

Tribute

Jonathan Roads was born on the 26th October 1943 in Hitchin in Hertfordshire. His parents were Albert and Barbara, who were Quakers and peace activists; in fact, Albert was a conscientious objector during the Second World War. They were caretakers in a Quaker Meeting House and were very active in that community. Albert became a social worker and Barbara, a member of Mensa, was sadly unable to take up a university place she had gained, aged 50, having had a stroke.

Whatever the truth behind some differing stories, Jon did not live with his parents as a very young child and his cousin Tim will speak more of this. When Jon returned to his family, aged five, they lived in Leytonstone in London and he went to Davenant Foundation Boys' School. His sister Lesley was born when he was eight and later the family moved to Burgess Hill in Sussex. Jon passed his Eleven Plus exam and travelled daily by train to his boys' school in Hove, where he had many friends.

After school Jon went to Seale Hayne Agricultural College near Newton Abbot in Devon, which later became part of the University of Plymouth. It was here that Jon met his first wife Val and they set up home in Lydney in Gloucestershire where the three children, Stephen, Oliver and Eleanor were born in 1971, 1974 and 1976.

The family moved to Horseshoe Farm in Brewham near Bruton, where they kept pigs and which is where Jon met friend of forty years, Stephen Abrahall, and his wife Jane. Their children all went to Upton Noble Primary School and the families spent a lot of time together.

Jon always demonstrated a healthy disregard for the law and his parents would no doubt have been proud that Jon, with Stephen, took part in the CND 'Snowball' campaign of mass civil disobedience in the 1980s, which, on their part, involved symbolically cutting through MoD fencing at Corsham.

Sadly, Jon's marriage with Val ended and he moved to Stoney Stratton and finally Evercreech, where he has lived for the last thirty years. In Stoney Stratton Jon had another brush with the law when he was fined for growing cannabis in his greenhouse, unfortunately sited alongside a public footpath!

Jon met and married Kate and they lived happily in Evercreech for many years. Even after their marriage ended, they remained close until Kate's death in late 2015.

Jon had many business ventures, not all of which thrived, but his leadership of 'Aquaid', a WaterAid franchise, which lasted about sixteen years, was immensely successful because of the things they achieved, awards won, but mostly in terms of the teamwork, loyalty and friendships which were generated in those years, with Jon at the helm. When he did eventually retire from this business, what he feared most, the loss of the jobs of the staff, was the inevitable consequence.

Jon had supplied WaterAid water around the Glastonbury Festival site, a place that Jon knew intimately anyway, as he had spent many years as a volunteer at the CND staffed information points.

Jon also set up, in his spare bedroom in Stoney Stratton, the one and only pig staffing recruitment agency, aptly entitled 'Road Hogs' which he ran and continued to have hands-on dealings with until very recently. This has remained very successful and, now based in Frome, is in the capable hands of Liz who will continue the good work. With a registration plate of PIG JOB on his car, Jon could never hope to remain anonymous on his travels around the south-west.

Jon's other interests were many: music and reading with eclectic tastes in both. Ellie has packed away hundreds of books from his home and she had enormous difficulty narrowing down musical choices for today's ceremony from his many loves: his particular favourite being Leonard Cohen, whom he had seen on numerous occasions, and others, but usually people who sang with poetry in their hearts.

Jon loved his gardens and allotment in Evercreech, where he was the treasurer for many years, and where he would go to tune in with nature. He grew vegetables and fruit which he liked making into chutneys and jams, and also had a fantastic asparagus bed. He had booked a new plot at the Langport allotments where he was going to live and was already planning what to grow next year. He loved walking, especially with the Brislington Twalkers, with whom he walked, and talked, sometimes devising and leading the walks.

Jon has always had dogs in his life: Fly, Poppy and when he died he left behind the lurchers Meg and Pippa. Any visitors to his home would have to be prepared to heave a dog off their bed and watch out that their breakfast didn't get pinched. Meg and Pippa are being well looked after and Lola the cat has a wonderful new home in Babcary.

Jon was of course very politically aware, a keen supporter of Jeremy Corbyn, a self-confessed newspaper and coffee snob, loved the Saturday Guardian crossword and the Independent crossword during the week. He was a big fan of Radio 4, of Andrew Marr on Sunday politics, especially when it was combined with a breakfast fry-up.

Jon loved travel especially trying new places, in Cuba, Morocco and Greece, for example. He went several times to The Gambia, in west Africa taking the children on one occasion and it was here that he made connections with people whom he supported to set themselves up in business.

In fact, Jon was charitable and generous to a fault, sometimes even a little naïve, it has to be said. He loaned money or gifted it to many: people to whom he has given a leg up on a business ladder or helped out in times of need or enabled to change career, through pure generosity.

He and several pals, actually 119 of them, once dressed up in orange boiler suits to be locked up for 24 hours in Shepton Mallet prison and as a fund-raising event for S.O.S. Africa, it was amazingly successful, reaching a staggering thirty-five thousand pounds.

Outwardly a very gregarious and relaxed man, Jon had a darker, more vulnerable side to his personality, which Tim will speak more of. He was anxious and looked into his inner self more than was perhaps helpful to him. He used to spend each early morning in his hot tub, with a cup of tea, planning the day and indulging in mindfulness and

then, in the evening of a cold day, warming himself up and putting the day to bed. He was never quite sure that he was taking the right path and after some mistakes in his life, maybe he was more aware that he might just be repeating history. There is a quote from Oscar Wilde on Jon's Facebook page, 'Be yourself- everybody else is already taken' which reflects his need to be honest and genuine.

In later life Jon had spent much more time with his family, his daughter Ellie and her partner Laurence and their two children Soloman and Nova, and his own sons Stephen and Ollie with whom he went swimming every Thursday, followed by tea and cake. Jon wasn't much of a drinker, much preferring a good cup of tea, with a chat and putting the world to rights.

Jon loved his cottage in Evercreech, although it was usually incredibly untidy and he was so ashamed that he tidied it every Thursday evening before Harriet got to see it on Friday morning to do her weekly clean.

However, after his relationship of many years with Grace, they were about to embark on a new life together in a house in Langport and there was lots to look forward to. Jon loved the company of women and was a real romantic. During the Somerset floods a few years ago, Grace had tried to deter Jon from visiting her as her farm was cut off. Completely undeterred and in true heroic style, Jon drove as far as possible, took his clothes off and waded into the depths with his clothes held high above his head.

That's an image to retain in your mind, a man who faced difficulties but who never let them get in his way. It is so sad that a knee operation, designed to give him back mobility and ease, should have contributed to his untimely death.