

A Celebration of the life of  
Rosemary (Rosie) Victoria Bower

26<sup>th</sup> February 1943 – 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020



Ceremony at West Berkshire Crematorium

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Celebrant**

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## Music

'Rose Of My Heart' by Johnny Cash



Good afternoon and a very warm welcome to everyone here and those joining us on the web cast. I am Louise Jopling, a Humanist Celebrant. A Humanist Funeral is a celebration of life. Today, and on behalf of the Bower family, it is my privilege to lead our celebrations of Rosie Bower's life. We will share with you, music that Rosie loved, poems and readings in tribute to her, quotes that she herself collected and as many memories as we can possibly squeeze in too.

We of course acknowledge that there is sadness, you have all lost someone irreplaceable. We hope that many of our tributes will bring you a smile, bring laughter through the tears. Rosie was full of life, colour and happiness and in her memory that is what we aim for today. Rosie's only rule was 'no negatives' and so our ceremony is all about the positives. As a quote she liked says:

*"The person who succeeds is the one who thinks they can."*

Rosie faced her cancer diagnosis with courage and determination, there are not many who could outlive their prognosis by ten years... As one friend wrote: "[Rosie was] *a truly amazing woman who confounded Doctors and lived life to the full*". Whatever she faced; Rosie could always find the sunshine.

As you all know, Rosie loved to write, keeping volumes such as 'Rosie's Favourite Writings'; pages covered with quotes that had been meaningful to her, all recorded in her beautiful copperplate writing. Rosie documented so much of her life and passions, from her published travel diaries on the website, to the rows of files overflowing with notes, tickets and photographs. Rosie kept a daily diary at home too and she dedicated notebooks to each of her children and grandchildren, noting their development, milestones and (unfortunately for them), all the silly things they ever said!

We will talk much today about the things that Rosie did like and, by way of introduction, it is perhaps worth noting the things that she didn't care for and, which will be markedly avoided today! They were: dogs, soap operas, competitive sports, politics, anything to do with finance and... Strictly Come Dancing. Not that she didn't enjoy dancing just not that overly popular show! Anything popular or trendy would be prone to dismissal, statuses could on occasion be reviewed, should popularity wane later! Rosie was known for her steely determination and there was no point in arguing with her: "*Oh no, we don't do that!*"

And, as Dr Benjamin Spock wrote in the quote she kept:

*"Don't worry what other people think, if you know that you are right!"*

Rosie may not have always been right (!) but to so many, she was an inspiration and, in celebrating her life, today is just the start.

~~~ooOoo~~~

Our biggest challenge in paying tribute to Rosie's life is, where do you start?! So, we have decided to begin at the beginning and at the start of Rosie's story. Rosie's Dad Ted had written an autobiographical book 'Ted To You' and this was followed by her own record of childhood memories, written with her son Paul's help. The resulting book is called 'And, Rosie Too!'. Rosie's son, Simon will share with us now, an excerpt:

### THE BEGINNING

*"Wake up, Normy, wake up. It's the baby, it's coming."*

*"Okay, I'll go and get the midwife."*

*"Get your bike and go quickly. Mind how you go in the dark."*

*"Okay, okay."*

*My mother made her way back to bed. February 1943. Blackout. Her two young daughters lay fast asleep, but with Ted away in Scotland, Norman had to take his place.*

*"It only should take him about ten minutes to get to the nurse's house, then he'd have to wake her up, then ten minutes for her to cycle back. It would be at least half an hour. Would baby number four wait that long?"*

*Mother realised that time was getting very short.*

*"Oh, I wish Ted was here with me. Still, at least I'm in my own home, not in that awful place we were evacuated to. Ow."*

*She gave out an involuntary shout.*

*"I'll go and put the kettle on, I bet the nurse will be glad of a cup of tea. I wouldn't mind one myself. Nice and sweet and strong. Normy will be cold too when he gets back. Oh dear this baby isn't going to be long."*

*She leant against the deep china sink and reached for the taps to fill the kettle. Suddenly the door opened and a little blond head appeared in the dim light.*

*"Mummy, Mummy, I heard a noise. Is it the Germans Mummy?"*

*It was Irene, her wispy fair hair still tied in two little bunches at the side of her pink, sleepy face.*

*"It's alright darling. I just fancied a cup of tea. Go and look after little Vally for me."*

*"Vally's asleep Mummy."*

*Back in her bedroom, mother did what she could before the baby's arrival. She wasn't really frightened. After all, she'd done it all before, and only the first time was it a struggle, when it went on hour after hour, with just her husband to try to comfort her. Suddenly it all happened. The baby was born. A little girl, another little girl. She pulled the baby up towards her and cuddled her, and lay back exhausted.*

*"Mary Rose" she whispered "Mary Rose."*

Eldest sister Renee remembers that moment too, she picked up the crying baby marveling how tiny she was with little wisps of dark hair. Later that morning a telegram was sent to their Daddy to tell him that his baby daughter had arrived. There were three more babies after Rosie with Doe, Ed and Jon also joining the family. Rosie held so many happy memories of their life at 32 Lees Road in Hillingdon; to Rosie, family was everything.

Rosie was adventurous from the start; Renee remembers her only just able to walk, escaping from the air raid shelter and back into the house:

*"There was a little figure just eighteen months old, tottering down the garden path, clutching a little red Micky Mouse gas mask. "Rosie, how did you get out?!"*

[taken from 'And Rosie Too!']

Rosie was known to follow her sister Val around and when she was three, Val decided to throw her off the trail. Val was only going a few doors up, yet she told Rosie she was off to Uxbridge. Rosie duly walked the two miles into Uxbridge...on her own! She was fortunately rescued by the lady who worked at the Post Office. As Rosie wrote in her book: *“When, as a young adult, I went into our local Post Office... and was asked for identification, another woman in the post office said, “It’s alright, I know her. I brought her back from Uxbridge once in my pram!””*

Rosie and Val had many adventures together, she was only thirteen when they cycled to the Isle of Wight, stopping off at Youth Hostels on the way. Rosie also Youth Hosteled with younger sister Doe at Boscastle. Their Dad Ted had cycled right across the South of England and when Rosie later researched the family history, she uncovered the Lawson explorers of old so, perhaps, it was all in the genes!

*“Travel is imposed on us by some inner compulsion,  
which is not to be resisted.”*

[Diane Johnston]

In 1963, Rosie was just twenty when she and Val volunteered for the United Nations Association, at a Refugee Camp in Kapfenberg, Austria. They practiced their German and slept on straw piles on the floor of a house. Their role was to run a Children’s Club for the Yugoslavian and Russian refugees. As Val remembers: *“We played games with them, taught them a bit of English and did craft work with them. When we left, the children all ran up with armfuls of flowers and two of the boys were determined they were going to come to England and marry us!”* The sisters then hitchhiked through Yugoslavia, getting arrested and interrogated for hours in Zagreb

for taking photos. Val recalls that Rosie didn't seem scared at all! They found a countryside bar in which to recover, were plied with drink by the locals and ended up falling into a ditch outside! The tale had a thankfully happy ending with the arrival of a Yugoslavian American, who took them to the Italian border. They'd chatted to the driver the whole way there but in their tipsy state couldn't remember a word they'd said!

Rosie had great times with her big sisters though she was also a wonderful big sister herself. Doe recalls Rosie saving her from a school bully and even fishing her out of a river at Little Britain; leading her to safety! Rosie loved children and so her chosen career as a Pre-Prep Primary School Teacher came as no surprise. She trained at Milton College in Portsmouth.

It was in Portsmouth that Rosie met Adrian, in January 1964. His first impression had been of an attractive yet 'little stay at home girl', oh... how very wrong he was! Theirs was a whirlwind romance. A mere month after they'd met, Rosie proposed marriage, on the 29<sup>th</sup> February 1964 and... to every other man in the room, as it was Leap Year Day! They married on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 1966 and honeymooned in Guernsey. That trip was remembered for Rosie's insistence that they hang back from the airport boarding gate; she'd fancied having her married name called over the Tannoy (they very nearly missed the flight)! Rosie was now 'Rosie Bower' though it wasn't long before she also became known as Adrian's 'Wild Rose'!

Rosie had completed her Teacher Training and from the very beginning she absolutely loved her role. Rosie treated every child in her care as an individual; her passion was to find their strengths and draw the very best out of them all. Rosie

herself had an eternally questioning mind and she strove to encourage that in her pupils. Rosie was practicing 'student-centered learning', long before the term had even been coined. As a quote she kept says:

*"A child's mind is – a fire to be kindled not a vessel to be filled."*

One of Rosie's early jobs was at Wormwood Scrubs (the school next door), though still the source of much hilarity! And, apart from a break, while having her own children, she spent her entire working life teaching. Her eldest Emma was even taken along to the classroom as a baby! Over the years, Rosie was a positive influence for countless children, bringing out their best and setting them up for the world. Her final role was working with the children at Priors Court and she made many good friends among her colleagues there. Even in retirement, Rosie volunteered to support single parent families, making a huge impression on the children and their parents alike.

As a Mum herself to her four children, Rosie actively encouraged exploration and adventure. She fostered their independence and never fussed. She quietly commanded their respect, the worst disapproval she could muster was docking five pence off their pocket money! She joined in with their games though always preferred those based on chance, like Beetle Drive rather than the strategies of Monopoly. As someone with such a love for small children, it was the most natural thing in the world for Rosie to have a family; she was a wonderful wife and mum and she treasured every moment. As a friend wrote: *"Her love for her family showed no bounds"*.



Children were one of the great loves of Rosie's life; children and, their potential in our world. She wrote that her own childhood had a 'feeling of safety and security about it' and she strove to ensure that her children and those she taught, would feel the same way.

Rosie's youngest son Tom, will now share a verse by Kahlil Gibran, which beautifully captures Rosie's passion for children. Tom will be followed by Rosie's big sister Renee, who will share her personal words of tribute:

### On Children

*Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and the daughters of Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you but they are not from you,  
And though they are with you they belong not to you.  
You can give them your love but not your thoughts,  
They have their own thoughts.  
You can house their bodies but not their souls,  
For their souls dwell in a place of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.  
You can strive to be like them, but cannot make just them like you.  
Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and the daughters of Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you but they are not from you,  
And though they are with you they belong not to you.*

[written by Kahlil Gibran, abridged by Roy Bailey]

From her early days hosteling and hitchhiking, Rosie's love for travel only grew. She always joked that she must have had Gypsy blood! Though as she also loved to quote, from the Roy Bailey song 'Beeswing': "*But even a gypsy caravan was too much settling down*"! Rosie preferred to wild camp than join the masses in organised campsites; a roadside was always preferable to a numbered pitch! When the kids were young, camping holidays to Europe, squeezed into the back of their big blue car, were decided on the ferry, camping pitches followed the sun until they found somewhere they all enjoyed.

Adrian and Rosie's first motorhome experience was in Canada, in 1989 with all three boys! Not put off, and in retirement, they bought a succession of motorhomes, finding this an ideal vehicle to gain their freedom to explore. In the following years, they clocked up over 1,000 nights in each of their three motorhomes, and that doesn't even include the times, they swapped campervans (with couples in Australia and South Africa) and, when they rented in New Zealand!

In choosing a destination, a key decision point for Rosie was whether it was somewhere she'd been. There was far too much world and far too little time to be wasting it re-visiting a place! Focused on spontaneity, Rosie could pack everything into one light case whereas Adrian would be laden up to cover all emergencies! As a young lady in the early 60s, Rosie famously travelled from Greece to Turkey, with her friend Diane and her 'packing' consisted of only one spare pair of knickers and that was it; for a whole week!

Rosie was drawn to water, loving to swim in the warm seas of so many destinations. Not that cold seas were any deterrent, as Rosie and Emma happily ran into the water

on the South-West coast for Boxing Day dips (a trait carried through much of the extended family)! In 2009, Rosie also took the 'Polar Plunge', a dip in the subzero waters of Antarctica and as she wrote: *"I was glad to be one of the first to go, so I didn't have too long to think about it. We were warmed afterwards with a drop of vodka."*

Rosie celebrated her Birthday on that trip with their first Antarctic landings, surrounded by penguins! Another memorable birthday was in Tobago, when Rosie tuned in early to Radio 2, the last item on the Vanessa Feltz show is always 'Today's Jolly Good Fellow' and, as Rosie wrote: *"when [Vanessa] spoke to someone about a close relative's birthday that day. Never did I imagine that person would be me! Emma spoke amazingly well, and I felt very proud!"*

Rosie found it impossible to pick a favourite among their extensive travels, though their 1998 trip to the Marquesas Islands in the Southern Pacific Ocean was rather special. Rosie walked in the footsteps of her whaling ancestors and met a whole new section of her extended family, of Polynesian descent! She also particularly loved the remoteness of the Rocky Mountains and the mid-west of the USA. Over just eight years, Rosie and Adrian explored all fifty US States and all Canadian Provinces, as well as Central America; all the way down to Panama.

Amidst the far-flung destinations, Rosie and Adrian also travelled both the route from Land's End to John O'Groats and around the whole coast of Britain too. In their coastal adventures ('RO-AD AROUND BRITAIN'), they concentrated on: *"the smaller roads and stopping off wherever and whenever we fancied to explore, visit, swim, cycle, walk or whatever. We avoided built up areas as much as possible but*

*visited seaside towns as we came across them.*" Daily diaries of this trip were written up as fastidiously as all the others, though they do feature rather more rain!

In the 80s, Rosie and Adrian had bought a 1930s Morris Major, a restoration project, which kept Adrian occupied for years! In the 90s the Morris was joined by a vintage Eccles Caravan. Adrian again set to work on the restoration and Rosie very much enjoyed collecting historical pieces for the interior, with Emma regularly contributing trinkets! Once all was ready, there were some wonderful times with the Historical Caravan Club on rallies and outings; Rosie loved to share their delight in the history on show.

Rosie and Adrian's website, documents twenty-five years of their incredible travels. It was not only for family and friends, over the years, they added to their ever-growing mailing list with those they met on their journeys. And... there were the 'armchair travelers'; people not able or willing to travel themselves but who thoroughly enjoyed the experience vicariously and keenly joined in with an evening tippie at the end of a day!

There is such a wealth of information in Rosie's travel diaries. She concluded many entries, with her insightful notes and tips on a destination. In Istanbul, she noted the predominance of men on the streets and the hundreds of well-fed cats and, the languishing dogs! In Crete, things that Rosie liked were: the sunshine, nice food, empty beaches, friendly locals with few tourists, history, a warm sea and beautiful native plants.

Not all trips went smoothly, though Rosie was never deterred. She had always been inspired by historical figures who faced and overcame adversity and, she very much lived by their example. Rosie and Adrian were seasoned travelers who had taken on a multitude of challenges. They had seen and done so much, though hated the thought that anyone would find them boastful. Rosie was modest to her core; they shared their amazing tales simply to entertain and perhaps to inspire the next traveler, to give it a go. Rosie's personal accounts are straightforward and honest, weaving incredible moments with the everyday. Her enthusiasm and enjoyment of every moment is so evident in her words and the pages cannot fail to give you a smile.

*“Tourists are people who don't know where they have been,  
and travellers are people who don't know where they are going.”*

[Paul Theroux]

Rosie's daughter Emma has written a poem in tribute, to her ever-travelling parents, which she would like to share with us now:

## Sad but celebrating

*Celebrating a life of travels and trails and endless tales  
Of countries far and wide, with Adrian by your side  
Albania, Japan, Galapagos, to name but a few  
Iceland and Tobago all gave joy to you  
Many happy months you spent, meeting local people as you went  
Like a gypsy you travelled through highs and lows  
Not a hippy gypsy, but a gypsy Rose  
You sowed the seed for a love of travel and sunshine  
These things which both became loves of mine  
Six of us in a Renault 20 we went, holidays in Europe in a tent  
Through towns and villages of France and Spain  
Dad at the wheel, you with a map, kids being a pain!  
To beaches of sand and a warmer sea  
You loved all this and the feeling of being free  
In a lake or sea you often took a swim  
wherever, whenever, just on a whim  
You loved the innocence of a child at play  
To see them grow and thrive in a special way  
You loved a new baby in you arms to hold  
And to see their lives develop and unfold  
You loved a garden full of plants and flowers  
How appropriate that you were called 'Rose Bower'  
'Make the most of now' was a favourite phrase  
You certainly did that in so many ways  
Your life was a journey every day  
Making the most of it in every way  
You were free as a feather, now you're lost forever  
But always in our hearts*

[written by Emma Bower]

We pause now for some more music and the chosen track is from Willie Nelson. Rosie and Adrian were introduced to this track on their travels in Central America and, it became their 'setting off music'; marking the start of a new adventure.

*"I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake."*

[R.L. Stevenson]

~~~ooOoo~~~

Music

'On The Road Again' by Willie Nelson

~~~ooOoo~~~

For all Rosie's travels and adventures, her family were always the centre of her world. In 1982, her Dad Ted wrote her a poem, which captures this perfectly. Rosie's son Paul will share Ted's words with us now:

## Rosemary For Remembrance

*Rosemary for remembrance,  
With your family of four,  
And Adrian, your husband,  
Whom, we're sure you adore.*

*'Tis from such family life,  
With seeds of love well sown,  
The Tree of Life, with branches strong,  
Has in the Garden grown.*

*The product of such a garden,  
Much benefit will give,  
To all those who around you,  
Their varied lives they live.*

*And may the flowers of fortune,  
Beautify your day,  
And leave a fragrant memory,  
That will forever stay.*

[written by Ted Cape February 1982 (*abridged*)]



Rosie's love continues down the generations and her adored Grandchildren have recorded their personal tributes to a wonderful Grandma. The tributes will be followed by another music track, which Rosie loved and one which would always have her smiling and dancing along!

#### VIDEO TRIBUTE FROM THE GRANDCHILDREN

~~~ooOoo~~~

#### Music

'I Have A Dream' by ABBA

~~~ooOoo~~~

As her Dad alluded to, in his beautiful poem, another of Rosie's enduring loves was her garden. She was an enthusiastic member of the Hermitage Horticultural Society & Gardening Club and she very much enjoyed visiting gardens for ideas. As Adrian says, in her own garden at Elm Gable, 'Rosie was the strategist and he was the gardener'! Rosie knew the names of all the plants, what would work well where and how to care for them though she also loved what she'd call 'nature's unplanned gifts,' like the much-admired white foxgloves, which suddenly appeared; Rosie delighted in them, sharing the seeds with family and friends. In her garden, she gave each of her children their own patch to work with and to learn from. Everyone remembers Tom's patch with its 'dwarf' conifers, which were of course soon towering over the garden and the cause of much amusement!

So many of Rosie's travel diaries end with her delight at seeing the 'fresh green of the trees' and 'the seasonal colours' in their garden as they arrived home. Rosie and Adrian had quite literally seen the world though, she never failed to appreciate the beauty and wonder of nature in her very own garden and, she loved to observe the passing wildlife. As a friend wrote: "*Not a flower or bird passed Rosie by without her noticing it and recording it,*" unless of course, it was a grey squirrel or the fat woodpigeon pinching the bird food; another matter entirely! As her sister-in-law Liz wrote: "*Rosie was an example to us, in her ability to enjoy the sensations of nature, to see and hear what was around her in the moment.*"

*"Earth has no sorrow that earth cannot heal."*

[John Muir]

When at home, Rosie thoroughly enjoyed Hermitage life. As well the Horticultural Society and Ladies Lunch Club, she had been a long-time member of the Women's Institute. When that sadly closed, she was subsequently a member of the 2000 Club; getting fully involved in activities and helping to organise the Christmas 'Do'.

Everyone (family and friends) have the fondest memories of Rosie's Hermitage Garden Parties. As neighbours recall, Rosie would hold a 'social gathering' to celebrate nearly any occasion! The most important of all were the frequent family Gatherings. Rosie and Adrian willingly gave over the whole house and garden to their families and, as her brother Ed remembers: "*[there would be] adults and children all over the place, lots of food, something to drink, a barbeque and, lots of conversation, laughter and good cheer... Rosie and Adrian took it in their stride.*"

'Cape Camps' and 'Bower May Day Camps' were also a highlight in the annual

calendar; Rosie was so close to her siblings and extended family and, she would jump at every chance to have them all together.

Her brother Jon remembers the celebrations for Rosie's 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday; the garden again full of family and friends on a summer's day. Rosie had kept in touch with an influential Teacher from school and, she invited he and his Band to provide the entertainment. Rosie and Janice had kicked off their shoes and, barefoot they danced away together on the grass, as the mellifluous sounds of jazz surrounded them. Rosie's 70<sup>th</sup> and her and Adrian's Golden Wedding were also very memorable celebrations and packed occasions with over a hundred guests at each. Rosie was in her element! We bring our tributes to Rosie to a close now with those memories of fantastic times at the forefront of our minds.

Friends remember Rosie as warm and welcoming, friendly and caring with 'a kindly interest in all whom she met.' Rosie was loving and she was genuine, she was 'thoughtful and, she was fun'. To her children and grandchildren, Rosie taught you how to think, not what to think.

*"I think that it matters little what a child knows if he hasn't learnt how to find out more."*

[Schools Inspector, New Zealand 1861]

Rosie was your inspiration. She showed you how to think for yourselves, to find your own paths, to rise to every challenge.

We now take some time now to reflect and to remember our own favourite moments. We'll be listening to a favourite John Denver track which, has been chosen by Rosie's family for its lyrics today.

~~~ooOoo~~~

**Music**

'Rhymes & Reasons' by John Denver

~~~ooOoo~~~

Rosie leaves an incredible wealth of treasured memories. She was devoted to her husband, children, grandchildren and wider family. Rosie was an inspiration to them and, to so many of the people she met along the way. When you were with Rosie, the sun always seemed to shine.

Thank you, Rosie, we are so grateful to have walked through life with you. To have heard your laughter, to have benefitted from your care and kindness and, to have felt your love.

With our love and, with the greatest of respect, we now let you go.

~~~ooOoo~~~

We leave in a moment to two final tracks, which Rosie also loved. As a lifelong favourite, The Beatles of course feature. But to play first, (and in her own words), the lyrics from The Kinks embodied Rosie's dismay at the 'popular' or the 'trendy'. Rosie was truly unique and, she held a unique part in each of your lives.

*“Live each day so that you will neither be afraid of tomorrow  
nor ashamed of yesterday.”*

We leave now resolving to always hold Rosie's spirit in our hearts. To open ourselves up to all that the world has to offer, to feel connected to nature and its miracles, to 'cheers' every success, to overcome every challenge and perhaps, most importantly, to each blaze our own trail.

Thank you.

~~~○○○~~~

**Music**

'I'm Not Like Everybody Else' by The Kinks /

'Here Comes The Sun' by The Beatles

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