

Christmas 2013

2013 was a bad year as you will know. I have not yet got used to life without Liz, but no Christmas cards this year, for which I apologise, is just one example of what is happening.

Not a good year at Knowle Farm, but I hope for a *Merry Christmas*, and a happy and prosperous New Year for all my readers, and let's hope that 2014 finally brings some better times.

Some Tributes

"She had a deep empathy with people who were hurting and she supported grieving people with great sensitivity"

"A good person, the best I ever knew"

"Liz stood for all things good, that which was honourable, helpful and right"

"What a huge crater someone like Liz leaves - so sweet, so funny, so brave, so genuine and who will ever forget THE best smile ever."

"a ray of sunshine with her lovely smile"

"her infectious chuckle will stay in my heart"

"My beautiful friend"

Thanks to...

Can I thank - all those who stuffed food in my freezer, all those who left cakes on my back doorstep, all those who invited me round to dinner, all those who provided meals while we were going over to Nottingham every day for radiotherapy, all those who sat with Liz over her last days and hours allowing me to get some sleep, and Catherine for organising it all.

Thank you too to both of my families, to brother John, to sister Mary, to my brother Neil,



Goodbye my lovely Liz

As you will know, my lovely Liz died on November 1st this year.

As part of the exhaustive testing that our G.P. went through in 2006 and 2007 to diagnose her M.E., we were told that Liz would, at some time, develop myeloma. We were also told that myeloma is not curable but it is treatable. Liz may have understood the implications of this, but I certainly didn't.

and particularly to our daughter Vicki and sister Jo for being there during that last heart wrenching week and supporting me throughout it.

A very big thank you to Dr Allotey, to Christine Skeet, and to all the other nurses and doctors of the haematology department at the Royal Derby whose kindness and care helped Liz greatly in the difficult moments of the last 18 months.

Finally, I would like to say a great big thank you to all the staff at Bankwood nursing home.

When, at the start of last year the haematology consultant, Dr Allotey, told us that they would treat her "some time this year" nobody expected the myeloma to come on as aggressively as it did. That frightened me, and from that moment I was horribly afraid that it might end this way.

Liz went through the treatment, which was extremely unpleasant in parts, with her usual calmness

The staff there - all of them - really cared about Liz and looked after her.

But a particular thank you to all the nurses and carers for whom nothing was too much to help ease a long last journey that could have been so much more difficult.

and when it was all over at the start of this year, she started to recover and we had a few lovely months.

Alas, it all came tumbling down in April / May when the final diagnosis was made.

I will never know where Liz found the strength and the courage to live those last few months the way she did. I only ever saw her cry over it once, very shortly after the diagnosis, and thereafter she just got on with

it. Her faith must have been an enormous help, but I know I would never be able to find the courage, the strength and the grace to face the end the way my Liz did.



Some Happy Memories

There was one thing that was always, without fail, guaranteed to make Liz burst out laughing, and I will pass this on to you ladies for times when you need a bit of cheering. We saw it on one of those TV programs where they show you silly bits of TV from around the world, and this came from Sweden.

I would undress down to just my socks (little looks quite so silly as a man in just his socks), then stand on one leg, hold my arms out at my sides, star shaped, and jump up and down. Never failed.

A favourite story of Liz only goes back to 2001, when Friends Reunited first brought together a crowd of us from my old school and we starting to meet up with them (and have in fact done so ever since). On one early visit we were going to see my first ever girlfriend. The girl who gave me that first kiss, and who then broke my heart. All Liz's friends were saying "Are you MAD? Going to see his first sweetheart? That's really asking for trouble." Liz wasn't fazed, she always replied "In his head she's 14 but I know she's 60".

One thing Liz didn't like was sailing. She was fine as long as the mast was vertical but as any of you who have ever sailed will know, that mostly only happens when the boat isn't moving. To move, it usually has to be heeling over. On one holiday we laboriously loaded our Mirror dinghy on the roof of the Volvo estate, drove it down to the south of France, and one day took it to the local lake. There we unloaded it, rigged it, and put it in the water. The was a gentle breeze - enough to sail with but nothing exciting - and off we went. We got about 10 yards out and I noticed that Liz was gripping both sides of the boat with knuckles white. "Don't you like it" I asked. "No" came the unequivocal reply. "Shall we go back"? "Yes". So we went about and sailed the 10 yards back to the shore where we got the boat out of the water, derigged it, and struggled it back on to the roof of the car.

The local French family who had been watching all this enquired "Le bateau - il ne marche pas"? To which Liz was forced to reply "Le bateau marche bien, c'est moi qui ne marche pas". The boat was duly carted all the way back home and never went on holiday with us again.

One ski holiday with Vicki, I had persuaded Liz that her ski suit still fitted ("of course you're slim enough to get in it" - never failed as a ploy to avoid buying a new one). However, Liz fell over at the top of the mountain and - zi-iiii-ip - the one piece suit became a two piece suit. The trousers had separated completely from the top. Vicki can still remember the sight of Liz skiing down the hill clutching ski poles in one hand, and her trousers in the other. Very Liz.

Andy will tell you the story of Liz's first orphanage. For lots of reasons some lambs are left without a mum to raise them and Liz collected them all in her orphanage where she fed them and loved them. It is a fact of such orphanages though that very few survive through to adulthood, and such deaths always upset Liz. However, part way through raising the orphanage lambs to adulthood, we had to go away for a week and Liz told Andy that there were two lambs that she was particularly fond of that MUST NOT DIE! As you can imagine, they did die, but Andy's tales of spending half his working life that week trying to keep these two alive is another testament to Liz's ability to inspire (or was it scare?) people.

Most people meet their financial advisor through a solicitor, or a friend, but we met ours in a snowball fight. Having had the fight across a busy bus route in Moseley (Birmingham), Peter reports "We met in Salisbury road when, as a good neighbour, you arrived at 5 p.m. with provisions for the new arrivals, and staggered home at 10". Liz was gregarious way back.

Liz's contact lenses were always good for a funny story. From enormous black ladies on a Greyhound bus in America stomping around asking "where's the contact lens" to the time Liz and her friends spent a good few minutes looking for a missing lens when she actually had them both in the one eye— the cry of "oh-oh—I've dropped a lens" was always good for a little light entertainment.

Sue tells of their trip to America as second year students at Sheffield. They were camped out in Yellowstone park under the stars with a couple of young men they had met, and one of the young men produced a spliff. However (and I am repeating verbatim here as my personal knowledge is limited) in America they make them differently from here. We pack them rather loosely. But over there they pack them tightly. Liz took one huge toke - and swallowed the whole thing. Their entire stash for the night. She was not popular.

I am still finding out just how much Liz inspired, supported, and helped other people. Reading some of the correspondence I have had since the funeral has left me in awe of the way she affected people's lives. I knew Liz had a wonderful shoulder for crying on, but I had no idea just how many people had cried on it.

I had no real understanding of the strength of her faith and how it inspired other people - people who had attended her bereavement courses, fellow believers, friends struggling with faith work in Africa. The more I find out about it the more I am sure that it will have given her immense strength to cope with those last, beautiful, dreadful, heartbreaking, months.

