

A Celebration of the Life

of

Carole Gunn



**Guildford Crematorium**

**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

**at 2.15pm**

**Service led by Sarah Weller**

## Entrance

*Benedictus - The Armed Man*

Portsmouth Cathedral Choir

## Welcome

A very warm welcome to you all as we gather today to pay tribute and say a last goodbye to Carole Joan Gunn, beloved mother of Katie and James, grandmother to Finn and a great friend to many.

The current restrictions mean that the number of people here today is in no way representative of the esteem in which Carole is held. As we come together for Carole, so others are thinking of her and saying their goodbyes in their own way. You will know the depth of love and regard in which Carole is held; as a teacher, she had a wonderful way of making the children and colleagues she worked with, feel valued and listened to and she had time for everyone.

Carole's life was full; full of love, family, friends and adventures. Hers was an insatiable thirst for knowledge and a passion for education, always keen to learn more about topics she cared about.

Her generous spirit was beamed out to all those she met. In recognising all that Carole offered to those in his world, it makes the gap she leaves, all the more poignant.

## Carole's Story

Carole was born in Liss on the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1951, to parents Ted and Gladys, the younger of two daughters with her sister Marilyn.

Carole's family were humble, hardworking people and higher education had never been part of the family pattern. Carole was extremely self-motivated and determined to do her very best and she did just that, becoming the first in her family to attend college and university.

Carole had always wanted to be a teacher and set off to London to complete her teacher training. You may not know that alongside her learning, Carole could be found barefoot in Carnaby Street and checking out the folk scene at various local pubs and venues. One special claim to fame was once seeing David Bowie performing at her local college digs.

She was always passionate about politics and a member of the CND and a committed Socialist. Carole was well informed, had strong opinions and loved a good debate.

After qualifying as a teacher, she worked at various secondary schools, teaching English. Carole was always immersed in all aspects of school life, from coaching netball teams, to being instrumental in school plays and events.

Marriage to Ian in 1977 followed for Carole and then with the birth of Katie and James, Carole took to the new role of being a stay at home Mum for a few years,

before returning to primary teaching some years later. This time, Carole found her vocation in working with children with special needs and it was clear that she had all the compassion, commitment and drive for their success, needed to be a wonderful SEN teacher.

Education was always important to Carole and with Katie and James it was no different. Carole was a parent governor at their school and she supported them both to achieve their potential, with love, solid encouragement and support. This even extended to once correcting the apostrophe in one of Katie's birthday cards to her Mum (although she always denied this with horror) - as Katie says, 'You can take the teacher out of the school...!' 😊

Carole was committed to doing the very best for the children and was selfless in ensuring that they had the opportunities that they needed to make the best of their lives.

Family holidays were full of fond memories; boating on the Thames, trips to Devon and a memorable 6-hour drive back from Wales with a car sick James that they used to laugh about. Carole hated flying so any trips abroad were accompanied by her water bottle that she kept close by - not that it contained water of course, it was the vodka that helped with the flying nerves! It did mean however, that the family were able to enjoy holidays in France and Italy.

Carole's first operation came in 2003 and as part of her recovery, she treated herself to a puppy and so it was that Poppy became such an important part of

Carole's life. When Katie and James moved out of home, Poppy was there as company for Carole and they enjoyed many walks together in the countryside.

Poppy always held a special place in Carole's heart.

After 40 years of teaching, retirement beckoned and Carole was presented with a long service award. Retirement for Carole meant leaving a job that she loved but she set about setting herself goals for places to visit and things to learn. A further operation followed in 2015 but Carole met this challenge with the same bravery and stoicism that she had drawn on throughout her life.

A course of radiotherapy at The Royal Marsden, became a six-week residency in London, which Carole was determined to use as an opportunity to explore galleries and museums and attend theatres, as much as her health would allow.

Since this time, Carole achieved several other of her ambitions such as travelling to Norway to see the Northern Lights, singing in the Albert Hall with a choir, travelling to Canada and setting herself the challenge of learning Bridge. Always an avid reader and listener to Radio 4, Carole was content in her own company and enjoyed creating her home and in particular, the garden.

And of course, Carole loved a quiz! She belonged to a quiz group and being so organised, brought along the note pads and pens for her team so that they could play 'properly' and woe betide anyone calling out the answers so that other teams could hear! Carole's early drive to always do well did not diminish over the years and the quiz team's success was taken just as seriously!

Lovely times with her friends were spent with Carole enjoying cream teas, trips out and pub lunches. These were warmly recalled by friends in their messages of condolence, amongst which there was a recurring theme of glasses of wine and

Carole's great sense of 'wicked', 'off the wall' humour.

In terms of her recent illness, when Carole was given her diagnosis, she wanted to share the news with her family, friends and colleagues. It was important to her that she was open with everyone but not because she expected or wanted people to help her; that had never been Carole's way. She always wanted to help others

but was reluctant to ask for, or accept help herself.

Carole was a champion of the underdog and an advocate for those who needed a voice. The confident and competent person on the outside belied a constant worrier to the point of anxiety at times; she hid it well and continued to inspire

others to the end.

~

The poet Edward Thomas was the subject of Carole's thesis at college. She was a member of the Edward Thomas Fellowship and his poetry held a special place in her heart. It seems fitting that it his poetry that we hear today, read by Carole's

friend and former colleague, Michelle Frost.

Poem

'For These'

An acre of land between the shore and the hills,  
Upon a ledge that shows my kingdoms three,  
The lovely visible earth and sky and sea  
Where what the curlew needs not, the farmer tills:

A house that shall love me as I love it,  
Well-hedged, and honoured by a few ash trees  
That linnets, greenfinches, and goldfinches  
Shall often visit and make love in and flit:

A garden I need never go beyond,  
Broken but neat, whose sunflowers every one  
Are fit to be the sign of the Rising Sun:  
A spring, a brook's bend, or at least a pond:

For these I ask not, but, neither too late  
Nor yet too early, for what men call content,  
And also that something may be sent  
To be contented with, I ask of Fate.

by Edward Thomas

### **Memories of Carole**

Michelle Frost

### **Reflection**

*The Joy of Living*

Ewan MacColl

### **Carole's Letter**

Carole began to compile a letter in 2003 ahead of her first operation and she probably added more again around the time of her second operation in 2015. Katie and James feel sure that there are many more things that Carole might have wanted to add from the last 5 years if she had had the chance.

And so, we listen to Carole's words, her poignant letter to those that she held dear that takes us to a time, when she felt she should prepare to say goodbye, "just in case". There are all sorts of wonderful memories made since her letter, not least of course with her beloved grandson Finn, her partner in crime and the apple of her eye. He was a gift in Carole's life.

Woven within the poignancy of Carole's letter is her great sense of humour too, familiar to you all and so typical of Carole to focus on making everyone else feel more at ease during a difficult time.

From Carole to you all...

'Well I hope you don't think this is too naff or too morbid - a little unconventional perhaps, but something that I've thought a lot about whilst lying in bed at night. Of course, I have written lots of "bon mots" and witty phrases in my head but they will no doubt escape me now. Some may think that the fact I am writing this is typical of my half empty rather than half full tendencies.

Not so! I am just being pragmatic - a word many of you will have heard me use all too often! I only made it to Brownies as a child but I would have made a great Girl Guide - always prepared!

So here we are and my life, not my death, is the reason that you - my wonderful family and friends - are here. I also hope that whilst this is a sad occasion (I don't

think I've offended too many people) that you are to quote the usual phrase "celebrating my life". Sadly, I can't say that I've changed world (I was saving that for tomorrow) but hopefully knowing me has been mostly a positive experience and maybe, just maybe I've made a small contribution to some people's lives. At this point I would expect to see some head nodding please.

I have been very lucky to know so many lovely friends and colleagues and a brilliant family and I've had some great times and lots of laughs. I guess that I will have come across differently to different people - I'll put that down to my Gemonian traits - but whilst you are all together, I wanted to recall just a few of the "fun" times. I'll mention no names and I'll keep it brief but you will know who you are...

- Does Wareham ring a bell and a certain quite refined lady in a purple dress who couldn't keep her drink in a glass and the man who can snore for

England...

- Prague - where taxi drivers and Germans featured so highly. How many normal sized people can you get in the back of a taxi??

- Massages and ice-packs in Verona and those very posh, if slightly damp, seats at the opera

- Without petrol on the auto-route - and another taxi to the rescue before the exquisite splendour of the chateau and lovely meals of dubious origin

- Making more than a few of you join me in various fancy dress for outdoor  
concerts at Claremont House

- And how about some unexpected bingo in Garda with a few too many  
cocktails and a stunning hand-crafted prize? That was you Katie!

I could go on and on and on and some of you will know I did just that in “the  
diaries”. Good times and endless photos to prove it all! Memories that I hope will  
raise a smile and not, definitely not, a tear.

My greatest achievement is of course my wonderful children, Katie and James  
who have been wonderful company and my very best friends. Do not be fooled -  
they may not shout the loudest - and they’ll be squirming now - but they have  
great conversation and a brilliant sense of humour. We’ve had so many laughs  
and I want them to have lots more. They’re also caring, thoughtful and sensitive  
to others - qualities that will pay off even if they get in the way at times. So, keep  
them smiling and looking forward with no regrets and focussing on the happy  
memories. It is the happy memories that tie us all together!

Some of you will have heard me describe the seat at Blackdown with its beautiful  
views for miles. The plaque reads “to live in the hearts we leave behind is not to  
die” and apart from “I told you so!” that feels like a good epitaph for me. So,  
thank you all for being a part of my life and allowing me to be a part of yours.

Love Carole x

## Committal

Please stand.

And so, comes to the time for our goodbye.

Even though our connection to Carole moves from the physical, to one of memories and a place in our hearts, we are blessed for having known her.

Blessed that we felt the comfort of her voice, her kindness and compassion and her never-ending support. Even now, the truths that she taught us, the courage that she showed and the love that enfolded us, we take with us and onward as we move forward with our lives.

And so, it is to this end that we gather here, to return to the natural cycle of life and death, that part of Carole that cannot remain here with us. In our grief at the parting but with such gratitude for the life that she shared with you all, we commit her body to its elemental, natural end.

Carole lives on within you, her legacy is imprinted in you all to a greater or lesser extent. For her children Katie and James and in the youngest of her line, Finn, she lives on. Carole might say this is the way of things, the great wheel, the natural cycle.

*Farewell to you, my chicks, soon you must fly alone*

*Flesh of my flesh, my future life, bone of my bone*

*May your wings be strong may your days be long safe be your journey*

*Each of you bears inside of you the gift of love*

*May it bring you light and warmth and the pleasure of giving*

*Eagerly savour each new day and the taste of its mouth*

*Never lose sight of the thrill and the joy of living*

*Take me to some high place of heather, rock and ling*

*Scatter my dust and ashes, feed me to the wind*

*So that I may be part of all you see, the air you are breathing*

*I'll be part of the curlew's cry and the soaring hawk*

*The blue milkwort and the sundew hung with diamonds*

*I'll be riding the gentle breeze as it blows through your hair*

*Reminding you how we shared in the joy of living.*

Carole Joan Gunn - always loved and never forgotten.

Please be seated.

**Farewell**

*Fire and Rain*

James Taylor