

BRIDGET ROBINSON

SEEING MAGIC

TIME AND PLACE OF A LIFE OF LOVE

48 Tasman Road
Somers
Victoria



*Bath Street, Mornington,
circa 1962*



*left - Great Witley, UK,
circa 1963, right - Bath
Street, Mornington, 1964*



Marysville, 1974



*with brother Andy, Tabber-
abbera 1975*



*with Mike prior to his de-
parture for Antarctica on
board the Nella Dan, 1979*



*Bath Street, Mornington,
1980*



*Dusky Sound Track, Fiord-
land NZ, 1981*



receiving the Ross' "Impetuous Fools" wedding present , Bath Street, 1983



with Dan – Cambridge, 1986. Bridget and Mike lived at Fen Causeway for 1 year in 1986-87. leaving when Dan was about 8 weeks old. It was the only year in her adult life when Bridget did not work in a formal role.



*with Dan – south west
England, 1986*



*32 Avenue Road Prospect,
1988, where Bridget and
Mike lived from late 1987 to
1984, when they moved to 4
the Parkway, Blackwood.*



with Erin in utero – Avenue Road Prospect early 1989.



with Dan – Bath Street, Morington, circa 1990. Robinson through and through, Bridget almost always started her day with at least one cup of tea, preferably in bed.



with Erin – Fleurieu Peninsula, South Australia, 1990.



with sister Jean and brother Doug – Mossgiel, 28 Bath Street, Mornington 2005



with her father Phil – Bath Street Mornington 2005



*with Anna – Mount
Howitt, 2010*



*with all her children and
Mitra in the “Poodle
Palace” — Evans Street
Somers, Christmas 2012*



*with Erin at the Acropolis –
Athens, 2019*



*with life-long friends Sarah,
Sue, Nicky – 2018*



*with grandson Heath –
Tasman Road, Somers, early
2017*



*with Mitra, Rosa – Tasman
Road, Somers, February
2022*



*with Mike – Fingal Beach
near Cape Schank, Morn-
ington Peninsula, 2019*



*with Moira and Jean, Bath
Street , 2011*



Tasman Road Somers, 2017

A proper life – Mike Sandiford

THE GENTLEST OF rains briefly settled over Somers just before 7am on Friday 11th February in the year 2022. Moments before Bridget had died in my arms, her children and grandchildren nearby. So very Bridget. We announced her departure from the living world with the following words.

*The skies are crying
Gentle gentle rain
As we are too
Farewell our darling Bid
Wherever are you*

BRIDGET WAS just 63 years old and had lived the last ten years knowing her life would be cut short by her cancer. Despite numerous visits to hospital for treatment to control the primary tumour growth and the many secondary complications, her disease was managed with remarkable skill at the Peter MacCullum Cancer Centre, and her health remained mainly good. Throughout, her remarkable spirit of positivity was extraordinary.

IT WAS just one week before her death she learned her ongoing treatments were failing.

In April 2012, Bridget was diagnosed with a rare pancreatic cancer - a pancreatic neuroendocrine tumour or PNET. The primary treatment used was Peptide Receptor Radionuclide Therapy or PRRT.



With Mike and Erin before a stint in Peter MacCullum Hospital, 2012. Bridget loved stripes, which for her symbolised good fortune.

With the cancer spreading rapidly, we were informed there was no more medical science could do. She had just a week or two at most, they said.

AND JUST seven days it was. It was devastating news for Bridget and the many who knew and loved her. Despite the sadness of those last few days she exhibited amazing grace as she had through the preceding decade. Always able to muster a smile and a few kind words as her dearest friends came by to say their farewell, her concern remained the well-being of her family and friends. As harrowing as it was, it was a privilege to accompany her in those last moments of her life.

BRIDGET'S LAST WEEK was profound testament to her commitment to living properly. Though she would not have described it as such, she was a master stoic, able to concentrate her energy on the things she could control in the most challenging of circumstances.

Despite the grim prognosis that shadowed her last decade, she had a special knack for revealing the magic in our lives. It was as though she understood innately that finding that magic was the essence to a life lived properly. She always did, it seemed, reveal the magic in our lives. She was magic.

AND FOR BRIDGET the magic was simply the touching of lives for the better. Her life was a testimony to the power of love. Despite her illness, she always said she had been incredibly lucky. She understood that there was not a

As a psychologist, I work all the time with good, nice people to whom horrible things have happened. Life is not fair. Bad things happen and everyone cops trauma at some point in their lives. Being diagnosed with this cancer was just my piece of ill-fortune but it doesn't define me. And that's the thing, cancer is a part of my life but it is not the whole of me.

— Bridget - 2017

day in her life she was not *loved to bits*, by her parents and siblings, her husband, her children and grandchildren, her close friends and many colleagues. Her response was to give her love freely, totally – without expectation or judgement.

Daughter-in-law, Mitra aptly summarises being loved by Bridget as

... the most warm and nourishing thing. Bridget's love is good for you. It makes you a better you. You are brought closer to her grace, just by being loved by it. She seemed to have arrived at a place in herself that was fully accepting of her role in her life, the place that she had made and chosen, as well as the circumstances she'd been given. This is a rare and wonderful thing.

IT IS TRUE — Bridget's life was a gift to those that knew her, especially so her family. It is completely true — we love her to bits, completely forever.

A memorial

A CELEBRATION OF BRIDGET'S LIFE was held at her home at 48 Tasman Road, Somers, in the afternoon on Friday 18th February, 2022. In attendance were some 250 of her friends. A transcript of the proceedings follows below.

Welcoming – Anna Sandiford

I'D LIKE TO WELCOME EVERYONE here to Tasman Road, to Bridget's forever home. This is a place she loves.

Mum spent over half her life on the Mornington Peninsula. On this land she felt most at home.

IN THE LAST WEEK, we experienced some extraordinary phenomenon. Animals and birds came by the garden, including some that we haven't seen in many years. There was a koala, a pair of tawny frogmouths, and some king parrots. To us, this is meaningful. It is a song from the past.

When I relayed this to my indigenous friend Karri, she explained that it was the way of



*Bridget and Anna, Somers,
2020*

the land saying it understood. It is a special reminder that this land has been occupied for over 50,000 years and we pay special acknowledgement to the Bunurong people of the Kulin nation.

I am now handing over to Mike, who is going to talk about his Bridget, our Bridget, who he, for each day of the last 45 years of his life, has described as the most beautiful woman in the world.

Welcoming - Mike Sandiford

WE ARE JOINED HERE TODAY by the simple fact that our lives have been touched by Bridget, each and every one of us. We are joined here at Somers, the place Bridget called home. So fortunate are we - the people and place of her love

In joining to remember and celebrate her life, our families – the Robinsons and the Sandifords, thank you for being part of our dear Bridget's life.

YOU TOO were part of the Bridget-verse – a very special place. Bridget has touched our lives, each in different, unique and treasured ways, whether it be as mother, Bibi, sibling, friend, colleague, or, for me, as life partner.

As a family we are desperately sad to no longer have Bridget's physical presence in our life, with all its calm, measured, assuring purpose.

But at the same time we are grateful for the wonderful seeds she planted in our memory gardens, throughout our lives.

We hold those seeds so dear.

WE WILL BE CELEBRATING BRIDGET'S LIFE here today with personal anecdotes and testimonials. In doing so, we hope each of you too might uncover some long forgotten treasured memories of Bridget, the seeds of which you can take with you into the future.

By clearing away some of the weeds of time, you bring life back to them, so you too can



Bridget and Mike, Rathdowne Street, Carlton, 1981

nurture them in your own memory garden.

In the sadness of this past week, I have been greatly comforted by many dear friends who have travelled with Bridget and I over the 45 years of our life together.

THE STORIES RECALLED have uncovered many long lost gems – memory seeds we had long forgotten such as the coconut seed as you can read about in the order of service.

Should I be so brave as to claim that the bag of memory seeds Bridget carried to wherever it is she has gone is as fine a bag as any person could aspire? Yes, I will. Yes.

EACH OF US WILL HAVE OUR OWN IDEA of what might happen at death. Bridget did not much care for such metaphysics, much preferring to concentrate her energies on the more concrete reality of the here and now. Specifically, she was focussed on how her actions could enhance the well-being of all around her.

I think we were all touched by that commitment.

COULD THERE BE A COMMON THREAD to the way Bridget has touched our lives so, and in so doing cultivated such an extraordinary legacy of memories – an essence of Bridget?

To help unravel such questions, we will hear insights and reminiscences concerned the founding platforms of her life, from children, siblings, friends, professional colleagues, and life partner (that would be me). These were the bedrock of her existence. And it is these

Bid had gone travelling in Queensland (1980). You (Mike) were forlorn, when one Melbourne winter day you went to get the post and there at the door was a coconut, complete with the address and stamps on the husk, no wrapping. The gloom lifted, you got cheerier. That's it.

– Mary Ross, Perth 2022

that gave her the calm, assured, purpose in her life.

In celebrating her life, we will hear stories from the heart from some of those who have been most closely associated with Bridget, all dearly loved by her.

BEFORE WE DO SO I wish to outline a basic chronology of her life – a chronology that combines place with people. It is chronology of constant love and support.

Bridget was born in Malvern Hills in Worcestershire in the town of Great Witley, in the evening of 19 June 1958, second child of Moira and Phil Robinson. Melbourne time, that was about 7am 20th June.

Phil had met Moira at Cambridge reading English, and following university he took up a job at the family carpet firm Bondworth, a job he would say he was singularly unsuited.

After an initial trip to Australia on carpet business in 1960, Moira and Phil emigrated to Mornington in 1964, purchasing for the second time their home at 28 Bath Street, Mornington and established the renowned Robinsons bookshop in Frankston that so many of you will know.

Bridget's schooling was at Toorak College, where she met dear friends that she keeps to this day. In 1977, she began studying her BA at University of Melbourne in 1977 majoring in psychology, and we began our life together in a house in Michael Street in North Fitzroy. A great sadness in all our lives followed the tragic death of her dearly loved elder brother Andy in an accident in England in early 1980.

AFTER LIVING TOGETHER for almost seven years in student houses in Fitzroy and Carlton, Bridget and I married in 1983 at the Robinson family home .

Dan was born in 1986, and we spent the first year of his life in Cambridge, in England, briefly returning to Melbourne before moving to Adelaide in late 1977 where Erin and Anna were born, in 1989 and 1991, respectively. We moved back from Adelaide to the Mornington Peninsula in 2000, for several reasons – a prime one being to reconnect more closely with our extended families.

BRIDGET IS IMMENSELY PROUD OF HER CHILDREN and mothering is essential to her being. But friends and work were also extremely important. Except for a short break in what I teasingly called her mid-wife crisis, when she went back to study in the mid 2000's, she worked throughout her adult life, in a huge variety of roles, mainly in her professional capacity as a clinical psych.

As Anna has already alluded, the Mornington Peninsula is where Bridget felt most at home. She spent over half her life here. In the 22 years since we returned, we have benefited from a wonderful sense of community, and we are both deeply thankful for that, with many friends we love, including some of Bridget's oldest friends dating back to her earliest school days, and many new ones.

PEOPLE AND PLACE ARE KEY INGREDIENTS in all our lives, setting the foundations for everything else. Both Bridget and I were fortu-



Bridget drinking a champagne "Impetuous fools" on the morning of her wedding in a bath in Bath Street June 18th Mornington, 1983

nate to travel widely, and in my work I have seen many extraordinary wonderful places. But our hearts are here in Somers, Bunurong country. If you have not been here before, I urge you take a walk to the beach down the track just across the road. A special track we walled most days. If you have more time, then one day take a walk along the beach eastwards. It is 5 kms to Sandy Point which you can only get to by foot or sail. It's such a magical place full of power and mystery, equal to any of the places I have seen on this planet. We loved our walks and time there.

BRIDGET DIED HERE IN HER HOME last Friday morning just before 7.00 am. Anna has alluded to the appearance of many animals last week – animals that we use to see quite often but see much more rarely now, such as koala and little bush birds. A few minutes after her dying a gentle misty rain briefly settled on Somers. It was as if the sky was crying. There was special magic in those moments.

Bridget regarded her own life as *very lucky*. She could not believe her luck in having the parents she had, her siblings, her children, and her friends and colleagues. She wrote in a recent birthday card :

I love you.

I love that you love me.

How lucky am I?

I loved her to bits, and she knew it.

BRIDGET LIVED ALL OF HER 23,247 DAYS on this planet, not a day without being loved

completely, she would say. And that number, 23,247, note the last three digits, they are so special – I read it as _ twenty-four seven_. Just so Bridget.

WHAT IS IT THAT MADE BRIDGET the special person she is? As I have been thinking about this, a distinct image has formed in my mind, a kind of celestial map of Bridget's universe. You are all part of it.

At the centre is the axis comprising her children, and now their partners and children, about which Bridget's life revolved.

Her siblings and parents are there as other planets, with their moons, providing her orbital stability – though it has to be said that Andy's distant orbit has a notable wobble.

And her sky – it was illuminated by the dazzling array of friendships and colleagues and people who have sought her professional counsel.

You are constellations that bought the sparkle into her life.

Bridget's older brother Andy, whom she adored, was a brilliant charismatic rascal character who sadly died aged 23 in a traffic accident in 1980 in London



Mothering - Dan Sandiford

IN MY LAST MONTHS of high school, they did this whole time capsule thing, reading out answers to questions that had been asked we first started. One of the questions must have been along the lines of what do you like doing most. My answer was *cooking at home with mum*. My school chums found this mightily funny. No one else had nominated mummy hangs as the pinnacle of contentment. But she was damn good company.



MANY OF THE ACTIVITIES we pursued growing up had this dual aspect - whether it was the after school bolt to Pt Leo, to catch the sniff of a swell at high tide, or runs up the Monash for netball training with the radio tuned to Richard Mercer's love song dedications. Likewise, she would drive all over the peninsula to pick up Erin from parties she didn't know Erin was at. Our family migrations were mainly dictated by Mike's work. Mike's way is to do things with a great intensity for a while, then draw a line and move on. One year he cooked beans and rice. Another year potato pizza. Every night. Bibi provided Erin, Anna and I with the bedrock - the continuity. She added new recipes to her repertoire, but the classics would always return. She built and sustained her friendships, did the hard work of making community. Wherever we lived, she found lifelong friends. When people latched on to her, they didn't let go. And why would you?

MANY PEOPLE HAVE TOLD US this past week that even though they might have met Mum only a few times, they felt like she got them and instantly felt comfortable with her. They've remarked on her energy, intelligence and radiant positivity, which you could see in her twinkly blue eyes. While others noticed that she had this special way she had of listening, like a clever little bird. Some have reflected that she seemed like an ideal mother, wise, patient, steady.

ERIN TELLS ME THAT WHAT UNDERLIES these qualities is it that Bibi had an exceptionally uncomplicated and un-conflicted relationship with mothering. She had a natural way of inhabiting of the role of caregiver, the role of provider, listener, boundary setter. This requires a deep intuition of people's emotional needs. She was someone who was comfortable living most of their life externally, whose focus was the people around her, the physical space she inhabited, her attention to conversation, her presence in a hug.

And 'mothering' is not just being a biological mother, she mothered her friends, her siblings, Mike, Mitra, her clients. Perhaps this kind of community-wide mothering is better-articulated in other cultures. I've been thinking of the fencing analogy; at one level a stock fence is just posts and wires. But the tension is taken up by the end assembly. Now an end assembly is nothing more than post and wires, but it keeps the rest of the fence standing when it's tested. Without those, the whole bloody thing falls over, and soon enough



the bank is turfing you out. Erin goes on, Mum's ability to tailor her mothering to suit an individual's need was tuned so perfectly that it was almost imperceptible, and you weren't even necessarily aware you were being mothered/cared for because of it. She held everyone with a different level of grip.

Her parents, Moira and Phil, no doubt have a big hand to play here. Those who knew Phil will remember his spellbinding knack with people, for immediately putting folk at ease. Which is why their home at Mornington became a kind of *Durrell-esque* haven for so many visitors.

With Heath, mum's care-giving energy was channelled in an intense focus and presence, something fundamentally irreplaceable. We would watch Heath become his most relaxed, his most expressive - around Bibi. He would sit with her for hours chatting away about his view of the life, the universe and transport infrastructure.



ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE things about mum is that even during her illness - which was always going to cut short her life and frequently laid her up in a variety of symptoms - she remained such a rock for a wide range of people. Mum gave without judgement or expectation; her advice and counsel never harboured the ghosts of her own regrets, ambitions or hangups. Importantly, she had a way of gently dissolving binary simplistic thinking, particularly blame-seeking. She supported us to start a commune, then was ever-available to talk through the realities

and tensions of running a commune. Likewise with the ups and downs in relationships, jobs, parenting. She had an ability to communicate using just as many words as is needed – not talk to hear herself talk, not talk to show off.

Of course, Erin, Anna and I, don't mind dominating a conversation. When we were all together one of favourite games was to try to stir mum up a bit. To try to find a flaw in the old girl. Often it would start with Erin doing an impersonation of someone - and if she took the bait, showed a hint of a smile, we would all pile on. "I told you, she has mean streak a mile wide" we would howl. She loved these bits of theatre, being the centre of attention, even in jest. She leaves behind a long trail of nicknames, reflecting our playful adoration:

bid, bibi, Mrs B, bridge, bridge over troubled daughters, ridgy didge, rigdgy didge the travelling fridge, bj, mo fo, mama bear, mumbles, the radioactive woman

THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF LAUGHTER over the years of her illness. Erin and Anna, mum was so proud of you both - forging ahead, kicking goals in your relationships and careers.

While this is obviously mum's show today, it's not all one way traffic. At mum's 60th birthday I remember she made a pointed mention of her girlfriends and the mutual support that they provided one-another, through conversation, walks and drop-everything backup. I want to thank everyone for the support you have provided her in ways big or small. One of things that was very important to her as

cancer-haver, was to have normalcy. If you ever felt uneasy about dumping your emotional baggage on mum - don't. We all did it, and it gave her the role she wanted, not a victim, patient, but empowered friend, therapist, mother.

WATCHING MUM DIE has been a raw, sad and beautiful experience. She drifted in and out of consciousness, and various dreamworlds. It seemed to me like she was simultaneously inhabiting all phases of life - young, uninhibited, pixielike; old, wise, decrepit; contented and sorrowful. The conscious and unconscious realms mixing freely. And when she got the wobbles, saw strange things in the void that were too strange and too thingy, Mike was there, hand on the tiller, to guide the good ship Bibi. Like a shaman, or Hermes - man as spiritual guide and caregiver. And in these role-reversals, us caring for her, there felt a profound spiritual and ritualistic element to her departure; as if we all understood suddenly that this is how it is meant to happen, this is how we are to behave.

SHE WAS ABLE TO JOKE WITH US about the wonder and absurdity of the experience. She told us how various characters were visiting her - like Daniel from Inverloch, and this other fellow - of no fixed address or purpose. Incidentally Jung saw these archetypal manifestations - the psychopomps, or guides towards the afterlife - as possessing the dual role of traversing the conscious and unconscious parts of our psyche.



Now this motey crew of Angels were no seraphs; seemingly they were as real, as colorful, probably as flawed as we are. No doubt the relationship was reciprocal - as they assisted her to loosen her tethers to the physical word - I'm sure she was working with them, reassuring them about their career choices, relationships and their fundamental worth.

I'VE BEEN LISTENING TO A SONG a this last week, called, I Someone great, by LCD soundsystem. It's basically a lovesong to his therapist. It starts - I wish that we could talk about it, but there that's the problem". It ends with this repeated lyric, *when someone great is gone*, something like an mantra or an incantation. It doesn't offer analysis or an attempt closure, just the lament,

When someone great is gone...
I think this is apt for Bridget.



Siblings - Jean and Doug Robinson

IN A WAY, all of us are lucky to have known Bid at all as she might well have stayed in England where she and Andy were born (not like Jean and I, we say patriotically), or Mum and Dad might not have stayed in Australia.

But luckily Phil and Moira did decide to commit to living in Australia and went on to form many close friendships in those early years, particularly the Morleys, Johnstons, Hawkins and of course our relatives the Gibsons. In turn, the children of their friends from these early years became our friends and we have all been lucky enough that many of them have continued as life-long friendships.

For Bid, some of her childhood friends, especially Sarah, Nicky and Sue, have remained amongst her closest friends and still holiday together on a regular basis. After more than fifty years, their friendship has well and truly stood the test of time.

For all of us Robinson kids growing up, a mainstay of our lives was being part of this big mob of kids from these various families, spending huge amounts of time at the beach but also on regular holidays at places like Walkerville and Tabberaberra. This love of the bush was a real feature of our family growing up and continued for ever after for all of us.

In truth, though, when we were growing up in our school years, we were the 'littlies' and Bid and Andy were the 'biggies' and so we never hung out that much with Bid at that



stage of our life. However, she was the sensible biggie. And Andy was the not-so-sensible, naughty biggie but a lot of fun if you were one of us. So from quite an early age, we had a good sense of how some people take their responsibilities seriously and others do not.

A FEW OF OUR favourite examples of Bid's early sense of commitment, responsibility and care for others were firstly, her determination to acquiring and training an afghan hound for competing in dog shows. She worked and saved up for months to buy the appalling afghan hound Princess Zaida and put huge effort into training her for dog shows, culminating in Princess Zaida bursting out of the show-ring at Sunbury show-grounds, with the family in hot pursuit. This ended that particular campaign.

Secondly, just after I finished year 12 and Bid and Mike had just become a couple, they generously let me join their 3 week hiking trip through Tasmania, and put up with a whinging younger brother complaining about leeches, heavy back-packs and Deb as a potato substitute as backdrop for this early romantic adventure. But what a fantastic trip that was, Mike, as we sat with Bid last week recalling those adventures.

Jean and I were in awe of how studious Bid was and her meticulously labelled study notes and charts she had created for various subjects which I subsequently used to pass various subjects at year 12 and University, still managing to get a response from her last week when we recalled that thanks to her notes I

got 80 in French whereas she only got 79.

BY COMPARISON, our memory of Andy's academic approach was that he barely bothered to go to school at all in his final year. What Andy did do so well, however, was to be a magnet for people and Bath St, in our later school years was always full of his group of friends, including a young Mike, along with the intriguing adult friends of our older foster brothers. But soon after we all finished school, and while Jean and I were in our late teens, Andy died in an accident in England, making Bid the oldest sibling. His loss was obviously a huge loss for our whole family but none more so than for Bid, who was now the only big kid for us little ones to follow but also without her closest sibling.

THIS SUPPORT ROLE for us is a role she provided magnificently and with ease over the last four decades, especially as we moved into the stages of long-term relationships and child-rearing. Wearing her psychologist's hat, Bid always thought that one of the reasons Moira and Phil created such a wonderful refuge at Bath St was because they were so in tune as a couple that they had energy and love to spare and share.

Bid, with Mike's enduring love, continued that tradition, always providing a calm and supportive refuge where one could shelter from the storms of life. I will so miss that special role of guardian angel and mother hen that she provided to us and to so many others.

Friending - Sarah Hawkins

THERE WAS SOMETHING about Bridget that seemed deeply - almost fundamentally - comfortable inside herself. The way I think a person is when they have been loved by their parents and in Bridget's case by the love of parents, Michael, her children and her many many friends.

I am going to relay the thoughts of a number of these friends and my own experiences of a friendship with Bridget.



Bridget and Sarah – 1976

Nicky Sandiford

So good at friends, had time, inclusive, caring/sharing. Checking in for us. How do we go. Sister, family, everything. Yell to the world - we all loved her. The essence of her - for everybody.

Pam Clark

Duration and constancy of her friendships over her lifetime. It is no mean feat to mother, work and stay in those relationships well. Women's friendship is restorative for all.

Grace Walsh

She was a ray of sunshine in my life. I am so grateful I was her friend.

Cheryl Gurney

good at making friends and keeping them. If you hadn't seen her for awhile she'd phone saying 'hello



Pam sprinkling ashes, Red Hill walking track – 2022

my dear - just thought I'd like to hear your voice. A great listener and provided wise and practical advice if requested. Always positive, you always felt better for having shared a short or long conversation with Bridget. And great at sharing stories, family, news, books, recipes and a cup of tea or glass of wine.

Marg Tilleard

Bid made everyone feel they were her friend. Make you feel valued, took an interest in you - talk about anything . Good at connecting with people at all levels. People told her stuff. Valued friendship, wise council.

Jenni Sebire

To me Bridget was wise, compassionate, warm and such good fun. She was easy to talk to, one of those people who, you felt, listened to and valued what you had to say. I think she brought out the best in everyone. I think we all recognised her courage and her ever positive attitude, her vitality and love of life.

Sue Morley

Bid and I met when we were toddlers. Her parents and ours became close friends soon after they migrated from England. We grew up together and had many common interests - camping, bushwalking, birdwatching, books music, fun, family times. When we caught up it was if we had seen each other yesterday. There is a comfort with a good friend where you don't have to worry about silences in the conversation, where you know each other well enough and you have a long shared history, you don't need to explain the background to a story you are sharing; there is also a lovely

quiet connection and comfort with each other. Bid was a great cook and one of the things she did well was creating times with friends over good food and great conversation - good hearty and heartfelt conversations.



Bridget and Sarah – 2018

FOR ME, BRIDGET was *a tonic for the soul* to quote Hannah Kent talking about friendship. We are soul mates who shared 60 years, shared kindergarten, school, a share house, holidays, activities, but more profoundly important we shared. We shared the most important of life's paths - knowledge and love for respective partners, achievements, sorrows, disappointments, loss, gains (of the birth of children and then grandchildren) as well as sharing recipes, books etc etc. Bridget guided, cared, counselled, nattered and gave love. Her head and her heart was given in equal measure.

I had the opportunity to tell her what she meant to me - and I am thankful for that privilege. Now I want to thank her for all she gave all of us.

Working - Carla Lechner

FOR THOSE OF YOU who do not know me, my name is Carla. It is my absolute privilege to speak here today.

I apologise in advance for speaking longer than intended but so many colleagues wanted to add their voice and to pay their respects to a psychologist and woman who made a difference. My remit is to speak about Bridget's professional life, and I would hope that by the end of my absurdly short summary of her career, you will understand that Bridget touched the lives of not just family and friends but also of many, many colleagues and countless clients who will remember the kind *lady they once saw who helped change their life for the better*.

I KNEW BRIDGET JUST SHY of forty years and what a gift it is to share such a long friendship. We met in 1983 when we were both admitted to the Clinical Psychology Masters Degree at Melbourne University.

We were immediately drawn to one another as we were clearly the only sane and psychologically sound people studying there. This became abundantly clear when we studied the Psychopathology unit and began diagnosing our fellow students with great confidence – Narcissistic Personality Disorder, Bi Polar Mood Disorder, Never Say Anything in Class Disorder and some cohorts who were just plain weird.

We laughed a lot, especially when carry-



Bridget and Carla, Bear Gully, 1983

Her formal training was in cognitive behavioural therapy. Albert Ellis, the founder father of CBT, was heavily influenced by the great stoics, particularly Epictetus' notion that our interpretations of events have a greater impact on us than the events themselves

ing out tasks allocated by our teacher Dr. Ian Campbell. He was a very strict adherent of RET and following the ethos of Albert Ellis, we had to engage in “homework”, such as shame- attacking tasks that we would later utilize with our clients,. I recall that we once took a tram ride through Carlton – I was wearing my clothes very visibly inside out and Bridget was calling out the name of the tram stops in a very loud voice – Grattan Street, Tin Alley, Elgin Street etc. People thought we were lunatics escaped from the asylum; little did they know we were aspiring to be the professionals treating them!

WE DID MANAGE TO GRADUATE, and Bridget went on to enjoy an amazingly diverse life as a psychologist. Her special interest was always mothers, babies, child development and attachment. At uni she studied under Dr. Nancy McMurray and her long-term placement was at Queen Victoria Hospital in the child/adolescent ward under the supervision of Dr. Trish Miak.

After graduating, Bridget and Mike moved to the UK (where she didn’t work) but upon their return to Adelaide, Bridget was employed at the Hillcrest Hospital and later at the Noarlunga Community Mental Health Centre where she provided 1:1 therapy services, as well as setting up group programs and providing community education. During her time at Hillcrest she worked with Donald Sandford who stated



Bridget and Carla, Mornington Peninsula, 2018

my clearest recollections of Bridget are of her con-

siderable intelligence, her enormous professional competence and her confident grasp of the endless inter professional politics of a hospital working environment ... her intellectual curiosity, incisiveness and ready wit were sorely missed when she left ... she was undoubtedly one of the best psychologists I have had the pleasure of working with.

Don's early insights of her unique qualities have been shared time and again by subsequent colleagues. Bridget also worked at SIDS; her colleague and friend Sandy Gaunt remembered Bridget as

always getting on with the job with compassion and kindness} in a job characterized by immense grief.

She stated that Bridget was immensely sensitive to her client's grief and quietly resigned when she was pregnant with Anna in the knowledge that her pregnancy would be too confronting for her clientele.

BRIDGET AND I KEPT IN TOUCH whilst she lived interstate – she started having babies, moved to part-time work but never lost interest in her craft. She and I would often discuss the difficulties of balancing home and work life, (and I assure you that we NEVER used psychological strategies for child management well maybe sometimes, well ... maybe often!!!). We would talk about new psych trends (that mostly seemed to be variations of the old), different therapeutic strategies and interventions, interesting clients, and any dilemmas we had encountered or mistakes we had made. We were acutely aware that we were not perfect clinicians, well not yet anyway!

We would also discuss the frustration of more “annoying clients” who baulked at all suggested interventions.

I recall that Bridget once told me about a client with OCD. She stated that he each time came into their meeting/appointment, he wouldn’t stop with his obsessions and compulsions – he kept telling her

and then I washed my hands three times, touched the door handle so had to wash them again, clicked the light switch five times, went out the door back in the door as he paced around the room muttering thoughts of dread

until she shouted,

SHUT UP, just shut up.

Realising that she had momentarily lost her cool, and quick as a whip, she looked at her rather stunned client and explained

now, that’s what you have to say to yourself, nice and loud, it’s called thought stopping.

I’ve come to realise it’s not such a bad strategy when you get caught in your own overthinking!

UPON RETURNING TO LIVE in Victoria, Bridget worked at Cerberus where she was referred to as *marm* and on occasions saluted. She tells me that she would salute back but inwardly she would get the giggles. She found it hard working in such a male dominated and psychologically immature environment but I’m sure she provided a lot of care and

wisdom to some lost souls, helping young recruits who didn't really fit the mould to exit the program with grace. Her friend and colleague at Cerberus, Jackie Watkins, stated

Bridget was happy to be out "her comfort zone", with fond memories of her participating in the high ropes course (apparently, she froze at the top and had to be talked down by another psychologist) and weapons training

Can you imagine Bridget with a gun or bayonet in her hands? But what Bridget didn't have in defence skills she had abundantly in people skills – she was described as

asking penetrating questions whilst warmly holding and embracing the relationship

and this would be for new recruits and commanding officers alike – Bridget didn't care about rank!!!

AS WE ALL KNOW BRIDGET segued for a while and followed her dream of midwifery, studying and working part-time and running a home (no mean feat) until she qualified and worked as a midwife for a brief time. Realising that she actually preferred working with the mind rather than the body, she returned to psych, then found her dream job working with mothers and babies at the O'Connell Family Centre. Bridget always believed that the mother/child or primary caregiver/child relationship was of paramount importance hence her work focussed on strengthening that bond.

Dr. Matt Roberts, consultant peri-natal Psychiatrist at OFC, offered the following insights regarding Bridget's work (and I'm pretty much quoting him in full such was his insight to her work and general being – especially bearing in mind that she was diagnosed with cancer in her early days at OFC). He stated

Over the best part of a decade, Bridget was the clinical psychologist on the Mental Health Team at the Mercy Health O'Connell Family Centre, formerly the Grey Sisters, a residential early parenting centre for families with children aged 0-4, in Canterbury. Bridget clearly loved this work and it loved her back. She brought a wonderful energy in the door with her, driving innovative clinical changes such as the mental health screening of all admitted parents, cutting-edge Circle of Security group sessions for parents and babies, regular staff supervision and support sessions, and introducing clinical teaching of psychology students. Bridget's students clearly loved learning from her, as she loved teaching them.

But her first duty was to the families of all walks of life who came to the centre desperate for help. Bridget's curiosity, compassion and dedication meant that each week, those families struggling the most with the stresses of early family life were listened to carefully and supported through clinical understanding, painstaking discharge plans and handovers to community staff.

Bridget was my eyes and ears on the unit, sitting me down upon arrival each week for a rundown of who was in and what was up, including her gentle wry observations about staff wellbeing and interactions on the unit, always conveyed with her characteristic warmth, humour, and sympathy.

A proud mum and grandmother who had been grand-maternal to us all at O'Connell well before her first grandchild was born, Bridget was the heart and soul of our Mental Health Team; I among so many others from her OFC years will carry her caring thoughtful voice with me always. Thanks Bridget: to steal from your beloved Circle Of Security, you made OFC bigger, stronger, wiser and kind.

But that is not the end of her career for Bridget had yet another string to her bow. For many years she also worked at the Melbourne School of Business as a *coach, facilitator and debriefer* for executives and others in management who undoubtedly had psychological issues blocking their potential. She teamed up again with Jackie Watkins of Cerberus days. Jackie believes that Bridget helped hundreds of clients with her

dry wit, independent thought, serious intelligence and by being a thoroughly decent person who didn't tolerate fools

Jackie used more colourful language – I have toned it down! Bridget remained with MSB until late last year.

ULTIMATELY, AS BRIDGET AND I grew older and wiser, we realised that the theoretical framework didn't matter as much as the therapeutic relationship; it was developing an empathetic connection, really listening to her clients, and cutting to the crux of the matter in a kind and compassionate manner that Bridget excelled at. She reluctantly retired at the end of 2019 (except for the odd MBS gig) so

that she could focus on her health and spend time with family and friends (and garden, not sure how much of that happened).

NOW MIKE, SORRY, this is where I will wander off the reservation and talk about Bridget more personally! Whenever Bridget and I met up, we would talk about work (a lot), current affairs, books we were reading or had read, holidays we'd been on or wanted to go on, but invariably the discussion would turn to family – who was doing what, the trials and tribulations of their relationships, our own respective relationships, who was happy and who was not. We quickly realised that we were living proof of the edict *you're only as happy as your least happy child*.

This meant that we spent many years in the *low to moderate* happy range as we navigated the teenage and early adult years, as invariably, one or other child was in the *not so happy range*. I always appreciated Bridget's ability to listen, offer sage advice or to make me laugh as our children tumbled from one crisis to another.

But whilst low-moderate range happiness may have dominated those fraught years of teenage-hood, I know that in recent years, Bridget's happiness gauge was in the high – very high range despite her diagnosis and ongoing fight against her illness. She was happy about Dan, Mitty and their gorgeous family unit, proud of Dan's academic achievements, the couple's thoughtful approach to life and she was enthralled by her grandchildren Heath and Rosa. She was thrilled with

Erin's pregnancy and convinced that she and Dave will make lovely and loving parents; she knew how much being a mum means to Erin. She was also over the moon about Anna's recent marriage to Richie and that Anna was following her dream of life as an "attorney" in NYC. She was proud of her children as young people with positive goals and values, care for one another and decent moral compass. Having a happy family was paramount to Bridget (and of course Mike) and they achieved that goal through love, nurturance and never failing support.

AND MIKE, well they were each other's north-south-east and west – a relationship perhaps of *yin and yang* but built on deep mutual respect and immense love for one another. Mike, through your dogged research and discovery of an effective treatment for Bridget, you gave us all another ten years of cherished time with her – we cannot thank you enough for that.

Bridget, I was so, so lucky to have you as my friend and confidante. Even when we last met on the Sunday before you died, we could still laugh at life's twists and turns and were fortunate to share how deeply we cared for each other.

Vale dear lady, I will, we will, miss you enormously. May you rest in peace.

Loving - Mike Sandiford

BRIDGET'S CHILDHOOD home Mossiel at 28 Bath Street, Mornington was a magical place for many people, me included.

Aged 17, and hanging out with Andy in the summer after we had finished school, I was immediately captivated on my first visit.

It was full of people of all sorts, all welcome, from lost souls to the shining intellects. There were the dogs, sometimes penguins.

What made the place so fascinating was the welcome. Everyone was welcomed without judgement or expectation by all the Robinsons. And I think this is really key to understanding Bridget, who was a Robinson through and through.

Though I knew Bridget earlier, I was immediately captivated by her. That in itself produced challenges.

AMONGST THE ROBINSON MENAGERIE was a bitzer dog named Moz, whose two missions in life seemed to be to defend Bridget's virtue, and to excel at chair cricket. Entering Bath Street was always by the back door, never the front, and to unlock the garden gate one had to stick their hand through a small triangular gap in a solid 6-foot-high wooden garden fence gate. Moz had a sixth sense for any would be suitor, so opening the gate always risked attack by his manic jaws.

Still the prize was far too great, not to risk hand amputation. At first I thought that being able to sail very, very fast was enough for



Bridget and Mike, Fingal Beach, Mornington Peninsula 2019

a young suitor to win the heart of such a brilliant young lady. How sadly naïve was I. But I persisted, even soliciting the aid of Moira who became my main ally.

Bridget was just 15 at the time, and it was not until she went to Uni, some three years later, when I was living in a share house with Andy in Michael Street, Fitzroy, that I finally succeeded in attracting her affection. She was 18, and I 20. Apart from a brief early period of ambivalence on her part – referenced in the coconut memory seed in the order of service – we have been truly in love ever since.



I WAS BEDAZZLED by her from the very beginning and remain so today, even if now only in memory. The Bridget that I remember from those early was like a morning star, though she would claim she was hobbled by doubt and uncertainty at that stage of life.

It wasn't really until she become mother that she was able to shed those doubts. It is then began to find the purpose that allowed the quiet calm, and assuredness that I think we all recognise now. Throughout her life, but particularly in those early mothering years in her thirties and forties, she was magic to me. I don't think words can describe it, really. I was blessed and I knew it.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to understand Bridget completely without reference to the illness that has stalked her these last 10 years.

In many ways this was her age of wisdom, fusing the love and kindness she inherited from her parents and siblings, with her com-

passion and with the work she did, both professionally and within her network of friends.

Once the initial awful realisation of the diagnosis had settled, it was clear there was a new purposeful serenity in her life. Her focus was now clarified on the important things of life. It was as if the windscreen of her life was now cleared of all the dust and detritus. There was now just clarity.

Given the circumstance it speaks directly to her essence.

AFTER SEVERAL YEARS of mysterious nondescript issues that were initially thought to relate to menopause, she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in April 2012. Everyone knows that isn't a good one. The initial diagnosis was extremely challenging – the sort of pack your bags type. She was extremely sick and faced with an initial prognosis of just several weeks.

Within a few days it became clear that the cancer was a very rare beast, a PNET and not the much more common adenoma, as initially assumed. PNETs are more like a slow, silent stalker than a pack of wild attack dogs that is adenoma.

Several weeks later she received what was life-saving treatment, from the remarkable Peter Mac Hospital under the direction of Rod Hicks, the remarkable Tim Ackhurst and her oncologist Michael Michael.

The treatment itself almost killed her. There was a touch and go period of about 7 days in ICU.

THREE MONTHS LATER she emerged from hospital, a tiny skeleton of her former herself. Some will remember the 100-day party we had at the poodle palace just up the road from here. She was just 43 kg.

It was a time of great compassion, love and support. Nicky my sister knitted a heart each and every one of those first 365-days until Bridget told her she must cease because Bridget had decided she was going to live much longer.

BRIDGET'S STOICISM was extra-ordinary, even in those early days. I can only recall one private occasion of somewhat muted self – pity; the why-me syndrome. I think she decided there and then never to do so again.

Because she had initially thought she was likely to miss cherished events, every big family occasion was very special to her. No more so than those that marked passage for our children.

Graduations, Anna's 21st, two weddings and even now two grandchildren and another in the oven. They were all made especially magic for the rest of us by Bridget, simply by her presence.

As my mother was fond of saying – Bridget was *tickled pink* just to be there.

AS HER STRENGTH GREW, and her weight increased, she gradually resumed normal life duties, so much so, that I found it hard to believe she had any disease at all. Even though she continued to receive treatments every 6 months or so, I often forgot about her illness



Nicky knitted a heart for every day of the first year of Bridget's cancer journey

for months at a time. Occasionally, but only very occasionally, Bridget would express frustration at me over this because, for her, the cancer was ever present in her mind.

I know it took an enormous toll on her, because though she was so determined not to be defined by the illness, it would never leave her side.

REFLECTING ON HER LAST DECADE, it seems she was being stalked by a silent assassin, the ever-present threat finally wearing down her reserves of energy. In December everything seemed to change, as though the disease realised she was weakening, and it pounced.

I can't pretend it was not harrowing, watching helplessly as the life was torn from her failing body. It was. But she remained extraordinarily calm and centred throughout. And neither did she lose her sense of humour.

As I mentioned earlier, she often gave talks at conferences and fund-raising events, presenting the perspective of a cancer patient – a grim ask if there was one.

But her presentations were anything but grim, eliciting as many laughs as tears, often simultaneously, in her awe-struck audiences. To quote one

One other person who brought some light to a difficult situation although he wouldn't have known it, was a lovely Registrar who was providing cover over the weekend – that dreadful arid wasteland where you know nothing is going to happen for 48 hours. He bounced up to my bed and excitedly announced that I had the second most interesting tumour in the hospital. I remember thinking – sheesh

what does a girl have to do to be number one.

On another occasion early in her long stay in hospital a young psychologist approached to see if she needed any help. They talked for an hour, and by the end they had sorted out his career path quite nicely, thank you.

Just so Bridget.

In a presentation some seven years along her cancer journey, she reflected:

I've done extraordinarily well. In the 7 years since diagnosis, I've lived to see all three of my children complete uni and get jobs, I have a grandchild – something I did not think I would see. I returned to work and lead a busy normal life. I consider myself incredibly lucky.

Just so Bridget.

BRIDGET AND I had several conversations in the last few days as she hovered in the half-light between life and death. Sweet conversations, funny, sad, full of meaning and mystery, with all emotions collapsed into one – I guess that is what we call love.

Just pure Bridget.

She told me several people had been visiting. One was a man called Daniel, he came from Inverloch, with a kind face and warm hands. She was aware he was going to take her somewhere – an escort of a kind. We talked of his purpose, and she was relaxed about it.

After she fell asleep, I wrote these lines on this special conversation :

*In the night came to me
A silly man*

With gentle face, warm hands
 said he to me soft-voiced
 "Please come, no rush."
 He seemed the gardening type
 and set about planting memory seeds.
 A special task we both agreed,
 Would take some time,
 No rush.

So when you next pass though Inverloch,
 please say a silent thankyou to Daniel and let
 yourself feel the gentle warmth of Bridget's
 memory, see her quizzical smile with those
 unmistakable slightly upturned eyes. I am
 sure it will bring a gentle smile to you.

THEN THERE WAS A MYSTERIOUS LADY, who
 whispered the words *twenty-four seven*. Brid-
 get was more worried by this person. Who
 was she? Where did she come from? And
 why the constant whispering *twenty-four seven*?

It seemed to me, that time was collapsing
 for Bridget as she approached death, and I
 wonder if at that singular point between life
 and death, time merges the past with the fu-
 ture into a dimensionless form.

Surely the *twenty-four seven* was a reference
 to the love Bridget received and gave so gen-
 erously. _ Twenty-four seven_ for every one
 of the 23,247 days she spent on this planet. To
 me it was also a calming reassurance that her
 memories will be with her family *twenty-four
 seven*.

And the mysterious woman? Could it be
 that she was from the future, a grandchild
 perhaps, as yet unborn? I have become very
 fond of that mysterious lady. I call her Au-

drey.

A DEAR FRIEND OF MINE, a colleague from Bhutan, with whom I have worked in the magical remote Bhutanese Himalaya unexpectedly emailed me the day before Bridget died expressing concern *how are you doing, how is Bridget?*. In return to the sad news that followed, Phuntsho responded

According to Buddhist calendar, whoever dies on this day is considered to be very special. This reflects how special Bridget was. Today we offered butter lamps to guide her through darkness to an eternal peace. They say, memories are stronger than physical forms. Ultimately we too shall pass and only our memories will remain.

There is some essential truth here, which I agree. While Bridget is no longer with us in her physical form, and we will grieve for that, she is ever present in our loving memory.

WHEN I REFLECT ON BRIDGET'S LIFE, the way she so willingly offered without expectation or judgement, her calm presence, her careful phrasing, her unerring moral compass built on a foundation of family love, friendships and community, I sense she was the quintessential gardener of memories, at the job *twenty-four seven*.

While I did not understand it at the time, it was very much part of what bedazzled me all those years ago as a captivated 17 year-old, just as I remain bedazzled today.

And I am comforted by the knowing that in her death, Bridget is accompanied with a bag of memory seeds the envy of any person.



*butter lamps set to guide
Bridget to eternal peace –
Phnutsho, Thimpu, Bhutan,
2022*

After all what more could one want for, at
the end of this life.

Thankyou Bridget, my darling.

Wording - Erin Sandiford

De Facto Epithalamium (for Bid and Mike)

The orb that burns by the darkling panes
Is nigh, and the embers in linen
Flared with the dawn; I am recalling that
Syllabic smile of depth
Between her right thigh and her left,
Guttural throat of the mariner
Foundered in visions of his mermaid.

Now is the time when all body is a sail
Moved by the trade winds of touch and devo-
tion.
Early cry of the suckling birds
And the sun is faltering to its birth
High over the arid and scarf flung hill.
Speak love by the bowsprit,
Speak love through the madrigal.

— Andy Robinson, circa 1979



*Bridget and Erin, Avenue
Road, Prospect, SA, 1990*



*Bridget and Andy, Tabber-
abbera*

Reflections, memories and lives touched

Kate Murphy, London

IT'S A LOVELY THING to have known – or at least to know that you have known – someone for all of your life. That was the case with Bridget and me. Our dads, Phil and Brian, had met at Cambridge in the early 1950s. Moira and my mum, Liz, were also soon to be best friends. My earliest memories of the Robinsons are fleeting – a house in a country village with a large garden, a homely kitchen, Bridget and me doing jigsaw puzzles together. Our families were extremely well matched. Andy and my brother Nick were the same age; Bridget and I as well (her June birthday to my September); Doug and Jean slotting in neatly around my sister Jane and brother Patrick. Although the Robinsons moved to Australia when I was still very small, they continued to be part of our lives. My mum and Moira were in touch by letter – my mum would read us out news from Moira's legendary many-page missives, so Bridget was often there in my mind. And we were special. My mum was her godmother, her mum was my godmother – so that meant we must be god-sisters!

By the late seventies, physical contact had

Phil and Brian Murphy were great friends at university at Cambridge, as were Moira and Liz, with Moira godmother to Kate, and Liz godmother to Bridget, born only several months apart.



*Liz Murphy (godmother),
Bridget and Kate Murphy -
London, 2017*

been resumed – firstly Nick travelled to Australia, then Bridget and Andy to the UK though, so so sadly, London was to be Andy's final home. The flood gates had by then opened to an incredible assortment of Australian visitors, friends of Andy and Bridget's, who would arrive to stay at my parents' house in Muswell Hill, North London. Many became friends.

I FINALLY MADE IT out to Melbourne in 1983 and got to visit Mornington! Bridget and Mike were by then newly married and living in Rathdowne Street. I spent my first night in Australia there, being awakened the next morning – jet lagged – to be taken on a nine-hour journey (9 hours – was something so long even possible?!) to Bombala, the family shack-in-the bush, in NSW. There are some hazy photos of us all (Doug was there too), including Bridget in shorts on the deck, keenly engrossed in a book. My favourite is an image taken on the way back. Bridget and Mike, huge grins, snuggling up to each other on Ninety Mile Beach.

I was lucky to be able to stay on with them in North Carlton, lapping up their homeliness, conversation and good food. I got too comfortable though, and overstayed my welcome... I remember Bridget diplomatically mentioning that perhaps it was time for me to move on... they were newlyweds after all... We did, though, continue to meet up often which was always a delight.

It was a pleasure, then, in 1986, to welcome Bridget and Mike to the flat that I shared with Lou Macdonald (a Robinson-made best-friend)

in Hackney, East London. This was at the start of their year in the UK. Our flat was in a council estate, on the top floor of a 1930s block – 68 steps up, and no lift. They arrived with baby Dan. As a gift, they had been given a huge pram – not the easiest thing to negotiate round twisting stairwells – but it made it up. How Bridget laughed. I was fortunate to visit them in Cambridge, that special Bridget-and Mike-welcome always there.

As our lives became busy with proper jobs and young families, our immediate contact dropped off, but there was always news from letters and travellers who were passing through. I was always determined to return to Melbourne and made it back in 2002. Bridget and Mike were now living in Eyre Street in Somers – what a joy to stay there and to at last meet a teenage Dan plus Erin and Anna for the first time. There was time too for Bridget and me to catch up on life and work.

I must have bought a new computer in 2011, because it's from then on that I have a trove of Bridget emails, lots of them. They burst with vitality and while there is always news of her and Mike's latest antics and work situation, plus updates on Phil and Moira, Doug, Jean and their families, the stars are always Dan, Erin and Anna.

IN EARLY 2012 everything changed, of course, and I have to thank Phil for his brilliant communiqués keeping so many of us in touch about Bridget's cancer and treatment. Her email to me on 20 May seems so typical of her attitude to it all – a quick mention of the



with Kate Murphy - England, early 1960's

devastating diagnosis but then on to her focus on being positive and news of Dan, Erin and Anna. . . And that is how it always was. Emails filled with the joys of life, of her evident love for Mike and her pride – always her pride – in the pastures new of Dan, Erin and Anna. Oh yes, and perhaps a nod to her illness, something that, as she put it once, continued to *loom large in our psyches, the unwelcome 13th fairy at the christening!*

I WAS DETERMINED to see Bridget if I could and found the opportunity in 2015. I visited the new Somers home in Tasman Road, but mainly stayed with her and Mike at the Victoria Street flat in Fitzroy. It was just brilliant to have time with them both – but also with Bridget. On one day we went to Healesville Sanctuary, on another for a walk round the old stomping ground of North Carlton. We ended up sitting on a bench for a good couple of hours, watching football being played, as Bridget told me the whole story of her cancer. Then it was done, and we could move on. I remember a similar occasion in 1983 when, newly arrived in Australia I struggled to speak about Andy when everything was still so raw. And then we did, and I understood, and Bridget helped me to grow up and learn that talking about these things was important, not frightening.

I was lucky enough to see Bridget again in 2016, on second trip down-under and then in 2017, she and Mike made it to London. They were passing through on their way from Iceland (Iceland?!) and could they stay the night.

There was also time for a meet up with my mum – what an absolute treat for the three of us to be together, Mike cheering us on. This was in the posh surrounds of the Sky Bar at the Royal Festival Hall. There is a photograph of us looking so incredibly happy, that Bridget smile!

THE LAST TIME I was able to hug Bridget was in 2019. My husband Dave and I were on a round-the-world trip visiting family and friends, and of course, Australia was a major stop off. As well as visiting the Fitzroy flat for dinner, there was a big get together in Mornington. Phil and Moira hosting with Doug, Sal and the girls; Bridget, Mike, Erin and Anna. I cherish the memory of seeing Bridget with so many of those she loved so much.

We did see each other one more time, during lock-down. The discovery of Zoom has been such a brilliant addition to our lives, especially for my mum who was also living with cancer. In May 2020, we linked up with Moira and Doug in Earlston, mum in Hackney, me in Brockley and Bridget and Mike in Melbourne. So, so special for us all. And of course, there continued to be news by email – Bridget's excitement at getting an electric bike; the impact Covid restrictions were having on offspring, siblings, nephews and nieces; a lovely family photo accompanied with tales of weddings, relocations and a new grandchild. And at the end of her last email to me, just a casual mention of how she was chugging along, trying out a new chemo drug.

IT WAS UNBELIEVABLY SAD to get the news from Mike in February that Bridget had died, but also heart-warming to learn about the extraordinariness of her last few days at home in Somers. And thank you again to Zoom technology which enabled me to share the wonderful celebration of her life, beamed from the garden with the silvery gum trees behind, shimmering in the sunlight. I feel so blessed to have had Bridget in my life and to have been able to call her a dear friend.

Sue Morley, family friend, Adelaide

OUR FRIENDSHIP has lasted more than 6 decades! I recall having a conversation with you, I think in Adelaide, so it must have been quite a while ago.

Maybe it was some time after we both turned 40! Part of the conversation was about connections – our shared histories and links with our respective families. At that time I still didn't feel that I had close friends in Adelaide. So Melbourne friends were and still are very important to me. In particular we talked about, even when we didn't see each other very often, there was a comfort, familiarity, closeness and immediacy about the times when we did catch up. We knew enough about each other's history that we didn't have to explain things or fill in the gaps! Having so many wonderful memories of combined family holidays, of hanging out together at Bath Street and Hawthorn, and growing up together, and sharing so many childhood and adolescent



with Sue – Mossgiel,
Bath Street, ~1976

'growing pains" I have a sense of closeness and ease with you that I only have with my other family members.

Since 2010 at Phil's 80th birthday bash at your place in Somers, when we have re-connected again, it has been a joy to find that the sense of connection is still strong and growing. Some of it is the value of having a friend of such longevity to share and discuss some of life's joys, quandaries, mysteries and frustrations; and maybe a lot of it is to do with our shared family values and way of seeing the world. It felt like we had all been on separate journeys – which we had – grown older and wiser, and almost walked back into our 19-year-old-selves!!

Mary Ross, University friend, Perth

THOSE EYES that close with an upward turn when she smiles and the knack of lightly suggesting the sagest of advice.

Erin Sandiford, Melbourne

WE SPOKE FOR HOURS about people. What I didn't realise then, it was her way of talking to me about me. Her mind of people, her mind for people, when it came to people, she was the wisest person I will ever know

Sandra Gault, colleague at SIDS Adelaide

LIKE A SUN who brought light and warmth into so many lives.

Carmel Macmac, family friend Somers

ONE OF LIFE'S extraordinary people. Seeing you always bought a smile – someone who you'd hope would be on the other side of the door knock.

Maddy Boadle, family friend Somers

ONE OF LIFE'S beautiful humans. Loved our converstaions together ... always so positive loving life and family to the full.

Vinka Dukanovic, family friend, Adelaide

A VIBRANT COMET soaring through our lives touching us all with your magic.

Emily Foden, family friend, Adelaide

CHEIRSHED, TRUSTED, SPECIAL friend to mum and dad, with an innate ability to make everyone you met feel seen, hard and held in two warm arms.

Mat Roberts, colleague at O'Connell Family Centre

BRIDGET HAS BROUGHT lightness into my life and her belief in me helped hugely in some testing times.

Bec Chivell, student mentee at O'Connell Family Centre

ALTHOUGH I WAS just in the periphery of Bridget's world, the connection I had with her was so meaningful to me - she's the kind of person who makes you feel so warm and cared for. The day she passed away, before I heard the news, she was in my mind. I was sharing with a friend my plans to begin to supervise psychology students, and how the way I work will be so strongly influenced by this 'incredible supervisor' I had a few years ago ... there was a gentle but good dose of mothering thrown in the mix too! (The memorial service was just breathtakingly beautiful. It felt Bridget was there among us.)

Phuntsho Pelgay, student of Mike's Thimpu

WHO PASSES AWAY on this day is very special ... we offered butter lamps to guide Bridget through darkness to an eternal peace... memories are stronger than the physical forms. Ultimately only our memories remain

Robert Devereux, family friend, London

I WAS TRYING to remember when we last saw each other. I think it was in London in about

1980. Yet despite the passing of so much time I still have the clearest of memories of her. I am sure she grew a lot during those years but even then, at such a tender age, she was a life force - full of such joy and generosity. A true life enhancer. One of the frustrations of a full life is not being able to keep close to all the remarkable people who pass through it. Bridget was definitely one of those. Her smile is indelible.

Bridget's cancer story

BRIDGET GAVE NUMEROUS public talks concerning her journey with the rare cancer pNET Pancreatic neuro-endocrine tumour. The talk at the annual raising gala for the Unicorn foundation presentation, in 2019, is cited in full below.

THANKS KATE for the kind introduction. I was really delighted to be asked to do this talk, mainly because I'm a great fan of the Unicorn Foundation and the wonderful work it does in advocacy, fund raising, and support. It's amazing to see so many of you here, if a bit scary, - so don't be shy everyone, spend up big, it's for a great cause.

Before I really get going, I need to emphasize that what I am saying tonight is my experience, it won't be yours. Just as people are different, so too are NETS and everyone's experience of NET cancer will be different.

SO, A LITTLE BIT about my experience of cancer. As Kate said, I was diagnosed in 2012. I had been experiencing vague gastric symptoms for several years prior to diagnosis – bloating, abdominal discomfort, occasional

bouts of vomiting and diarrhoea. More flatulence! My husband used to say I was like the Queen and would never do anything as common as farting in the presence of others. That, regrettably, is no longer the case. Most days I sort of splutter along.

I saw several GPs, was referred to a gastroenterologist, had a colonoscopy, gastroscopy, and various other investigations. I began to lose weight and developed a not-so-healthy tan. One day I noticed some puffiness around my ankles and saw the GP who said my liver was playing up, tests were ordered and the next day, actually just as I was about to head to the gym, she rang to say I was extremely sick and to go to hospital. This was confronting to say the least. Up until that time I had been to hospital three times in my life to have three babies. I had barely missed a days work due to illness. My own assessment of what was happening was that it was the middle aged woman's triumvirate of mild IBS, stress and menopause and I basically just went on with life. The idea of cancer had never crossed my mind. There was no family history of cancer whatsoever.

So off to the Epworth and a few hours later a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. Even I knew that wasn't a good one. By that stage I was severely jaundiced as my bile duct was blocked. Several days later I had a stent put in and by that stage there were the beginnings of a rumour that I might have a PNET and not a pancreatic adenoma. Shortly afterwards I was admitted to Peter Mac and there I stayed

for the best part of three and a half months. My tumours were secreting large amounts of something called ACTH which in turn affected lots of other things. My potassium levels were so low that I was on a constant drip for weeks and as fast as they put it in one end, I efficiently peed it out the other. Calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, all were erratic. There was some talk of my adrenal glands needing to be removed but luckily they found a medication that finally slowed the ACTH secretion. Crazy times indeed. At my peak I was taking 54 tablets a day. It was a full-time job keeping the pill box filled!

Of course during an admission of that length there were some amusing moments. About three weeks into the admission, it was a weekend – you know, that dreadful, arid wasteland where you know nothing is going to happen for 48 hours. A lovely young registrar bounced up to my bed and excitedly said Bridget, you have the second most interesting tumour in the hospital. I remember thinking – sheesh what does a girl have to do to be number one. Some weeks later, about 2 months into my admission I decided I should see a psychologist, I am a psychologist by the way and I thought that that was what you did when you were facing an uncertain future. They sent up a lovely young man and I spent a very happy hour discussing early career progression and the importance of good supervision with him. I don't know if he benefited from the session but I certainly did. For me, a small moment of trying to recapture my

old life.

I then began a series of PRRT treatments – (Peptide Receptor Radionuclide Therapy), the first of which, a combination of yttrium and lutate nearly knocked me off. I remember one of the nuclear med doctors just calmly saying, “It’s a cytokine storm”. Cancer, like all fields has its unique language. I rather like the phrase “cytokine storm”, it sounds vaguely intergalactic and it certainly felt as if I was having an out-of-body experience. How could this be happening to me?? To cut to the chase, I’ve had about 11 PRRT treatments since 2012 and in my case it’s been amazingly effective. I’m also on monthly injections of octreotide, a large unpleasant jab in the butt, that many of you will be familiar with. That’s the one where the nurses all apologize profusely before giving it to you. I’ve done very well. In the 7 years since diagnosis, I’ve lived to see all three of my children complete uni and get jobs, I have a grandchild, something I did not think I would see. I work half-time and lead a busy, normal life. I consider myself incredibly lucky.

SO LET ME TALK now about what has helped me during my time living with cancer and again can I say, this is my experience, it may not mirror your’s. First, is the love and support of friends and family. Having their support, particularly in those early days helped ground and reassure me – made the seemingly unbearable, bearable. My husband hates sickness, hates hospitals, never gets ill himself, but he sat by my bed every day for most

of the day, a comforting presence that helped keep me calm. He took up running at this stage, running off his demons I think. At one point he was running 100km a week – completely stuffed one of his calf muscles and can't run any more. My kids and their partners were wonderful, beaming life, laughter and vitality into the room. Friends came and visited, brought books, news and coffee.

The second thing that has helped and continues to help is the fabulous professional care I have received. In my case, I have received nearly all my care at Peter Mac and I can't speak highly enough of this hospital. I probably shouldn't name names, like the ABC it might be construed as product endorsement but I have a great medical team around me. My oncologist, a man of few words but whose clinical judgement I trust completely. The nuclear med team, one doctor in particular, a long, lanky fellow spent hours and hours with us in those early weeks explaining what was happening and explaining again as the words fell out of my brain. Right at the start, during that long admission, I had a string of wonderful graduate nurses who cared for me. These bright young things, straight out of training were compassionate, caring and so very professional. I have been treated unfailingly with respect, kindness and care. A smile, some humour to lighten the moment, remembering my name and not just being called the generic "love". It matters at these times to feel as though you are a person, not just a UR number or a case profile.

And the third thing that has helped me without a doubt is the wonderful Unicorn Foundation. Again in those early days of fear and trepidation, the support group was a lifeline. Being able to meet with a group of fellow patients, people who had this same weird diagnosis as me – a cancer probably none of us had heard of prior to being diagnosed. There really is a sense of community in the support group and it helped me, as it has so many others. When I was diagnosed in 2012 the Unicorn Foundation had only been going for three years. Simone ran the Melbourne support group, there wasn't a NET nurse, written information was relatively sparse, I don't think there was a FaceBook group or other online forums. The Unicorn Foundation has come such an extraordinarily long way in a relatively short time thanks mainly to the energy and commitment of Simone and John Leyden. Simone and John, along now of course with others have been powerful spokespeople for the NET cause, keeping it in the public domain, raising awareness, raising funds. The work done in raising funds to support research trials, in lobbying to have medications approved by the PBS, in funding the NET nurse – it's truly astonishing. I am lucky, I live very close to Peter Mac and have relatively easy access to medical professionals but for those who live in rural or regional areas, being able to access accurate information and support using the website and online forums provides a sense of connection and community that helps reduce the isolation ex-

perienced when you have a diagnosis so rare, few have heard of it. I must put in a special plug for our fabulous Kate (our NET nurse) – so ready with support and care, such a source of knowledge, so quick to respond to questions and queries. So kind. Thanks Kate.

I JUST WANT TO TALK briefly about one other thing that I think is important. I've said before that I consider myself a lucky person but perhaps one of the main ways that has played out is that I am by nature positive and optimistic. Make no mistake, the diagnosis of NET cancer is a heavy blow. During those early weeks in Peter Mac, I couldn't look at myself in the mirror because my eyes were so frightened that I frightened myself even more. But overall I haven't spent much time bemoaning my diagnosis, worrying what I did wrong to get this illness or thinking it's not fair. I am a psychologist as I said. I spend every day talking with good people to whom horrible things have happened. Life is not fair and that's how it is. I do think however that looking after people's mental health who have a chronic illness as well as their physical health is a definite area for improvement. There is good help out there and too many people struggle in silence. Health professionals need to be more on to this area, particularly if they know patients are isolated, live in rural or remote areas, or have few supports. I applaud the efforts the Unicorn Foundation are making in this area through their recently released Treatment and Wellness Plan.

SO WHAT HAVE I LEARNT along the way. Well – I have learnt to be an advocate for my own health. Hospitals are busy places, you have to be prepared to ask questions, seek information, keep at people. Being health literate helps you navigate the system.

I have learnt not to believe everything I read on the internet and not to read scary cancer stories. They don't do you any good.

I have learnt to cultivate a spirit of gratitude for what I have and not to focus on what I may not have in the future. (Actually to be honest, this one is still a work in progress).

And finally, I have learnt that out there in NET land there are people who are brave, courageous, generous in spirit, funny and indomitable. I have been privileged to meet you.

Thank you
Bridget

Time and place

This section is a work in progress, with substantial detail still to be filled in

Childhood

BRIDGET WAS BORN in Great Witley, in Worcester, at around 7 pm on the 19th June 1958, at home in Rose Cottage, second child to Moira and Phil. Phil was then working for the family carpet factory *Bondworth*. In 1959 the family set out for Mornington Australia to establish a new factory. Despite loving their time, Phil soon realised the carpet business was not for him, and the family returned to the UK.



Bridget – Marysville, 1974

(top left) Rose cottage, Great Witley - Bridget's birthplace (bottom left). Mossgiel, 28 Bath Street Mornington, Bridget's childhood home. (right) Robinson clan arrives in Melbourne via the Orcares, second time round in 1963. Bridget with her back to the camera - clearly unimpressed by the new situation.



The high country

BRIDGET HAD a great love of the outdoors, and especially so the Victorian high country. Amongst her favourite places were Tabberabbera, Walkerville, Mount Howitt and the McKillops Bridge country on the Snowy River. All had connections with people and place. No doubt her love for this country stemmed from father Phil's love of fly fishing, and his ability to make connections wherever he went. In no small part this was all helped by his great friendship with Jim Morley, and of course their partners Moira and Ruth. It all lead to absolutely wonderful friendships and adventures.

FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS in the 1970's the Morleys and Robinsons had access to an old farmhouse known as "Synotts" on the banks of the Mitchell River at Tabberabbera in Gippsland, inland of Bairnsdale. The annual expeditions to *Tab* were an extra-ordinary affair – wonderfully happy days. The last trip to Tab that Mike remembers was about 1978. Another favourite Robinson/Morley fly fishing destination at this time was on the Victoria River, near Omeo.

A CHANGE OF property ownership at Tabberabbera necessitated Phil search for a new mountain/ fly fishing base. In late 1978, egged on by Andy, Phil purchased 100 acres of partly cleared snow gum country on the junction of the Bombala River and Brown Creek in the



Snowy River country above McKillops Bridge en route to Tubbut to visit the Auers - great friends of the Robinsons and Morleys. Both Jim and Carl Auers had 2nd world war experience and established a great bond. Val Auers who was a larger than life country mother figure - a true gem of a lady.



Bridget and Andy, Tabberabbera, Gippsland, 1975

Monaro is southern New South Wales. Devoid of any buildings Phil set about getting a shack built, assembling a motley team - Al Ross as chief architect and building supervisor, Mike as chief carpenter, nephew (? name) as logistics manager. Moria and Bridget as chief camp cooks were forever turning out mountains of food including flapjack, bill tea, kidney stew and the rest of the Robinson staples. In early 1979 the operation was put into full motion over about 4 weeks. With the exception of Andy who had moved to London, the building team included the full Robinson clan and numerous friends including Lou Macdonald.

DESPITE ITS MANY WONDERS, Bombala is a very long way from Mornington and Phil eventually sought a closer refuge at Madalya in South Gippsland, which necessitated yet another building enterprise. Maydalya remained in the Robinson property list until the mid 90's.

Student days

FOLLOWING SCHOOL, which she finished in 1975, Bridget took a year off which included travelling to Europe with Sue Morley, a fter living in a student house for six months with Andy and Mike in Kelso Street Richmond, working in a newsagent in Swan Street selling Tatslotto tickets.

Bridget started her BA at University of Melbourne in 1977, residing at Queens College. At this time Andy and Mike, Andrew Kelly



Bridget and Jean on carpentry duty – Bombala, 1979



Bridget – Bombala, 1979

and Lou Macdonald were living in a house in Michael Street, North Fitzroy. Bridget was a very frequent visitor. In 1978, Bridget moved into a house with Mike and Lou in Canning Street, then a house in Drummond Street with Mike and Andrew Kelly, before Rathdowne street with Mike and Mary Rollo (Ross). During the four years or so living in Rathdowne street, many dear friends stayed including Kate Murphy and Pierre de Hedouville, who came for a night or two and ended up staying for a year as part of a student exchange from the University of Lille in France.



*With Mary and Doug,
Drummond Street, 1978*

IN FIRST YEAR Bridget studied English, Japanese history and French language along with psychology which she always intended to be her major. She worked part-time throughout her university days mainly as a waitress at places such as Taco Bills in the city. After graduating with honours in 1980, she preceded to work in a number of roles including as an research assistant to Tony Buffery, who had achieved some prior notoriety on the Oxbridge comedian circuit with the precursors to Monty Python.

A stint of travelling in 1981, had Bridget working on Hamilton Island. A night where she had to dress as a Playboy girl saw the end of that, and perhaps prompted her sending the coconut to a rather forlorn Mike back in Melbourne working through the middle stage of his PhD. In 1983 she commenced her clinical masters program.

Overseas adventures

ALONG THE WAY, and especially in the pre-mothering years Bridget had numerous overseas adventures. There was the obligatory six-month post school European trip, via Canada, with Sue Morley in 1976, and again in 1980, while Mike was in Antarctica. In late 1981, after an epic early season trek with Mike into Dusky Sound in Fiordland New Zealand, she set off to walk the Annapurna circuit in Nepal while he again headed to Antarctica. She loved that time in Nepal. In 1985 she and Mike travelled to Sri Lanka, where he had been doing field work, and where Dan was quite possibly conceived. In May 1986, eight weeks after Dan was born, they spent a year in Cambridge with numerous trips to France (to witness dear friend Pierre de Hedouville's wedding) and Spain, Scotland and Germany. As her children grew older Bridget again began to accompany Mike on some of his work trips, visiting England, France, Iceland, Spain, Norway, Denmark, Germany and Italy, amongst others. Highlights included reconnecting with dearly loved friends such as Pierre. Together they sailed the Croatian coast with the Gurney's and Nutting/Cliffords. Her last overseas trip in 2019, included a magical holiday at Asos in Kefalonia. There she was in her seventh heaven in the warm late summer Grecian climate with her family around her.



*the Annapurna circuit,
1981*

Grief and sprinklings — Mike Sandiford

THE INTENSITY of the sadness that comes with the death of a mother, sister, daughter, dear friend or a life long partner is immeasurable – the grief attached unknowable. In my ongoing journey I am learning a little about my own grief for Bridget. I am learning how to hold it with neither judgement or expectation, knowing only how, in its individual intimacy, it defies understanding.



_the Channel of Souls at
Sandy Point, Somers

I AM LEARNING there are many ways of holding grief. After some time, I realised in part my own grief was being gently tempered to the rhythm of my walking. For many months after Bridget's death I spent much of my wak-

ing hours walking. When in Somers, each day I would walk the 13 kilometres to Sandy Point and back. There I would visit, and often swim, a tidal channel where, with a dear friend of hers, I had sprinkled some of Bridget's ashes.

Sometimes I walked alone, sometimes with her friends, sometimes with the dolphins by my side, sometimes in the day, and sometimes in the early hours of the morning. Always something magical would appear, as if she was showing me something new for the first time.

On the 49th day marking the end of bardo, at Sandy Point, I came across a doll gently placed on a cuttlefish shell at the high tide mark. It had not been there the day before and was gone the day after – and I thought to myself she is safe now, as buddhist tradition would have.

At mid-tide, the current in the channel at Sandy Point runs fast like a mountain stream – with her ashes there it is always warming. With my walking companions, we know it as *the Channel of the Souls*. A magic place indeed.

THE REALISATION I was stepping my grief came during a long walk in the mountains above Lugano on the Swiss-Italian border in August, 2022. I realised then I was approaching three million steps, and with that I returned to Somers to complete this particular stage of my grieving, with the three millionth step at Sandy Point ...

*Grief so strange
I count in steps*

*Since her last breath
one million steps
to mark her trust
one million steps
to mark her belief
one million steps
to mark her affection*

*Three million steps
to mark my love
and the new life
the day I return
from my stepping grief*



*Sprinkling at Mills Beach,
Mornington, at the end of
Bath Street*

WITH FAMILY and friends, we have started to sprinkle Bridget's ashes in places of special significance in her life. At brother Doug's place, near Violet Town, some of her ashes have been sprinkled alongside her father's. Moira, Doug and Sarah have sprinkled at Mills Beach, Mornington, at the end of Bath Street. Some ashes are sprinkled on the Red Hill walking track by Nicky Sandiford and her walking girlfriends.

THE FIRST SPRINKLING by Anna, her husband Richard and myself was at Mount Howitt only 10 days after she died. It was a fitting place, there in the mountains she loved, surrounded by places with evocative names like the *Cross cut saw*, the *Devil's stair case*, *Mount Buggery*, the *Viking*, the *Razorback*, the *Terrible hollow* and *Hell's Window*. We sprinkled as the sun rose, and as we walked back to our campsite above Macalister Springs – where Bridget and I had first camped almost 45 years ago – clouds filled the *Terrible hollow* below us. It seemed the *Viking* was draped in ceremonial dress — mourning for our Bridget along with us. Special magic.



Clouds filling the Terrible Hollow beneath Mount Howitt, seemingly draping the Viking in ceremonial clothes. The first sprinkling February 2022

THERE WILL BE more, hopefully many more, sprinklings to come.

WE WILL each have our own and different ways of holding memories of Bridget tight. A dear colleague in Bhutan, Phuntsho, who first saw the ocean here at Somers, set traditional prayer flags near Thimphu for his own mother and for Bridget. According to Buddhist tradition each flutter of each flag is a prayer to the departed.

IN TIMOR LESTE, where I have worked and traveled extensively, there is a sacred mountain near the town of Baguia known as Matebean – *the mountain of departed souls*. In May, 100 days after Bridget's death, accompanied by John Tilleard, we ascended 1600 metres up through the swirling clouds of mist, to appear in sunlight, surrounded by towering limestone spires. Though Bridget had never visited Timor, she felt very close.



According to Buddhist tradition each flutter of each flag is a prayer to the departed.

IN MY STEPPING GRIEF, especially early days, I often listened to the music that had accompanied our 45 years together – Leonard Cohen, Linda Ronstadt, the Audreys and many others. One song came back to me time and time again was Van Morrison's *Tupelo Honey*. It begins

*You can take all the tea in China.
Put it in a big brown bag for me.
Sail right around all the seven oceans.
Drop it straight into the big blue sea.*

*She's as sweet as tupelo honey.
 She's an angel of the first degree.
 She's as sweet as tupelo honey
 Just like honey, baby, from the bee.*

and continues

*You can't stop us on the road to freedom.
 You can't keep us, 'cause our eyes can't see.
 Men with insight, men in granite.
 Knights in armor bent on chivalry.
 She's as sweet as tupelo honey.
 She's an angel of the first degree. She's an angel.
 She's as sweet as tupelo honey, just like honey,
 baby, from the bee.*

ending with the refrain

*Oh, you know she's alright.
 You know she's alright with me. She's an angel.
 Oh, you know, you know, you know she's alright.
 She's alright with me. She's an angel.
 Well, you know, you know, you know, you know,
 you know she's alright, 'right with me.
 She's an angel . . .*

THE REFRAIN *She's alright, she's alright. She's an angel* was often my comfort in the saddest of moments, enabling me to nurture so many wonderful memory seeds and hold my grief for Bridget safely.



emerging after an extended period in hospital, Victoria Street Fitzroy, late 2012