

Miranda (McIntyre) Shennan (G '76)

After her diagnosis in June 2013, Miranda and I had dozens, perhaps hundreds, of conversations about her illness, her death, and what would happen after her death. One of the recurrent themes was about this service, and one of M's recurrent concerns was whether anyone would turn up. Looking around here today, she needn't have worried. Thank you all, family and friends, for coming.

Although this is a tribute to M, I do want to thank a small group of close friends and family who have provided an extraordinary level of support over the last two years. Initially, providing distraction and entertainment of M, latterly providing a steady flow of pies, cakes, soups and eggs. The time for specific thanks will come later, but for now I want to acknowledge the immense gratitude of R, B and me for all that support.

All of this highlights one of the things we loved most about M – not just a love of people, but of friends and especially of family. M understood the importance of both. The proof of that love is here in front of me!

If my emotions permit, I want to say something about M, our family and about two of the lessons that come from M's untimely death. If my emotions do not, Tim has kindly agreed to step in!

As some of you will know, Miranda and I met in March 1985 in Kenya. As in the previous year, I had been on safari and had returned to the Lawford's Hotel in Malindi on the Kenyan coast where I relaxed below the palm trees reading Clive James' *Unreliable Memoirs*. After a few days, three very British looking girls arrived at the hotel. It didn't take long, travelling alone, to make their acquaintance (Linda, Alison, then M) and for a few days we enjoyed each other's company.

A few days later, the girls left to travel north to Lamu. And there it might have ended but for one of those extraordinary twists of fate when Miranda left me a postcard with her address, in case some photographs of her and her friends turned out well.

This highlights two things: one that without her postcard, we wouldn't be here today and two M's love of writing – postcards, cards, letters, probably to most of us here today. And her love of the written word: English literature; poetry; reading; book clubs; and punctuation! M was a champion of the apostrophe!

To return to that postcard: you may have gathered that the photos did turn out, and we were married on June 20 1987. Not many people know that we considered that our first child was born sometime during 1990 – the rebirth of Rosebank Farm after extensive renovation. Our first real child, Rosie, arrived in 1995 while Ben arrived in 1996. And our family was complete.

Miranda's death has been a devastating blow to our family, but I want to highlight two positive thoughts which remain. Both of these reflect M's own final words in her death notices: Carpe Diem.

The first is the need for balance between living for today, and living for tomorrow (Aesop's Ant and Grasshopper!). M and I had a love of travel. Each year, when we were planning our latest and sometimes exotic holiday, perhaps to the surprise of our extended family, we would ask ourselves whether what we were planning was the right thing to be doing (time, cost...).

We consistently agreed (with each other) that while it would be wrong to make life one long holiday (the grasshopper), it would equally be wrong to put off the holiday and save for the distant retirement that might never come. The right course we felt was to enjoy today, while at the same time making prudent provision for tomorrow. When M was diagnosed with a terminal illness, we were so grateful to have done what we had. Though we may be devastated, at least we can look back on many happy times, travelling the world rather in the manner of our meeting.

The second thought is that we never know when fate will strike. So we never knew when would be the last time of sitting around the fire on Christmas Eve reading each other Christmas stories; or when would be the last time standing on the steps of the house looking at St Mary's and listening to the bells ring in the New Year; or that long weekend in Barcelona would be our last family holiday before Miranda became ill. Suddenly fate strikes and our world is turned upside down.

The positive thought that we should take from this is, as far as possible, to enjoy the moment, to savour it, to try and extract maximum enjoyment in case it can never be repeated. Because suddenly the opportunity to repeat the experience may be lost.

But now it is time to say goodbye. To paraphrase my earlier email sent to some of you:

To our dearest Miranda (daughter, niece, sister, wife, aunt, mother and friend of so many); to my closest friend; and to the proudest mother of two wonderful children-

Adieu.

But there is a post script to add to this. Because not everybody here would say that it is 'adieu' or goodbye for the last time. Some people would say that it is rather 'au revoir' or goodbye until we meet again. And that is a happier note on which to end.

Chris Shennan (Miranda's husband)