

A celebration of the life of



**David Peacock**

1956 - 2018

1pm, Wednesday 28 November 2018  
Oxford Crematorium, St John's Chapel

**Ian Hembrow, Humanists UK**

[humanist.org.uk/ianhembrow](http://humanist.org.uk/ianhembrow)

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## Remembering David

We're going to hear first from Elizabeth.

*I was honoured and surprised when Jessica asked if I would say a few words about David. It could be any one of us sharing stories about this lovely man who has dared to leave us.*

*I do not think he knew just how much he was liked, respected and loved. The gathering of us here today is certainly proof that he was.*

*I first met David in Alton when he was working for a bank. I thought it was Barclays, Jess thought TSB and Philip put in a bid for Nat West, so who knows!? We were members of the Rotaract Club, a great organisation for making lifelong friends, having fun and doing the odd bit here and there for charity.*

*Whenever we had a themed disco or event, David would plan his costume with great care; he embraced every fancy dress opportunity with great enthusiasm, calling upon me to do his hair and make-up, when appropriate.*

*Our friendship group would often spend weekends together. I remember one Sunday breakfast. David took great pains to explain in huge detail the scientific reason and aerodynamic explanation as to why, when you dropped it, toast always fell butter side down.*

*David and I set off for a three week trip to India, which for David was to be life changing. We left England on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1988, exactly 30 years to the day that David died.*

*We cried at the Taj Mahal, laughed at the sacred cows and were in awe of the Ganges. On a day's fishing trip in Goa, fuelled by many glasses of cashew Feni (a lethal alcoholic drink, tapped from the sap of the cashew tree), David wrote his letter of resignation to the bank.*

*David spent time travelling, he returned to Cassington with Lionel and Eileen and followed a different career path.*

*David was a sensitive soul who read situations and adapted his approach accordingly. Maybe this is why his 'posse' of elderly ladies seemed to love him when he returned to banking.*

*David was eloquent, he used complex vocabulary, and always found that elusive word to fit the crossword clue.*

*David was a creative person. This was evident in his phase of cake decorating. Many of us will have gasped at his artistic flair and enjoyed the yummy results of his labours. His love of knitting allowed him to express his eye for design and colour. He took great delight in creating that special jumper or cardigan that was just right for the recipient.*

*David loved music, he had a broad spectrum of tastes, and his CD collection and Spotify playlists were testament to this. Many of you will have a song or orchestral piece that will forever remind you of David.*

*I am sure I am not the only one who would find themselves singing lines with David, of an appropriate song to fit our conversation.*

*What would David be singing now, I wonder...?*

*We are all here today because in our own different ways, we loved this man. He has gone from our sight, but we will all keep a little piece of him in our heart.*

*And I hope we remember him with a smile.*

Some more memories of David now from Neale.

*David (inevitably known as Peaky to me and Lynn and, and then - equally inevitably - he became "Uncle Peaky" when our children came along, although, for them, this started out as "Uncle Peepy" before they had quite got the hang of it) entered our lives in 1989, as he and Lynn were both enrolled on the newly-minted Health Care Studies course at Oxford Brookes.*

*As a result of the turning point that he had in India (as described by Elizabeth), he was now back home, having spent some years living and working away.*

*I think that he really enjoyed the mix of being a student but with a good helping of home and family comforts. He was as fit as the proverbial butcher's dog; cycling from Cassington to Oxford and back again every day, and all over the county and beyond on his days off.*

*Lynn and I were frequent visitors to the Peacock home and were made very welcome by all of the family. We loved to listen to what would now be*

*called 'banter' that flowed particularly between David and his mum, Eileen - who always gave as good as she got!*

*Just like Elizabeth, Lynn and I also were in awe of his creativity and the depth of his craft in knitting but most of all, in cake decorating. We became his apprentices, having foolishly volunteered to decorate a wedding cake for one of Lynn's sisters.*

*After that, the requests kept coming and this resulted in many hours sitting at the dining room table twiddling bits of sugar paste into many different shapes - that sometimes even resembled what they were meant to be! All the while, David would put on a display of fake (well at least I'd like to think it was fake) exasperation at our ham-fisted fumbling and then put things right, so that the final result would look far from shoddy.*

*To keep us going on these marathon sessions, there would invariably be a large pot of steaming dhal (a spicy lentil stew, for the uninitiated), and Peaky would declare each creation to be "the best dhal ever," exceeding all of his previous efforts - and superior to any that I had cooked for him. I would bristle at this insult to my heritage, and then Lynn would be put under a very uncomfortable spotlight as she was required to declare a winner.*

*In July 1993, David once again excelled himself when he decorated a cake for our own wedding, which was embellished with elephants, Taj Mahals and peacock feathers, as we had talked about travelling to India together. Six months later, as a sort of delayed honeymoon, Lynn and I went out there, accompanied - of course - by David. The three of us embarked on a six-week trip, taking in a good part of the country, with Peaky variously taking up the roles of tour guide, interpreter, minder, barman and performer of Indian dance!*

*Although everyone's lives were changing, in some ways things carried on as before. Peaky hosted several Christmas parties at number 69. One such event saw him revisit his love of an over-the-top costume as he dressed as Widow Twanky, and presented the guests with vegetarian chicken mix formed into the shape of a very ample bosom - as his very particular take on a turkey breast!*

*There was always a feast of very British innuendo on offer. Sadly, though, this phase was about to come to an end, as first Lionel and then Eileen passed away, with the latter particularly leaving a big void in David's life, and in hindsight taking away an anchor that kept things together for him. More trips to India followed for Peaky, some were happy, but others less so, and perhaps these represented a search for meaning for him.*

*We saw less of him, but when he did accept our invitations to visit, his rich talents were still frequently on show. He still deployed his wit with an ability to find a saying or a song lyric that fitted and enriched a conversation. He beguiled the children as they became old enough to have real rapport with a very singular soul, that they will forever remember as "Uncle Peaky."*

A little more now about David's life and times.

He was born at home in Cassington on 28 December 1956 - the youngest of six children to parents Lionel and Eileen. The Suez Crisis was just over, so then (as now) things were uncertain and changing fast.

David's mother was unwell for a while after his birth, so a lot of the early parenting duties fell to big sister Jessica.

Theirs was a close-knit family, who got on well together, despite what sounds like fairly modest circumstances and amenities. Philip described it as "*a tin bath in front of the fire and outside toilet*" sort of home.

Lionel worked as a driver for navvy gangs - a profession that's now all but disappeared. Apparently the house was full of interesting objects and artefacts he and his workmates had found while excavating sites.

David attended the village school in Cassington, and then Bartholomew School in Eynsham, where he showed himself to be a bright student - gifted across the board in all subjects. This propelled him into an early career with NatWest Bank, until in that moment of epiphany in India in his early 30s, David realised that he'd had enough of rules and regulations for a while, and wanted to help people in a more direct and flexible way.

So, he retrained as a nurse, completing his qualification at the John Radcliffe Hospital just near here as part of the National Health Service Plan 2000.

Once qualified, he specialised in supporting people with disabilities and paraplegic conditions, before moving on to work with people with Down's Syndrome and other learning disabilities in private care.

We've heard from Elizabeth and Neale about David's love for and fascination with India, its culture, scenery and food. And also about his talents as a baker and decorator of amazing cakes.

And he had all those other interests and pastimes - cycling, knitting, music, TV documentaries and (most of all) *The Archers*. I understand many a

conversation and phone call have come to an abrupt when the theme music we'll hear later began!

Never one to stand still, after a successful career in nursing, David decided to return to his professional roots and joined the Co-operative Bank, where he worked until - much to his sadness - being made redundant earlier this year.

However, by this time his health had started to decline, leading to a number of spells in hospital and then at the Sobell House hospice.

Shortly before his life came to an end, David told Jessica that he had absolutely no regrets. While not someone to shout about achievements, he was clear that he'd done what he wanted to, and enjoyed all his experiences in the company of family and friends he loved and who he knew loved him.

He was happy and fulfilled, which is as much as any of us can wish for - and certainly something to celebrate.