

Kreena Bateson RIP
Funeral Mass
Friday 29th September 2023

Kreena (Kay) Bateson (nee Attwell) "Shadowlands " Old Mooreville, Rathdowney, Co. Laois and formerly Crumlin, Co. Dublin and London, U.K., September 25th. 2023, peacefully at Midlands Regional Hospital Portlaoise in the company of her family. Predeceased by her husband Peter and her sister Janet. Sadly missed by her heartbroken daughters Margaret and Katherine, grandson Hayden-Peter, Katherine's partner Jason and his children Simone and Oisín , brothers Noel and Jimmy, sister-in-law, nieces, nephews, her dear friend Breda extended family, neighbours and a wide circle of friends both in Ireland and the U.K.

Greet Ann and Annette in Wexford (Three Muskateers)

Symbols: Attwell family Picture (love of roots and family tree)

Rosary Beads (Her strong faith)

Knitting needles (Love of knitting and founder of Rathdowney Knitting Club)

Delia Smith (love of Cooking)

Readers: Margaret and Julie

Prayers: Hayden, Simone, Jason, Valerie

Bread and Wine: Hayden and Oisín

I was thinking this week that in my more than eleven years in Rathdowney, other than those I work closely with, I have spent more time in conversation with Kreena Bateson than any other parishioner. Now those of you who knew Kreena well will understand if I say that I have used the term 'conversation' quite loosely. It would probably be more accurate if I said that I listened while Kreena talked. Kreena's encyclopaedic knowledge of her own family tree, the family trees of so many other families in this community and of local history meant that a visit to Kreena's front room was like an experience of *Ancestry.com*, *This is Your Life* and *Reeling in the years* all wrapped into one.

Through all of those encounters I would like to think we became good friends. I will be the first to put up my hand and confess that there were days over the years that I employed tactics and strategies to extricate myself from the front room in Shadowlands. Nevertheless, I was keenly aware that because of the limitations which her mobility issues placed on Kreena, that front room became her world. For a bright intelligent woman with an enquiring mind to be confined in such a way was a real challenge. Her stimulation and fulfilment came from her contact with a fairly small group of people. In the first instance, her immediate family and Hayden can I say to you that you brought a very special joy to your grandma when your face appeared around the door.

Then there was the various members of the Bluebird Staff who came to Kreena every day. I know that you as a family particularly want me to mention Norma and I have no difficulty doing that because I know from Kreena herself just how much Norma meant to her and what a good friend she was to her. The same goes for Breda . Beyond those people I have mentioned who were key to Kreena having a quality of life her windows on the outside world came in the form of her front window, the screen on her tablet and her mobile phone. Kreena tuned into every mass and liturgy here in this church and regularly I would get a text to comment on something she had heard or observed.

One of the texts I got a few months ago had a special request in it and that was that when it would come to her funeral and if I was saying the

mass she asked if I use a poem that she had heard at a few funerals here.
It is simply called The Dash

The Dash

by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak
at the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on the tombstone
from the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth
and spoke of the following date with tears,
but he said what mattered most of all
was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time
that they spent alive on earth.
And now only those who loved them
know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own,
the cars...the house...the cash.
What matters is how we live and love
and how we spend our dash.

So, think about this long and hard.
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left
that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough

to consider what's true and real
and always try to understand
the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger
and show appreciation more
and love the people in our lives
like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect
and more often wear a smile,
remembering that this special dash
might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy is being read,
with your life's actions to rehash...
would you be proud of the things they say
about how you spent YOUR dash?

The two dates that may in time appear on Kreena's tombstone are the same. The 25th of September because ironically, she died on her birthday. The little dash between those dates represents her 77 years of life.

Well how did Kreena Bateson spend her dash? I'm conscious that what I have spoken of so far has in many ways been the story of the last decade of Kreena's life and yes it has been characterised by her illness and the limitations her illness placed upon her. It has also been characterised by Peter's illness, his stay in Mountmellick hospital for nine years and then his death last year. However, Kreena is the last person who would want to have her life defined by her illness or lack of mobility.

Kreena Atwell was born in Dublin on Wednesday 25th of September 1946. Sadly, she would experience loss at a very early age as her mother died when Kreena was only one. Kreena's dad remarried and she grew up with her siblings Janet, Noel and Jimmy. Following her education Kreena first worked in Guinness' and later moved to a job she loved at Windsor Car Hire. On one of her many visits here to Rathdowney to connect with her Cahill and Daly relatives she met Peter Bateson, a young man home from England also to visit family here in Rathdowney. I can recall her telling me how they had to conduct their long distance relationship from Dublin to London through the medium of the old Coin box phones. I'm not exactly sure how long the first phase of their relationship had been going on but when Peter failed to turn up here for Kreena's 21st birthday in 1967 he was given his P45. No contact for ten years and then they both found themselves visiting Rathdowney again at the same time. The spark was reignited, and the rest is history. They married in Dublin in 1979 and then moved to England. Kreena understood that England was to be a 'temporary little arrangement' and that they would be back to live in Ireland within a few months. The temporary little arrangement lasted almost twenty-two years.

While it may not have been her plan to remain in England, Kreena embraced her life in London and immersed herself into the community in which she lived. She became very involved in her parish, St. Molitus in Tollington Park. Kreena brought her considerable organisational gifts and talents to so many aspects of community life. This community involvement was also a means of giving practical expression to her very strong Catholic Christian faith.

Kreena always looked forward to the possibility of returning here to live in Ireland and she particularly wanted to settle in Rathdowney where she could be close to her family roots. Peter and Kreena bought the house in old Moorevile back in the 90's and over the years during their annual vacations, the house would be renovated and decorated. Finally in the early years of this century Peter and Kreena moved to live permanently in the home they named Shadowlands.

Kreena enjoyed being back here living among the relatives and friends she had enjoyed visiting during her childhood years. She continued to use her considerable cooking and creative skills helping to found the Rathdowney Knitting club. She also indulged her passion of researching family history. My first encounters with Kreena were when she asked me if she could look up the parish registers to find her many relatives. I think she decamped to our parish office for a few weeks and she was in her element.

My main reason for visiting Kreena on the First Thursday of every month was to bring her communion. Kreena's faith was always very important to her and from my conversations with her I know that while she was sometimes confused about God's plans in her life she never lost faith in him even when the storms of life blew in her door. When Kreena's cousin Richard Cahill died last November she was desperately sad. I can recall her saying to me at the time that she always expected that she would be the next member of the extended family to die. Even though her death on Monday night was so sudden I think she herself was not caught off guard. I believe she was more than ready to join Peter, her great friend Mary who died in July and all the other family and friends who had gone before her. For a woman who was a brilliant cook I'm sure she would appreciate the image of heaven in that first reading from Isaiah where he talks of it in terms of a banquet of rich food. Today Kreena has traded her chair in the corner of the front room for an honoured seat at that heavenly banquet. She earns that seat today because with St. Paul in that second reading Kreena too can say *the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.*

For a woman for whom words were so important there was an ironic sadness that she left this world on Monday night without being able to say farewell. I want to leave you with a little reflection which I think might very well be words Kreena could use to say goodbye today.

I have got my leave.

Bid me farewell, my friends!

I bow to you all and take my departure.

Here I give back the keys of my door

---and I give up all claims to my house.

I only ask for last kind words from you.

We were neighbours for long,

but I received more than I could give.

Now the day has dawned

and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out.

A summons has come and I am ready for my journey

Kreena, may your gentle soul rest in peace.