

Lizzie Bowe RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Friday 28th April 2023

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Bowe, 30 Daly Terrace, Rathdowney, Co. Laois, 26th April 2023. Predeceased by her parents, brothers and sisters. Peacefully at her home, surrounded by her sister Nancy, her brothers Peter and Paddy, sisters Katsy, Teresa and Maggie. Sadly missed by her brothers, sisters, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

Last week I was up in Sligo at a wedding and one of things I noticed was that there is a new WB Yeats trail. Basically, it is a route you can take and along the way there are stops or points of interest all associated with the famous poet.

Yesterday as I drove around this town I was wondering if I was to design a Lizzy Bowe trail in Rathdowney what would I have to include. as I thought about it, it dawned on me that would be a walking trail and no car would really be needed because so many of the points of interest are very close to each other. I'm sure some of ye might think of a few more stops on the way but I'm going to attempt to lay it out as best I can.

The trail would begin in Moore Street where Lizzy was born on Thursday 23rd of August 1945 and it would end at no 30 Daly Terrace where Lizzy died on Wednesday 26th of April 2023. All of Lizzy's almost 78 years of life was lived between those two addresses and a few significant points in between.

Lizzy's parents wasted no time in having her Christened because on the same day she was born she was brought down the street to the old parish church where she was baptised by Fr. Kennedy and her godparents were Thomas Cahill and Myra White. Her school years were spent across the road from the church in the convent. Lizzy was only

about six when the family moved from Moore Street up to the newly built houses in Daly Terrace. And while Lizzy's working career did initially take her out of Rathdowney for a few years, first to Erin Foods in Thurles and later to Antigen in Roscrea but when Harp Textiles opened here in Rathdowney in the early 1970's offering opportunities for many local women in particular, Lizzy jumped at the chance of working just across the road from her home. I gather Lizzy was never really a morning person and not having to commute to Thurles or Roscrea was a bit of a dream come true. But even the task of getting to work three minutes' walk from her house proved a bit of a challenge for Lizzy. However, I think there was method in her tardiness. It seems that in Harp Textiles there was a rule that if you were twenty or more minutes late for work during the five-day working week then you would be denied the opportunity of overtime work on a Saturday. Many people of course relished the idea of extra work and an extra few bob on a Saturday but not Lizzy. She had other ideas for her weekends. So it seems that despite her mother's best efforts to get Lizzy out of the bed Lizzy would manage to be about five minutes late every weekday thus disqualifying her for Saturday overtime which she was not interested in anyway. This little strategy however in no way reflects Lizzy's approach to work because she loved to work not just in the factory but also with her dad bringing turf home from the bog and in later years, she also worked hard with her brother Peter on the farm. She could turn her hands to anything, and no task was beyond her, including climbing a ladder at midnight to readjust the BBC aerial on the chimney leading her family to believe there was a burglary taking place.

Back to the Lizzy Bowe trail around Rathdowney brings me to a few stops very close to each other near the centre of town. I'm thinking of The Card Stand where a few essentials were purchased or picked up like scratch cards and of course her secret stash of cigarettes. In more recent years Lizzy liked to be early with the Parish news by picking up a Parish Newsletter at the card stand on a Friday. A few short steps from the square would bring Lizzy on a Tuesday night to her weekly bingo game,

meeting up with her many friends. And if the Card stand and the Community Centre took care of Lizzy's gambling interests then a few short steps back into the Square and along pound street would bring Lizzy to her other two favourite social spots, O'Malley's and always ending up in Tuohy's. Now Brendan, I know you were very fond of Lizzy, and you are going to sing Lovely Rathdowney for her later today but I'm not sure if I should tell you a little detail I heard only yesterday. I understand Lizzy's favourite tippie was a glass of Martini. However, it seems that Lizzy rarely ever ordered more than one glass of Martini and yet the glass was never really empty. The answer may lie in the bottle she just sometimes happened to have in her handbag.

Just a few minutes across and up the road from Tuohy's is another location I also associate with Lizzy and that of course was the home of her great friend, Mark Whelan who died just a few months ago. As I mentioned at Mark's funeral, whenever I visited Mark and Lizzy would be there, I was greeted a big fog of smoke coming from both corners of the room and meeting somewhere in the middle. But there was also something else I remember from those encounters in Mark's home when Lizzy was there and that was the sound of laughter.

When I read down through the many messages on the Condolence pages of RIP.ie some reference to Lizzy's unique gift for laughter was made by some many who wrote about their memories of her.

Seven years ago when Lizzy was first diagnosed with cancer she was given something like six months to live. One doctor did say to her that while that might be his guess God was the only one who knew what time she had left. I have no doubt that a number of things in Lizzy's life contributed to her to living these six and half years beyond what was expected. That gift of laughter and sense of humour was certainly one thing that helped, her determination closely linked to a streak of stubbornness and independence was also a factor. Being able to live at home and have the support and help of family, neighbours and friends was very significant. In this context can I just pay a special tribute to you Nancy for the love and care and patience you have given to your sister.

On my monthly visits I could see just how that care was helping Lizzy to live the best life she could.

The other major motivating factor in Lizzy's life has been her unshakeable faith. This church would also have to be a stop on the Lizzy Bowe trail because while she was able to, she came here regularly to be nourished by the Eucharist and The Word of God. Her private prayer life focused on the rosary which she liked to pray very early in the morning every day.

Even though Lizzy was determined to live as long as she could and enjoy her life despite the challenges and the loss of some her independence, she was more than prepared to meet her God when he finally called her last Wednesday. Those familiar words of St. Paul in today's second reading Lizzy can certainly make her own today. *the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.*

So, as we take Lizzy today to her resting place at the Local Cemetery the final stop on the Lizzy Bowe trail, a few thoughts come into my mind. Firstly, I think of the comment somebody locally made to me yesterday. They said with Lizzy's death, a lovely bright light has gone out in our community. Using the idea and symbol of light in relation to Lizzy would seem quite appropriate. On my last visit to Lizzy about three weeks ago she was standing outside the door discretely smoking a fag. When she saw me getting out of the car, like a bold teenager she put out the cigarette and scurried back into the house. So yes, with Lizzy's death, the lighter has been clicked for the last time but much more than that, yes, a lovely light, a lovely laughter has been extinguished in Daly Terrace and in this parish community and we are the poorer and the sadder because of it.

My final thought brings me to the beautiful words of Paul O'Brien's own song, Paradise which he will sing again today, this time in honour of Lizzy. The words of the song are Lizzy's final words to you her family and friends and to all of us today:

*My time has come for me to leave this life,
I hear my name called out and I must go
I leave behind the people that I love,
To travel to this place called Paradise*

CHORUS

*So when your feeling down think of me and I'll come round,
I'm the gentle breeze that blows upon your face,
You can whisper to me softly you can talk to me out loud,
Just remember I'm around you all the time*

(2)

*My life on earth was filled with happy times,
My daily work was hard but I got by,
The laughs I shared with people everywhere,
Made my life complete with honesty and joy*

SING CHORUS

(3)

*Now don't be sad or even shed a tear
I am happy and content to be here,
The place I'm in there's beauty beyond compare,
It's my home away from home till we meet again,*

Lizzy may your gentle soul rest in peace.