, she liked Jane Austen, particularly the BBC adaptations of 'Persuasion' and 'Pride & Prejudice' – she and Dad enjoyed watching the latter so much that she particularly asked for it to be included in the service today – and of course any film with Clint Eastwood of whom she was a lifelong admirer.

For flowers, sweet peas were always Mum's favourite, and we were lucky to have a huge bunch supplied by her lovely neighbours, Richard and Caron, which gave her so much pleasure in her final weeks. And, of course, we wouldn't be able to write about Mum without mentioning a certain amphibian obsession! Indeed, anyone visiting the house couldn't fail to notice frogs as a central design theme. We're not sure when the craze started, but it certainly endured!

As a parent, Mum was wonderful and caring, and she and Dad gave us a happy childhood, with memories full of laughter and love. Their philosophy as parents was to be constant, and to be there when needed – and that is truly all you can ask for. They were always encouraging, and supported us with whatever we were doing. As a Granny, Mum was very much loved, and she relished time with her granddaughters.

Visits to Sheffield invariably involved requests for firm favourite 'Granny's Lasagna', with one of her legendary roast dinners on Sunday. And, of course, any stay was not complete without a trip to the ice cream farm – bonus grandparent points for living 5 minutes' drive away! Mum always showed a great interest in the girls' hobbies, celebrating every achievement. She spent long hours at the poolside supporting Jessica's swimming, or in all weathers cheering on Melissa and Jasmine's football teams. She was so proud of each of them.

Many of you have been in contact with us to give us your memories of Mum and express your love for her – you have described her as a dear and loyal friend who was always there for you, a lovely calm and kind person, someone who was strong and positive with a lovely sense of humour, who was always willing to help and who remembered to send a thoughtful card or message.

We end by giving our grateful thanks to you for supporting her with your friendship, particularly over the past few years – your messages, cards, visits, flowers and chats online were so appreciated. When we think of her, we will remember how loved she was.