

**Peter Bateson RIP**  
**Funeral Mass**  
**Rathdowney church**  
**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

*Peter Bateson, Old Mooreville and formerly Newtownperry, Rathdowney, Co. Laois and London, March 16th, 2022. Peacefully, in the wonderful care of the staff and nurses of St. Vincent's Hospital, Mountmellick. Sadly missed by his loving wife **Kreena**, daughters **Margaret and Katherine**, grandson **Hayden-Peter**, Katherine's partner **Jason** and children **Simone and Oisín**, nephew **Trevor**, niece **Christina** and great-niece **Katy** and all relatives and friends. Predeceased by his parents, his sister **Kitty** and close cousin **Peter**.*

**Symbols: Christy Moore CD, Sliothar and hurl, sweets, family photograph**

It struck me the other day that one of the sad ironies of Peter's 81 years is that both the beginning and the end of his life has been marked by news headlines about war in Europe. I'm not sure what awareness Peter would have had of what was happening in Ukraine in the last weeks of his life but having been born in England in April 1941 as the Second World War was raging across Europe, that conflict did have a big impact on a baby boys' life.

At the age of just three months Peter's parents brought their baby son here to Newtownperry Rathdowney to his maternal grandparents Peter and Anne Creagh. Peter's dad was away fighting in the war and his mum returned to England. Peter's younger sister Kitty was born in 1943 but even when things settled down after the war and Peter's parents wanted to bring him back to England, their young son was not for leaving Newtownperry. It was perhaps an early indication of Peter's independent character and a desire to be his own man. But his reluctance to move had also something to do with how he was doted on by his grandparents in Newtownperry. He had also gone to school here,

had made many friends here and living across the road from the hurling field he had everything he need on his doorstep. While Peter may not have wanted to be typecast as a goalkeeper his 6-foot four-inch height made him a good candidate for the role. His proudest hurling moment was of course to win the 1960 Laois Intermediate Hurling Championship with Rathdowney.

While Peter Bateson the young child did not want to leave Rathdowney to return to his family in England, the twenty-year-old man, Peter Bateson was ready to spread his wings and together with his great friend, Tommy Whelan from O'Daly Terrace they set sail for England in October 1961. Living with his parents in Finchley in London Peter got a job working with Fayres Building Merchants. Peter loved his life in London and very much enjoyed the contact he had with his Creagh cousins who lived very close to his parents. But of course, he still regularly returned to his grandparents and friends here in Rathdowney. On one of those visits here Peter met up with the woman who was to become his wife, Kreena Atwell, who lived in Dublin, but like Peter regularly came to Rathdowney to visit family and friends. There were a lot of coins used up in Peter and Kreena's courtship. She was in Dublin; He was in London and long before WhatsApp, Internet and Facebook, that old coinbox phone was the principle means of communication during the 1970's. Peter and Kreena were married in Mount Argus Church in Dublin on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1979. I don't know if you would describe it as a pre-nuptial agreement, but the plan was that Kreena would go over to London for ten months and then they would return to live permanently in Ireland. The ten months became 21 years. But the plan remained, and Peter and Kreena built their home in Old Mooreville in 1982 finally coming to live here in the first years of this new millennium.

That is in a way an abbreviated version of the biography of the man we honour with Christian burial today. When I had a chance to sit down with Kreena, Margaret, and Catherine, the three most important women in Peter's life I gained a little greater insight into the man, the husband,

the father, and how they will remember him. I was reminded of a greeting card I saw recently which read; *"To the world you may be just one person, but to one person you may be the world"* This is Peter Bateson's funeral mass and not his canonization. So, we know he wasn't perfect, and he had his shortcomings in equal measure to the rest of us. But this mass today does give us the opportunity to honour and give thanks for the life of a man who tried to live by the best values he was raised with. One of those values was a very strong work ethic and he took the responsibility to provide for his family very seriously. While not perhaps being very demonstrative in the showing affection department his family were left in no doubt that he loved them, and he was fiercely loyal to them. That characteristic of loyalty was also extended to his friends and all those who helped him on life's journey. He was very definitely his own man who liked things *his* way, a fighter for what he believed in and yet he could dodge confrontation by using his favourite phrases; *"How was I to know"* or *"I never said a dickybird"*

Peter was passionate about many kinds of sport and I gather it was not unusual for him to be watching one game on TV, a radio to his ear listening to a second match and reading about a third one in the newspaper on his lap. In fact, my distinct memory of my visits to Peter in Mountmellick was that he was always invariably reading the sports pages of the daily paper. The other great passion of Peter's life was films. Yes, he had his favourite actors like Clint Eastwood, but he had a broad breath of interest when it came to movies and it was a love and a passion which he shared with his daughters.

When it came to music one of Peter's all-time favourite singers was Christy Moore. At the end of mass today we will hear one of Christy's songs; *"Natives"* I was very struck by the first line of that song; *For all of our languages we can't communicate*

I was struck by that because I thought about the last nine years of Peter's life when had to live with the life changing effects of a stroke. Peter's life changed dramatically overnight. His ability to

communicate was significantly affected and then of course it also meant that he could not remain at home in Rathdowney. But perhaps what is most striking about Peter in these last nine years is how he accepted the hand that had been dealt for him. This weekend in Ireland we are giving thanks for all those who work in our healthcare services, in our hospitals, our nursing homes and within the community particularly during these last two years of the Covid pandemic. I know that Kreena, Margaret and Katherine would like me to acknowledge and give thanks to all the staff in St. Vincent's Hospital in Mountmellick for their incredible care of Peter over the last nine years.

While Peter's funeral mass today allows us to celebrate and give thanks for his almost 81 years of life, the primary purpose of this Mass is to pray for the repose of Peter's soul and to commend him to the love and mercy of God. I cannot speak with any knowledge or insight into Peter Bateson's faith or how he viewed his relationship with God or God's relationship with him. However, Kreena you mentioned something to me yesterday about Peter and that was his absolute love for dogs. It reminded me of a little story I heard a few years ago and as we accompany Peter on his final journey today, I will leave you with this which is Peter's story today.

A sick man turned to his doctor as he was preparing to leave the examination room.

"Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side."

Very quietly, the doctor said, "I don't know."

"You don't know? You, a Christian man, do not know what is on the other side?"

The doctor was holding the handle of the door; on the other side came a sound of scratching and whining, and as he opened the door, his golden retriever sprang into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of gladness.

Turning to the patient, the doctor said, "Did you notice my dog? He's never been in this room before. He didn't know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he sprang in without fear.

"I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing. I know my Master is there and that is enough."

Peter. May you rest in Peace