

John Lloyd

In Celebration

29 July 1941–7 May 2017



The Corn Exchange
12.30 pm, 19th May 2017

How do you tell the story of a life? – Becca Lloyd

How do you tell the story of a life? Unpick the threads and lay it out? 75, almost 76 years, here and in South Africa, student, journalist, activist, teacher, househusband, barrister, politician, bread maker, allotment gardener?

John was brought up a Christian, but lost his faith in his teens and outside the structure of the Christian faith he was at first at sea. Wanting a moral and intellectual foundation on which to build his life – he struggled with what a good life should and could be – and it is from there that everything stemmed: his commitment to equality, his life-long socialism, his hunger for learning, the breadth of his intellectual endeavours, the integrity and coherence of his political, professional and private life.

But I'll go back to the beginning, to July 29 1941, when John was born in a snowstorm high up in the Drakensberg Mountains, in what was then the British Protectorate of Basutoland, now Lesotho. His father Jacko, was fighting in the desert in North Africa and John's early years were spent in that countryside, with his mother's family who had a trading post at Qacha's Nek. He rode as soon as he could walk, and had a pony, Gramophone, which was the envy of the Sotho farmers for its tripling gait. On Gramophone, he won the Victor Ludorum at the local gymkhana.

When Jacko came back from the war, the family moved to Johannesburg, and then Pretoria, but Jacko's drinking lost him job after job and in 1949 Betty left him, driving through the night back to Lesotho and her family. John did his Standard I in Maseru – where he excelled in reading and recitation, but his hand writing and neatness was deemed poor (Alex, we know what that feels like!).

John was absent-minded from an early age. In kindergarten he had to go back four times to be reminded of the message he was meant to be delivering. And he once went out to play and forgot to go home to his own birthday party.

Betty found a job at the British High Commission, which required her to move between Cape Town and Pretoria and she decided the best thing was to send John to boarding school at Durban Boys High. He was not always happy there, but he made good friends, played rugby well, and cricket enthusiastically, and was made head boy in his final year. It was in this role that he made what was perhaps his first political act – he stopped the prefects from caning the boys while he was in charge.

And then university – where he studied Law and Literature, and got involved in student politics, fighting against the awful hazing of freshers, and campaigning for the provision of childcare.

Following Sharpeville, many in the Liberal Party felt that with peaceful means of protest being outlawed, something more radical was needed. John was one of them

and in 1963 he was recruited, by a friend, to the African Resistance Movement. Formed in 1961, the organisation bombed railway signals and pylons at night; it had a policy of avoiding harm to human life. In 1964 the Special Branch broke the organisation, and imprisoned a score of people, most of them young and white. John Harris had been left with the bomb making equipment from John's cell (group?). Harris met with John in Johannesburg, talking of wild plans to bomb a plane, to bomb a station. John tried to talk him down. John was then arrested on Thursday 23rd July. On the 24th, Harris bombed Park Station in Johannesburg, killing one and injuring many. John gave evidence against him, and then against his friend Hugh. That he gave evidence against Hugh he regretted until the day he died. They were terrible years in South Africa, and he and the other members of the ARM were trying to find a way to forge meaningful change. They all paid a high price for their ideals.

John came to England in the December of 1964, got work as a journalist in Bristol for the Western Morning News and then in London for the BBC, while he waited for a place on a teacher training course, which he started in Exeter in 1965. And so the next stage of his life began. A life in education, a life with Jenny, whom he would meet at the house of a mutual friend in Bristol in 1968, a home in Exeter.



Fighting Apartheid – words by Mervyn Bennun; spoken by Paul Wilson

I think that I met John in Cape Town at some time in the 1960s, probably on the beach at Muizenberg or Clifton. It must have been a casual encounter, for when our paths crossed in 1969 or 1970 he looked familiar when I saw him standing on the fringes of an Anti-Apartheid Movement demonstration in Exeter,

It is important to understand what South Africa was like in the 1960s. The repression messed everything up; it hung like a dead albatross around the necks of everyone. Bannings, trials, detentions, torture, deaths..... Everyone was involved and had to smell the rotting carcass – even the people who thought that they were not involved and so didn't have to think about it. It affected everyone's life - police and government supporters; the perpetrators of the horrors going on about us, their victims, and those who thought that they were neither; those who did resist, and those who didn't; and those who simply packed up and left the country. Nobody escaped. Everyone was damaged somehow, and lost something.

Many - mostly black - resisted the violent attempts to rob them of their humanity so in the end, even if they lost everything else that they possessed, that's what they kept: their humanity and dignity, held together by the scars. The rest - most of them white - voluntarily gave up being entirely human, thinking that this was how they would save everything that they had and were. Instead, they lost themselves; today over forty years later, many will even try to paint scars on hoping that people will think that they're real ones. They will tell you earnestly even these days how they never supported apartheid, how they suffered while on Fourth Beach at Clifton or in Hampstead (and sometimes both) when people were driven from their homes

or went into detention or prison or were tortured. But even they, who somehow once could not see Robben Island from Sea Point, are victims too because nobody should have to choose between real and painted-on scars as proof of their humanity.

John identified himself wholeheartedly with the solidarity campaign in the UK. He became an active member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and served some years as its Chair, though I think that he preferred not to. He rejected utterly any suggestion that because he had been detained and tortured he was therefore a struggle hero.

He made no secret of his support for the African National Congress.

John did not need to paint his scars on. He was my comrade in the African National Congress.

Hamba kahle, John. Hamba kahle mKhonto.....mKhonto we Sizwe.....



John didn't return to South Africa till 1993 when he showed Jenny, Kate and Becca the locations of his "When I was a boy" stories and spent time with his sister, Karin, and her family. John and Jenny went back the following year with Chester and Anita Long, witnessing the foreign minister, Alfred Nzo, address Parliament in Cape Town - they'd last seen him in their house in Belmont Road talking to anti-apartheid activists. Throughout that visit, *Nkosi Sikelele* rang out wherever they went.



Househusband and writer – Kate Lloyd

I'm going to read a diary entry of John's from 4 September 1979 which gives us a glimpse of his house husbanding, his politicking and his writing ambitions (he explored getting his house husband writings published, as well as some radio plays he worked on).

It also gives you a flavour of the unconventional childhood that Becca and I enjoyed. This included being sent out to deliver Labour Party leaflets (we found our small hands were perfect for taking already-delivered Tory ones out of letterboxes), calling our parents by their first names and complicated manoeuvres with the famous black hat when John ran the Exeter marathons, so he could start and finish wearing it, but not have to wear it for all 26 miles.

Being at home with me and Becca also meant that John taught me to read before I started school, using the Peter and Jane books (which did not chime with my upbringing!). But Jenny will talk more in a moment about John's teaching.

4/9/79

Mr Benn came to lunch today, my first 'at home', Jenny's first day back at teaching. I can't see why people get bored at home if this is the sort of thing that happens.

I tried to take things calmly. Jenny had been quite worked up about restarting, but, Mr Benn apart, there wasn't anything for me to get collywobbles about.

Jenny got up first, unheard of hitherto, but didn't feed Becca and Kate as I used to do [here there is a note added later which reads - *She says she is too bad-tempered in the mornings*. We came down at about 8.30 just as she went off on my bike, the saddle lowered [because] Misty has [not] arrived at Morton's yet. Later, she said she made an inelegant entrance at Priory, long skirt over crossbar.

We fed, while I started the bread rolls. Then we took Kate to playgroup, the first time I've done that. One mother asked me if I was doing the ironing. 'What ironing?' I asked. It is, of course, much easier for us to swap because we share so much of the work already. The only extras for me, care of Becca and Kate apart, are shopping and the washing. When some men say, with awe, 'It's very brave of you', they conceive a swap involving the whole range of things their wives do alone: cooking, cleaning and child care included. Somebody in Jenny's staffroom quipped 'Did you leave him a casserole in the oven?'

Becca and I came back, washed breakfast things, then went to bank in Heavitree and bought cheeses and plums. We prepared lunch, shaped rolls, collected Kate, baked rolls and received arriving Press and Party members.

Tony Benn took his lunch into the garden to be interviewed by the Press, then he came upstairs to sitting room to talk with Party members. He was, as I have always found him, direct, open and engaging. He needed two cups of tea.

After he left I washed up, with Kate ate lunch and prepared supper.

Jenny arrived home tired but mostly satisfied by her first day.



Teaching – Jenny Lloyd

John taught English, film and sailing to secondary students in Bristol and Exeter. He trained teachers to teach English in Bishop Stortford and supported student teachers from the English department of the School of Education when he was head of English at Vincent Thompson. He taught graduate lawyers to be barristers in London and he taught law to undergraduates in Exeter. We've heard from so many colleagues going all the way to his Bristol days who write of their respect and love for John and pay tribute to his inspiration.

A fellow teacher from Ashton Park School in Bristol remembers huge reels of film arriving from the BFI and 'there was filming on Super 8 which the kids loved'. When

he was filming with a class in Bristol in a disused warehouse, some of the kids climbed on the roof (probably sussing out the lead supply). A couple of mounted police rode by, and the kids said, "Run for it, sir."

His first appearance in The Express and Echo was when he was teaching at Vincent Thompson. The bakers were on strike and John was pictured – on the front page – teaching children to make bread – strike breaking, surely.

He showed Kate and Becca how to eat well; that you can live your life the way you want it and make big changes; that things don't have to stop once you hit a certain age.

He taught me optimism (though I wasn't a good pupil) and showed me you can be happy despite the awfulness of the world.



Marilyn: For John and Jenny, the personal was always political over their 48 years together. This song says it all.

Love for Love – Ewan MacColl
Performed by Paul Wilson & Marilyn Tucker



Politics – words by Chester Long; spoken by Emma Morse

John was an inspiration to me, always hungry to learn, fair, even tempered and full of interest in the world.

He was the maker of bread rolls, runner of races, the singer of songs. He was the opposite of Dad but also the perfect complement to him.

Those are the words I wrote to Jenny following John's death. They will serve to introduce you to his relationship with my Dad, his friend and political comrade, Chester Long. Dad has retired from public speaking but the memories are his and the words mine.

John and my Dad, the odd couple of Exeter politics enjoyed a friendship that survived decades and many a political disaster. Their friendship was based on three core principles: the Labour Party, Exeter City Council and rugby. I can't imagine John getting very far trying to discuss the finer points of modernism vs realism or the choral arrangements of traditional song with my Dad. I sometimes wonder if their relationship was so successful because they couldn't hear each other.

These are Dad's memories in my words.

John was a man of contradictions – a safe pair of hands holding a loose cannon. As

a former English teacher, he could write the perfect press release; his way with words was unrivalled, but discretion was not always his friend. On occasions, he happily shared a little too much with the media. In some cases, information was embargoed so that John wouldn't let it slip. Dad, joined by Jenny over the deselection debacle, made it their mission to keep his mouth shut.

John started his political career on Devon County Council – I hear all the best people do. I believe thanks are due to Saxon Spence for saying there was no room for him on the Education committee. This meant he served on planning and this combined with his later planning roles including chair of planning at Exeter City Council laid the foundations for his work as a planning Barrister.

After one term at county, he saw the light and moved to Exeter City Council, having won a seat in Rougemont, a ward which circled the city centre, and which was won on the back of a famous, but unsuccessful campaign to save their local allotments (now under Clifton Hill Sports Centre).

In later years John became the deputy leader of the Exeter Labour group and Exeter City Council and Dad and John became a political pairing, him the John Prescott to Dad's Tony Blair. This set him up nicely to be selected as the Labour Party Parliamentary Candidate in 1992. His candidacy was not without its challenges including the city council saving Exeter City Football club and the minor issue of John's natural smile not cooperating with a camera when it came to taking shots for election material.

John was not successful in his attempt to become an MP in 1992, but he did record the one of the largest swings to the Labour Party in the country, 8.45%. John thanked the public in his own inimitable style by running the Great West Run wearing a shirt with 'Thank you Exeter' on the back.

Belmont Road was always buzzing on Saturday mornings with key members of the council coming and going, coffee always brewing and home-made bread on the table, as local politics was discussed, children played and contributed. The sharp minds of Kate and Becca inputting – that's where I cut my political teeth.

John was a great politician. There were those that may have been better, and I've met many who are worse. But most of all he was honourable, hardworking and smart.



Law – Michael Berkley

I am honoured to have been asked to say a few words about John's legal life. Time is short, so there is much I have had to miss out, of course.

John Lloyd is responsible for many good things that have happened - as we have heard, and are going to hear, today. He was a man of immense strength of character and determination. This is reflected in his legal life, too.

First, there was the establishment of Castle Chambers – after the disappointment of a lack of a tenancy following pupillage at what is now Walnut House, he had the strength and courage to advertise for practising barristers to set up a new set. He, of course, ended up teaming up with Christina Gorna – chalk and cheese (for those you did not know, Christina might have been described as a force of nature) – but it worked very well for a long time! Exeter was a crowded place for Chambers – it already had three very well established sets who did not take kindly to a somewhat odd trio: this upstart of johnny-come-lately middle-aged barrister and his very flamboyant HofC, together with Francesca Quint – an astonishingly clever and mild-mannered chancery practitioner.

It was this move on John's part that brought me to Exeter from London after Christina had approached me through a mutual friend. If it were not for John, I would never have been in Exeter; Rougemont Chambers would not have been born, and Magdalen Chambers would not exist. It was truly a "sliding-doors" event: many, many people's lives have been affected by John's courage and determination in taking that step to start Castle Chambers.

And John's practice reflected his firm belief in genuine justice; fighting for the underdog and those unfortunate in life. He worked a lot with Cartridges – synonymous with such causes – initially in landlord and tenant and other social and housing matters, but latterly instructed by many solicitors he moved into Judicial Review: a complex and legally fraught area in which John became an expert. John was, of course, also an acknowledged expert in planning law – so we have John to thank for Gavin's presence in Exeter too!

After Castle Chambers dissolved, we went our separate ways and John worked from London – he taught aspiring barristers and practised from Francesca's chambers up there for a while, before returning to join the by then well-established Rougemont Chambers in 2002. That was his opportunity to engage with, and bring his positive influence to bear upon, a whole new generation and group of people – especially the youngsters – an opportunity he embraced. John became a much loved senior member of Chambers – always ready with a piece of sound advice, always given with wit and charm, as well as a very sound legal basis. He will be sorely missed as the many, many emails I had on having to give the sad news, demonstrate.

I saw John exactly two weeks ago today – to the hour – and we spoke about some of those old days, and his face really lit up. I was so glad for that opportunity – as I am for this one.

John was a truly principled man, which was reflected in his legal practice. He was a good lawyer, an honourable member of the Bar, and a good, kind, friend to me and many others in the profession. He was supported throughout by his loving, and adorable wife Jenny and a great family. He was also enormous fun, and we shared many a happy conversation over glass or two of wine over the years. Thank you John – the legal profession is indebted to you.



Jenny

John had an eclectic taste in music from Verdi to Johnny Cash. He listened to jazz, folk, classical and world music. He always told me that this was his favourite song:

Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes
music John Wall Calcott; words Ben Jonson
Performed by Song Fishers



Golf & conversation – words by Peter Tregenna; spoken by Philip Clarkson

When Jenny asked me to contribute to this celebration of John's life my sense of what a privilege this is was matched by my deep regret that I am unable to be here today. Sincere thanks to Philip Clarkson for reading this in my absence.

John was a man of many parts and careers. I was fortunate to spend many hours with him often on golf courses around Devon as well as in Portugal, France and Ireland. His end of term golf report would read as follows:

Whilst John learned his golf on the arid and sun drenched courses of South Africa he adapted well to the muddy and rain soaked conditions in Devon. He was an accomplished and first rate golfer whose greatest asset, ironically given his knee replacement operation, were his legs – H G Wells said ‘the uglier a man’s legs the better he plays golf – it’s almost a law’, a comment seemingly written for John. His interpretation of the dress code was idiosyncratic and the sight of him in his straw hat, shorts and knee length South African style socks was a unique experience. John’s play from both tee and fairway was as strong and stable as any politician’s and his putting, controversially was of the few rather than the many.

My friendship with John extended well beyond the golf course and I have fond memories of many hours spent in conversation over a wide range of both wines and topics. John’s breadth of knowledge was unusually matched by a real depth of understanding across numerous areas well beyond Law and politics. He taught me so much and his counsel was always wise and thoughtful, particularly when most needed – I remain indebted to him. I miss his sense and sensibility especially at this time – and can only guess what he would have made of the current election. He was a truly good man who faced his life and his death with courage and good humour. To have known him was a source of enrichment and a delight.

He is much admired and greatly missed.



Lifelong learning – Becca Lloyd

John, was an eternal student. As well as completing two degrees, a masters, teacher and barrister professional qualifications, he taught himself many skills including how to fix up the sash windows at Belmont Road and did adult education in subjects ranging from car maintenance, to German and Italian.

Back in the early eighties, a journalist at the kitchen table at Belmont Road got John to agree to run the first Exeter marathon. The next day it was in the paper – there was no way out. What did John do? He bought a book of course, and learnt to marathon run. When he got his first allotment, the old guy with the plot next to him told him, ‘just tickle the top’, but John had bought a book and dug down deep to turn the soil, not once but twice – resulting in proliferation of couch grass. That was how he was, not tidy, but always well prepared.

When he went back to university to get his law degree, he was in his 40s, and his memory, which had never been good, made learning all those cases a challenge. He tried mnemonics – they helped, and he read somewhere that relaxation could help. So he bought a tape and lying flat on the floor in the study, he learnt the names of all the muscles in his body, told each one to relax, slowed it down and got his degree.

They told him at school that he couldn’t sing. So despite his love of music, he never did. But when he was living up in London in the late ‘90s, teaching law graduates barristering, he decided to give it a go, and went to an evening class – ‘singing for the tone deaf.’ Having gained in confidence, when back living full-time in Exeter he joined Wren Music’s Voices in Common and began to really find his voice.

John was also of course an enthusiastic user of social media – he loved Facebook (so much so he ended with a full four FB profiles) and Twitter. And a few years ago, he started a PhD in Planning Law.

John liked a goal, and set himself many in his life, holding himself to a very high standard. He didn’t meet them all, but he never stopped dreaming.



Marilyn tells the story of John singing Sarie Marais at Song School and introduces Tolpuddle Man.

