



Obituary

Maud Lindsay

17th July – 25th December 2023



The following Tribute was read at Maud's Funeral by Don McLean and Robert Foulis, written by son's Christopher and Rodger Lindsay.

Maud Elizabeth Austin was born on 17th July 1942 in Annadale, South Belfast to her parents Jimmy and Lizzie and her big brother Alfie. She was mother to Roger and Christopher, their wives Una and Melanie and grandmother to the much-loved Erin, Aoife, Beth, Emily and Oscar.

We will share the two themes that thread through Maud's life - sustained friendships and, of course, bellringing.

Maud grew up in a house called Sloefield, near Trooperslane outside Carrickfergus. Many friends and family have fond memories of the unique house and its outbuildings, with no power, no running water or sewage supply - though lacking in amenities the house never lacked visitors or a warm welcome and Maud's parents lived there until 1984 when her mother died and was buried here in Ballylesson. It was from this house that she established her oldest friendship, with Rosemary, who she met and then went to school with and remains a friend until this day. Sloefield was demolished and a small industrial estate built on the site. In what is one of many coincidences, on Sloefield Park is the factory that makes her favourite ice cream. The ice cream is, of course, called Maud's.

In the early 1960s Maud started what turned out to be a sixty-year career in bellringing. She learnt to ring in Carrickfergus where, again, she met people who would become lifelong friends and are with us today. After getting married in 1967 Maud and her husband John rang at St Thomas Belfast and then in the early 1970s decamped to Drumbo, which at the time had 6 bells. After a period of heavy fundraising, the bells were augmented in 1976 to a ring of eight bells and Drumbo prepared for what would be the zenith of its 20th century bellringing performance. During the 1980s Maud was a stalwart of the team which repeatedly won competitions for change-ringing, and both the

Northern Ireland and all-Ireland trophies. Bellringing became something to be done anywhere from 4-6 days a week, the “off” days reserved for

fundraising and bell-ringing administration. Over all these years of ringing, Maud has made hundreds of friends across the whole of Ireland and beyond; many are no longer with us, but most of those who are still here have lasting memories of Maud and her impact on ringing and them individually. Don and I remember the day in November 1965 when Maud telephoned to encourage us to learn to ring bells, and Simon remembers when she spent a Friday night teaching him to lead properly (no longer a young boy, he is also with us today and just last week Maud expressed her delight at what a strong leader he has grown into).

Maud worked as secretary for the head of the Trades Unions in the 1960s and returned to the workforce after maternity leave to become secretary of Taughmonagh Primary School, which both her sons were attending. Retiring from that role some forty years later, many of the friendships from that period have, of course, sustained and some of the Taughmonagh folk have been amongst her appreciated throng of regular visitors.

Visitors to the house in Greystown Avenue will never have failed to notice the ringing-centric life she lived, with the six wrought-iron bells on the stairs reflecting the six bells that hung here in Ballylesson when she moved into the home and made by a local parishioner. She lived at this home in Greystown from 1969 and, as you may imagine, has incredibly strong lifelong friendships with her neighbours - of particular note are Margaret, Nigel and the Frame family who were always there and provided great support when she needed it.

The friendships she sustained were not one way; the energy these gave her kept her active and involved through her entire life. Roger, Christopher, Una and Melanie greatly appreciate the time all of her friends spent with her and know the great comfort your visits gave her, especially as her health deteriorated. She spent over a month in the Cancer Centre this year and there wasn't a day that the “two visitors per bed” rule wasn't completely destroyed by the number of visitors who came, and kept coming, and kept coming. The nursing staff at the cancer centre said they had never seen anything like it. When she made her final move to the nursing home, the visitors kept coming and she kept appreciating it. Even here, the stream of visitors was described as “extraordinary” by the staff.

There was another great sustenance in Maud's life apart from friendships and bellringing and that was her faith. Most of her life she worshipped here in Ballylesson and this is where we find the confluence of friendships and faith. In a friendship that has spanned fifty years Maud and Esther have rung together, travelled Ireland together, holidayed overseas together and had more Saturday night fish suppers together than anyone cares to count. Maud has no intention of letting something as trivial as death get in the way of her friendships - she has requested to be buried with her phone.

Maud saw many incumbents in this church during the last fifty years and it is both fitting and comforting to her friends and family that this service is being conducted by her unashamedly favourite, Mervyn.

Maud packed a lot into her life and if we shared much more, the coffee in the hall would get cold; to end, we come to share some of the unlikely coincidences in her life. Previously we noted the coincidence of her childhood home now housing a factory making Maud's Ice Cream, but more have followed her. Her big brother Alfie has spent most of his life living in a remote village in the north of Scotland. Timing and weather have prevented him being with us today, but the name of the village he lives in? Maud. The next coincidence is birthdays. Maud's brother shares a birthday with her younger son, Christopher. Her son Roger shared a birthday with her grandmother, and Maud herself shared a birthday with her second grandchild, Emily. In a final coincidence, we noted earlier that Maud was born in Annadale in south Belfast before moving to Sloefield. The nursing home she spent her final days in was also in Annadale, literally fifty yards from the onion patch in which she was born.

And so, we close this circle and Maud is coming home to be laid to rest with both of her parents and where she will forevermore be within the sound of the bells which she loved so much.

Maud thank you for being our sister, our mother, our grandmother and, of course, thank you for being our friend.