

## **Remembering Kathleen**

### **Eulogy read by Revd Richard on behalf of her family**

A reflection on the life of Kathleen Hooks from Adrian, Rachel, her children and the grandchildren, with memories shared by Janet Henderson, including much of Kathleen's own reflections and memories, too.

When we think of Mum, the words that come to mind are love, kindness, and home.

Kathleen Mary Cleave was born on Thursday, 10th March 1938, in Yeovil, the third daughter of Harold and Dorothy Cleave. She grew up at 31 Home Drive, where she lived until she married in 1959.

Her two older sisters, Dorinda and Rosemary, were much older than her, and she often spoke of them taking her out in her pram. She remembered herself as a plump baby with curly black hair and recalled, with some amusement, that she apparently refused to go out—even on the hottest day—without a blanket over her legs.

Some of her earliest memories were of wartime Britain. She remembered blackouts at the windows, the warm glow of the firelight during air raids, and her grandparents walking up the road at night to shelter with them. Her Grandpa would draw little “Billy Button” characters to keep her amused, while everyone shared tea and very thinly spread bread and butter — rationing made sure of that.

The church was at the very centre of family life. Her mother was the organist at Preston Road Methodist Chapel, and her father was the choirmaster. Even as a small child, Kathleen was surrounded by music, faith, and hospitality. Soldiers stationed nearby would often come back to the house for supper on Sunday evenings after chapel. Some played with her, some sent her books, and some American soldiers even sent food parcels, dresses, and, once, rather wonderfully, 52 packets of chewing gum. Her Dad apparently said that it should last her a year. It didn't.

She remembered chapel flower festivals, collecting wildflowers in jam jars, and music festivals where children performed. She once entered a piano competition and then decided she no longer wanted to take part. Her father simply asked, “Who told you to enter?” When she replied, “No one,” he told her that because it had been her own decision, she must honour it and see it through. It was a lesson she never forgot. And, in fact, she went on to win first prize. That sense of commitment stayed with her all her life.

She hated school - she said so quite plainly. She cried every day when she first started, and even later, never really loved it. But she always remembered one particular day when a circus came to town. Her father appeared at the classroom door and asked permission to take her home early. Why? Because the elephants were being exercised along the road behind the school, and he thought she would like to see them. She was very happy to leave maths behind for elephants.

Kathleen left school at 14 and began training in shorthand, bookkeeping, and typing. She worked hard, passed her exams well, and started office work at just 15 years old. Her first proper office job came after she answered the telephone herself at the Technical College and effectively offered herself for employment to a local solicitor. She got the job.

She later laughed about typing a letter involving an army Adjutant—a word she had never encountered before. Unsure of the spelling, she confidently typed “Agitator.” It caused some amusement. Thankfully, she wasn’t told off. She simply had to retype the letter correctly. She always had that wonderful ability to laugh at herself.

Friends and neighbours knew her as someone warm, welcoming, and incredibly organised — someone meticulous, who believed that if something was worth doing, it was worth doing properly. That attention to detail was simply part of who she was.

Church remained central to her life, and it was there that one of her oldest and dearest friendships began. Janet Henderson remembers moving to Yeovil at the age of nine and joining Preston Road Methodist Church. Soon, Kathleen became part of her life. Their friendship grew through church life — singing in the choir where Kathleen’s father was choirmaster, and even joining a quartet called ‘Four in Achord’, with Kathleen’s mother accompanying on the piano.

Most Saturdays, Kathleen and Janet were together - sometimes cycling all the way to Sherborne for tea and cake before cycling home again. Janet says she was always envious of Kathleen’s proper racing bike with drop handlebars, while hers was a much more sensible upright Raleigh. Kathleen also carefully explained to Janet the difference between comedy and tragedy before theatre trips.

When Janet lost her mother at just fourteen, she says Kathleen, with her extra two years of wisdom and kindness, became like the sister she never had - someone who helped carry her through grief with love and loyalty.

They holidayed together in Bournemouth and then on the famous trip to Sidholme in Sidmouth. It was there, in 1956, that Kathleen met the love of her life - Ralph Walker Hooks. Janet was thrilled to be her bridesmaid when they married in 1959.

Kathleen and Ralph built a life rooted in love, faith, family, and friendship. They first moved to Nottingham, then to Wymondham in Norfolk, where Rachel was born in 1965. Later came Berkshire, Beverley, Walkington, and finally Malton. Everywhere they went, they built friendships, joined Methodist churches, and sang in choirs. They made a home wherever they were. There was deep joy in family life, but also deep sorrow.

Keith was born in 1962 and was dearly loved. His death in 1975, at just 13 years old, was the greatest heartbreak of their lives. Kathleen wrote that he was “always with us in our hearts and thoughts and desperately missed.” Janet remembers how devastated they all were.

Then, in 1977, came joy again with the birth of Adrian. Kathleen wrote how happy she was to have another son after such sadness. Rachel adored her baby brother and became, as Kathleen recalled, 'Rachel became like a second Mum to him—until he was old enough to realise she wasn't actually his Mum!'

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Kathleen helped start the Mothers and Toddlers playgroup at Malton Methodist Church, with Adrian. They proudly served as founding members.

Singing remained one of the great loves of her life. Kathleen, Ralph, and Rachel all sang together with the Chanticleer Singers, and Rachel says she always felt incredibly proud to stand beside both of them in the choir. Kathleen also served as choir secretary for many years, putting all her remarkable organisational skills to excellent use.

After moving to Cherry Burton in 2007 to be closer to Rachel and family, Kathleen and Ralph joined Toll Gavel Methodist Church and continued singing with the Beverley Chamber Choir, Hull Bach Choir, and East Riding County Choir.

Some of Adrian's fondest memories growing up are in the kitchen with his Mum. She loved baking, and he loved food. She definitely passed her sweet tooth on to Adrian. Her Sunday roasts were legendary, and Adam still says Grandma Hooks made the best Yorkshire puddings, roast potatoes, and apple or rhubarb crumble.

Sundays were family days. Adrian mostly remembers Mum and Dad asleep on the sofa after lunch while he watched Formula 1. Now it's him who falls asleep during Formula 1.

Kathleen showed love in simple, steady ways. Rachel and Adrian both spoke to her every day. She was always there for advice, support, encouragement, or simply a chat. She was fiercely proud of her grandchildren. She loved hearing about Adam and seeing how well he was doing. She was equally proud of Niamh, supporting her in school performances, choir, and music exams, and especially proud of her RSCM Gold Award.

Kathleen loved simple pleasures. Garden centres were a favourite. Museums, less so. It's said that she could complete even the largest museum in record time. She loved driving to the coast, especially on Bank Holiday weekends when the roads were at their busiest.

Kathleen travelled widely too - Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Canada, New Zealand - and, closer to home, she loved the North York Moors, often indulging Ralph's love of steam trains by visiting Goathland and Levisham.

There are so many little memories.

- Helping Rachel buy her first car.
- Going to night school to learn computers with Rachel.
- Adrian, at the age of eight, locked his Mum's car keys inside the car, which somehow made the local newspaper.
- And perhaps best of all, her childhood cat Benjamin, whom she used to dress up as a baby and push around in a pram. That poor cat.

In later years, Kathleen showed enormous courage. She cared for her dear husband Ralph through his illness, and when his health worsened in 2013, and he had to move into residential care, she visited him every single day. Watching him decline was incredibly hard. When he died, she said it was the second saddest day of her life. But she believed he was now with Keith. And that gave her comfort.

Even in her own illness, she remained determined. She wanted to stay in her own home, with her own garden, and she was deeply grateful for all Rachel and Niamh did to help make that possible. Janet says she admired the courage, resilience, and quiet determination Kathleen showed in those final years. And she ended her own reflections on Kathleen's life with these words:

*'Peace be with you, my dear friend; you will always have a place in my heart.'*

Adrian wrote,

*'Mum was always there for us. Her love, care, loyalty, and dedication to her family never changed. We will miss her deeply. But we take comfort in knowing she is now at peace: reunited with Dad, Keith, her parents, and her two sisters.'*

Kathleen gave so much of herself, quietly and faithfully, over so many years, and we give thanks for her life, for her love, and for all the memories she leaves behind. She will always be part of us. And she will never be forgotten.