

# Humanist *Ceremonies*

Farewell Ceremony  
followed by  
Celebration of Life Ceremony

for

**Stuart Wilson**

**30<sup>th</sup> October 1951 – 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2018**

Held at

Woking Crematorium and The Lightbox

on

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018

10.15am

## Tribute from the Farewell Ceremony at the crematorium

This ceremony is our more formal farewell to Stuart and will be followed by a full celebration of the inspirational and free-spirited life he led - a life that has touched the lives of everyone here today, and so many others who were lucky enough to spend time with him.

Stuart was described recently by his sister-in-law Janet as “vibrant, witty and naughty” and we’ll hear several stories later today that centre on these delightful characteristics of his. From a young age, Stuart knew exactly who he was and where he was going. He followed his destiny, or shaped his future – however you choose to see it – by developing his immense natural talent for art. We all know what an incredible collection of work he went on to produce over his lifetime. We can only be thankful that he chose to explore this extraordinary gift and in doing so shared it with the rest of us.

A funny, blunt, sometimes stubborn man with a gift for malapropisms and great personal charisma, Stuart was a person who generally made an immediate and unforgettable impression on those he met. He refused to be dictated to – he had little time for the formality of suits and ceremonies. Our gathering here today will honour him in its simplicity and its straightforward reflections on what he meant, and will continue to mean, to those he leaves behind. Stuart could be irreverent and cheeky, and he nearly always brought laughter to proceedings, but his charm and his natural warmth were above all the qualities that endeared him to his family and many close friends. Stuart’s partner Noel was by his side, metaphorically when not literally, for over 32 years. Their longstanding relationship, complete with its established exasperations and well-honed traditional role allocations, has been at the very centre of Stuart’s life for all of their time together.

## Tributes from the Celebration of Life Ceremony at the crematorium

### Welcome and opening tribute by Hannah Green

It’s wonderful to see so many of you have been able to join us here to honour his memory. Some people who’ve been a significant part of Stuart’s life are unable to be with us in person, but they are nevertheless very much here in spirit. Stuart’s nephews Alex and Nicholas have to be elsewhere but they are thinking of us. Similarly, Alan Bainbridge, a longstanding and extremely close friend, is sadly too unwell to make the journey from his home in Exeter but he sends his love. Stuart valued Alan’s friendship enormously and we’ll more hear more about it later.

I’d like to extend a special welcome to Jo McConnell, who is here with us. Stuart first met Jo when she was just 18 and over the years he came to see her both as a close friend and as a surrogate daughter. We know that Stuart will still be very much in Jo’s thoughts on the happy day later this month when she gets married, and know that Stuart would of course loved to have been with her in person on that special day.

I'm also delighted to give a particular welcome to Stuart and Noel's good friend Rachel Thomas. From the day they met, they enjoyed a natural rapport and it was inevitable that Stuart and Noel would become honorary uncle figures when Rachel adopted her daughter Jasmine. In recent times, as Stuart faced the various challenges of ill health, Noel has seen how Rachel and Jasmine's company has often lifted Stuart's spirits, and Jasmine has written a few words for me to read on her behalf. She says:

"I love Stuart very much and will always see Stuart and Noel as part of my family. For as long as I can remember Stuart's catchphrase has been 'oh bugger' which in my experience was always followed by another swear once he'd realised what he'd said. So Noel devised a game for me where Stuart had to pay me 10p every time he swore. I loved it and followed him around constantly waiting for the money to come in. It's safe to say that I came out of that game a millionaire. I will always love them both so much, no matter what."

Some of you here have already commented to me that Stuart was lucky to have found, in Noel, a partner who was his perfect complement. Together for over 32 years, they've been part of the fabric of each other's lives and seen as a unit of one by many of their close friends. Within this incredibly close relationship, they each gave the other the space they needed to flourish. Their friend Avril told me that Stuart encouraged Noel to take up playing bridge again, explaining that he wanted workaholic Noel to have some recreation at least one night a week - but also admitting that it was so he could indulge himself in watching a musical or some other TV programme that Noel wouldn't enjoy.

A healthy dose of tension is a vital ingredient in many relationships and Noel and Stuart kept one another on their toes. Most years in their three decades together they visited the Lake District and they soon found their rhythm, with Noel organising the walks and Stuart striding ahead of the group like a mountain goat, complaining loudly if something didn't suit him.

On one visit with a friend, Raewyn, they walked across Striding Edge. Stuart was proud of this later but at the time the difficult route made him pretty cross with Noel. This was back in Stuart's days as a smoker, so he had a fag break to recover his equilibrium and then sat down to join the others who were by then finishing lunch. It wasn't Stuart's lucky day - as he took out his sandwich, a sheep snatched it and ate it, so he had to walk all the way back on an empty stomach.

Noel tells me that Stuart purported to hate crowds but actually he loved to meet people and always liked to be the centre of attention. They had a trip down the Nile a few years ago on a very swanky boat and Stuart was unimpressed to find they'd been placed on a table with others. Noel left Stuart to have the difficult negotiation to secure their own table, which he managed, and then, to Noel's great amusement

Stuart, now happily in control of his audience, spent the rest of the trip inviting others to join them!

While humour was a fundamental part of their dynamic, the qualities that Noel loved and admired above all in Stuart were his immense kindness and his ability to get on with everyone. Noel noticed many times that Stuart was always willing to give away the most precious things. He appreciated his good fortune in being able to travel so often with Noel, and he cherished the lovely possessions they acquired, but Stuart's generosity meant that in practice he would give up anything to be able to put others first. Noel recalls that when one of Stuart's pupils divorced recently, she mentioned that she needed an easel to be able to paint in her new home. Rather than giving her one of his many art class easels, Stuart gave her the one he'd bought at art college – his best one, the one that had the most meaning to him.

As well as being incredibly generous and considerate, people who knew Stuart well found him to be a deeply spiritual person. He was open to ideas and receptive to what others had to offer. In a few minutes we'll hear a tribute from one of the best friends he acquired on his journey through life. Let's begin our tributes to him now, though, with some memories from the family he grew up with. First, Jean Wilson, Stuart's sister-in-law, will speak on behalf of Stuart's brothers and their families.

#### Personal memories from Stuart's family read by Jean Wilson

We're here to celebrate the life of a great man. As the saying goes, behind every great man is a...well in Stuart's case is another great man. So can we please show our love and affection for our wonderful Noel?

#### Childhood

Stuart was born in Sunderland, Co. Durham in 1951 on the heels of his twin brother Ian. Brian was born a year later and Andrew and Peter were born a few years later to make up the five Wilson boys. The family initially lived with their grandparents before moving to Peterlee, Co Durham. Memories are of being free to spend a lot of their time playing outdoors with their friends.

The family moved to Leeds when Stuart was nine and he spent his formative years in Yorkshire; years that would shape his personality and passions. Constantly drawing and painting, developing tastes in music and making a lot of school friends. Stuart and his twin brother Ian were inseparable. They became friends with Charlie and they became the 'gang of three'.

Stuart was no saint – It's probably why we liked him so

much – and he certainly got up to mischief as a child. Charlie recounts the story of when they built a den in the local woods, they decided to light a fire and cook some sausages. We know that a fire in a wooden den isn't a great idea, but at the time it probably seemed ok. The inevitable happened and the whole lot caught fire. They did what any 10 year old would do – ran away.

### Teenage years

Stuart, Ian and Charlie were 'leading lights' in the art world at Allerton Grange School.

They were also responsible for booking some big acts for 6<sup>th</sup> Form school concerts such as Fairport Convention and Peter recalls Stuart sneaking him in to see Be-Bop Deluxe when he was only 14 years old.

They were the 'movers and shakers' of their day!!

They had long, flowing locks – take a look at some of the old photos!!

Art, music, friends and parties were the order of the day!!

At the end of their school life, the 'Gang of Three' took their separate paths to different art colleges but stayed in touch with each other.

### College/professional life/career

Stuart studied at Falmouth School of Art and Design and graduated with a Fine Arts Degree in Painting. He then took a Post graduate course at Leeds Polytechnic in art education, before becoming an art teacher.

His first teaching job was in Malpas, Cheshire. Stuart had a great life in Cheshire where he had many friends, including Alan. They enjoyed several cycling holidays and were to become friends for life. They often cycled to the local pub and were, on one occasion, pulled over by the local police officer for being drunk in charge of a bicycle. They had apparently been weaving in and out of the central white lines (on a country road). They eventually noticed the blue lights and were stopped. Stuart promptly propped his bike against the police car, which didn't please the local bobby all that much. Surprisingly, they were let off with a stern talking to.

He had a couple of escapades in his car. While on a trip with Andrew and others, they had to negotiate a narrow lane, which had ditches on either side. Everyone seemed to manage the track except Stuart who ended up in one of the ditches with his car at a precarious angle. Julie recounts that the reason for this seems to be that Stuart

was talking too much and not paying attention. Stuart talking too much – who'd believe it!! The local farmer helpfully towed the car out with his tractor.

I also understand that the county of Surrey has lost a couple of traffic islands, courtesy of Stuart. He swore blind that it 'hadn't been there before'!

He later moved to a teaching post in Beverley, East Yorkshire in 1985.

This move was probably his most important as it was here that he met Noel who was to become the love of his life. Stuart and Noel later moved to London and then Surrey. He and Noel shared their love of music, theatre, literature, art and travel.

They shared several houses that quickly became their homes. They filled each home together with artefacts, books, antiques, artwork – and clocks. Stuart's pride in their lifestyle was evident as he used to describe newly added items with enthusiasm using phrases like 'I can't wait to show you' and 'Wait 'til you see this'. Stuart loved the sanctity of their home and was very house proud. At the last count he had 5 vacuum cleaners – one for every occasion!!

#### His art – exhibitions, teaching

Stuart's travel experiences became the source of inspiration for his art. He interpreted his memories by painting with passion and enthusiasm. The result is a timeless record of his skill and talent to be enjoyed by anyone lucky enough to have a painting hanging in their home. His paintings will not only continue to give immense enjoyment to their owners but also act as a catalyst to remember a remarkable man.

From 1977 to the present day, Stuart was invited to exhibit his work in a variety of venues in London and Surrey. He was a member of the Guildford Society of the Arts and formed the Surrey Open Arts Group in 2006 from his White Rose Studio in Woking where he continued to paint and inspire groups of budding artists and amateurs alike.

#### Life in Surrey

Stuart was a great cook and loved to entertain friends and family. He and Noel were the most perfect hosts and we had many great get-togethers. He loved his time with family and friends and they entertained people most

weekends. He also liked quiet time and one of his favorite places was the Lake District, where he spent time a few weeks ago. Peter and Janet shared a few days with Stuart and Noel that will have very special memories for them.

I can't speak about Stuart without mentioning the other love of his life – Pippin. Walks with Stuart and Pippin always took quite a long time – not because of Pippin but because Stuart stopped and talked to almost every dog and their owner.

Stuart had 10 nieces and nephews. You're going to hear from 3 of them in a minute (thank goodness they didn't all want to speak!!)

Stuart loved his family dearly and was really interested to know how their lives were developing. He hadn't seen some of them for a while, but he was always keen to hear their news.

Stuart was really pleased when a niece and nephew, my son and daughter moved relatively close by - my daughter lives in London and my son, his partner and my granddaughter live in Epsom. Stuart was thrilled to have family close by and, as we visit London and Surrey regularly we have spent a lot of time with Stuart and Noel in recent years.

The last time we saw Stuart was at the end of June. We were in Epsom looking after our granddaughter for the weekend and Stuart invited us and our daughter for a Sunday barbeque lunch. It was a hot day, we all swam in the pool and had a beautiful lunch courtesy of Stuart and Noel. It was one of those fabulous summer days that was just perfect. Perfect memories for us to keep.

A charismatic person, encouraged and supported unequivocally by Noel. Stuart could talk to anyone, was friendly, generous, caring, slightly bonkers sometimes, talented, stylish, loved to gossip, was impressed by famous people (did he mention the time he met Wayne Sleep? – he told me about 27 times!!).

Stuart was a truly fabulous person and we loved him very much.

We know we have great memories of Stuart. What we don't know is how we're going to live without him.

He will be missed more than words can say.

### Eulogy from Luke and Charlotte

#### **LUKE...**

9 years ago I took my relatively new girlfriend to meet, as Stuart would say, my 'very trendy, very cool', Uncle Stuart and Uncle Noel. Stuart's enchanting charm along with a large wine had immediately settled Lois warmly into their home.

Stuart soon had Lois laughing beside the pool when he then proceeded to prove just how cool he was by showing off his new nipple piercing... which he proclaimed was 'very butch'.

We'd like to say how honoured we are to talk to you today about our very much loved, Uncle Stuart.

Having had Stuart in our lives meant having an abundance of laughter, art, warmth, music, great cooking, mischief and love.

A hugely influential and inspirational member of our family. A beautiful person, who has left a deep and meaningful imprint on us all.

#### **CHARLOTTE...**

The imprint he has left on us stretches back to our childhood.

As children growing up, travelling to London to see our Uncle Stuart & Uncle Noel were always such exciting times.

We always arrived late at night, to the glow of the swimming pool and the conservatory illuminating the garden. We would then catch a glimpse of Stuart zooming across the kitchen, adorned with an apron, a pan in one hand and one of his many hoovers in the other.

We were then met at the door with such excitement, the warmest of welcomes, the smell of an amazing supper and love. We'd stay up long beyond bedtime, listening to music, rude stories and laughing until our sides hurt.

#### **LUKE...**

Stuart embraced life in the South. We endlessly wound him up regarding his adoption of the southern accent particularly with specific words such as baath, graass.



However, on the rare occasion that you may hear Stuart swear, it was never baastard it was BASTARD.

His native northern tongue would always resurface for that particular word. We would joke at how common Stuart was, which then had us all falling about with laughter.

We would also shoot down any attempts Stuart made to be acknowledged as 'cool' or 'butch'. Met by Stuart with 'you bitch' - a loving come-back delivered with a grin that we will always cherish. Stuart would then like to remind us with - "you're very lucky to have such a cool uncle you know".

### **CHARLOTTE...**

On the other hand, if you ever tried to impress Stuart, you'd be met with "yawn" and Stuart's signature tut and eye roll.

We would collectively poke fun at Stuart's 'man bag' or as I would shout - 'Stuart - have you remembered your hand bag!?' with the response "it is not a hand bag!".

Stuart loved a girlie gossip, and this was where his naughty side shone through for me.

The one saying we will miss the most has to be "oh wow!" - it was Stuart through and through.

Collectively known as the 'Stuart Sayings' - these all contributed to his beautiful character and made us love him even more.

### **LUKE...**

Stuart's art and passions have been very influential. Stuart and Noel have built a beautiful home, decorated with art and an eclectic collection of objects from their travels.

I personally found Stuart's own art and sense of design deeply inspiring; I was always excited to see his latest paintings and have a look in his studio at his works in progress.

My wife Lois and I would return from any visit, wanting to immediately update our interior decor to make it look like Stuart & Noel's. We'd then attempt a number of Stuart's recipes, have a sudden desire to invest in art, and I would often start drawing again.

### **CHARLOTTE...**

Stuart was extremely thoughtful. In 2011 my husband Gav proposed to me in Morocco. We flew home engaged, arriving late at night into Gatwick and stayed with Stuart & Noel.

Stuart had decorated the bedroom with candles, flowers, chocolates and scattered rose petals. A beautiful gesture we will never forget.

We shared a passion for the theatre, shopping, gossip and men. He is everything I could have hoped for in an uncle.

### **LUKE...**

It has been so evident to us how in love Stuart & Noel were. On a number of occasions while Noel was engaged in other conversation, Stuart would turn to us and say - "isn't he beautiful... he's a genius you know" - this has stayed with us. The depth of their affection for each other was so plainly in sight. As children growing up and into our own married lives, their relationship has been a perfect example.

Stuart has lived a life of creativity, leaving behind a trail of beautiful art. Teaching his gift to countless others, some of whom are here today.

Stuart - you will be deeply missed, but forever lovingly remembered.

### **CHARLOTTE...**

Love is a very common theme when talking about Stuart. Stuart transcended two generations for our family, he was deeply loved as an uncle, a brother and brother in law.

Stuart had a gift of making you feel like you were the most important person in the world when you were with him.

Stuart - we both love you, we all love you and we will miss you very much.

### Eulogy from Olli

'Our Uncle Stuart'

Uncle, God father, brother, twin brother, husband and son.

Stuart held a special place in mine and my brothers hearts. Maybe in recent years we haven't been as frequent in each other's lives as we once were, but the love we have for him will ever remain strong. A love that was quite unique for us in particular, I'm

conscious everyone here today had their own special bond with Stuart and I mean to say this with a sense of equality and respect but I am of course talking about his dynamic relationship with his twin brother, my Dad.

I can't imagine the pain endured from losing a brother in the manner of Stuarts passing, just to acknowledge and except our uncle has gone has been tough enough. So to all of my uncles Andy, Brian, Peter and Noel, I extend my love and support to you especially, if you ever need it.

I would like to take this opportunity to say something on behalf of my Dad, Ian. I know being close to my own brothers that we hold an intrinsic relationship, but to be a twin must take this to a level we could never truly or fully understand. Dads relationship with Stuart was fundamental in the love and fondness we had for him, contributing to a lot of our experiences with Stuart over the years, growing up, as he played a part in our lives. Dad said to me that he felt he had literally lost a part of himself. They had their subtle and obvious differences but at their core they shared an unbreakable bond, an almost telepathic and profound connection that I have witnessed on several occasions.

Something I'll never forget was the time we went to the train station, in Leeds to pick Stuart up. I can't remember why he was staying with us but what I do remember was a moment beyond the explainable. Stuart approached us in the station only to realise as he got closer he was wearing the exact same clothes as my Dad. Same shirt, same trousers, I even think the shoe colours were the same if I remember correctly, but the stand out piece of this bizarre coincidence was the waist coat. I remember this so well, not just because the waist coat was awful (90's fashion)... No offence Stuart or Dad. But it was such a one off in design, to both pick the same waistcoat 100's of miles apart unaware of each other's actions was, simply put, astonishing.

It may sound daft but this is one of those experiences I look back on and when I want to believe there is more to this world than just our physical existence, extraordinary moments like this fill me with hope and Stuart played his part in that. So Dad, I know we've spoke at length about everything and although a light you both shared has partly diminished here, know that it hasn't gone out. I believe your connection will always be there and eventually be whole again and Stuart is now shining bright as the best version of himself... Painting with Picasso or Probably hosting the dinner party to end all dinner parties... I don't think I have to explain any further the deep love my Dad and Stuart had for one another, to say he's devastated is an understatement, as to us all.

However, he will live on in our memories, the stories and being Wilsons, the impressions that we share. The first thing we agreed we would remember him for was his quirky little sayings, such as "ohhh woooooowwww" or if he's watching us now "Oh your all sweeties, honestlyyyyyyy" I remember walking around London when we we're a lot younger pointing at everything saying "ohhh woooooowwww" Stuart

would say “stop it you lot, it’s not Funny... honestly you rotters” but we knew he loved the camaraderie.

On the subject of banter, we also remember him for having a mischievous quality in his nature, like the time he and my Mum taped a bin liner over the back of my Dad’s Shogun 4X4 (Pride and joy) and said they’d been in a crash when my Dad got home from work. Safe to say my Dad lost it, Stuart found it hilarious and for us it was great to see that side of him.

One of his other many sayings was “trendy”, while on holiday with my Mum and dad, Stuart wanted to try on a wet suit, I think the idea of seeing Noel or maybe other surfers in a black, revealing neoprene cat suit was appealing. No idea why? So Dan and Rob convinced him it looked great and to wear it on the beach. Stuart thought he looked seriously trendy, like Patrick Swayze, as he strolled down the beach... closely followed by Dan and Rob who were creasing themselves with laughter, what Stuart didn’t realise is they’d convinced him to wear it not knowing a couple of things; One, It was on backwards, so he had the moulded bum shape at the front and two, It was actually my Mums, Stuart believing it was unisex only to have a pair of moulded breasts on his back.

We used to get sweets every Sunday from the local news agent. One Sunday Stuart and Noel were staying, so Stuart decided to come down with us. Both he and my Dad were once again wearing similar outfits, blue jeans, black t-shirts. Stuart at the time had just shaved his head/cut his hair short, my Dad had quite the fro still, and I know what your thinking don’t mention their hair but its important to the story. While Stuart watched my bros on their bikes me and my Dad went in first. Dad got his paper and I got my sweets and looked at some magazines. My Dad left the shop and Stuart came in with my bros to pick there’s... I clocked the shop keeper out of the corner of my eye, he double takes’. I could see he was confused. When Stuart left, he asked me where my Dads hair had gone or if that was his brother or something, we told him it was a wig and he probably didn’t realise it fell off. When my Dad came in again to get us, he leant over and said ‘he’s found it, pointing to his hair’...

A few other things we’ll never forget from growing up is playing board game’s with Stuart. He used to get really competitive and angry when someone liked to cheat (Dad). But the great thing we got out of this was seeing them as brothers and Stuart really letting his hair down and opening up to us as family. I think this was mentioned by James in our email correspondence before today but ‘Vacuum cleaners’ He really did have a passion for vacuums, cleaning and being generally house proud and Noel, I’m sure some of your wealth came from Stuarts Dyson sponsorship. He’s still, to date, the only person I’ve seen pick up a vacuum and Hoover a wall.

It paid off though, Stuarts love for his habitat and the pride he had for what he had achieved always came across in a warm and welcoming way when visiting their home. He was the consummate host. He always made you feel at home, he was

generous, caring and was the first to ask and pay genuine interest in what you had been up to between visits. I loved visiting Stuart and Noel, even in the earlier days in Wet Wang. I still remember when we visited he had one book I used to gun for that I would spend hours looking at while the adults talked. It was the art of DC, Superman, Batman etc... It used to really capture my imagination and sometimes he used to sit and read it with me which again showed a different side for me that maybe not a lot of people knew, it's weird what you remember about people and that brings me onto the closing part of what I would like to say.

He really inspired me with his artwork. He was a truly gifted artist. My dissertation at art college was about Stuart as an up and coming painter and his love for one of his major influences David Hockney. There is something about Stuarts paintings that draws you in, you can feel the heat of the sun or the spray of the waves, up close they tell a painters story with carefully placed yet relaxed brush strokes and textures. Move away and they come together to form a composite of exciting and bold colours that feels like an explosive photograph, putting you right there, in the very moment he was inspired himself. But perhaps the biggest achievement you get through his work is his colourful personality, his voice that ultimately gave him a distinct style. The mark of a great artist. His work is homely and comforting, it's not just a painting by Stuart Wilson it's a part of Stuart himself, and I'm sure I speak for us all when I say I will take comfort in knowing there will always be a piece of him in our homes and this is one way out of many he will live on.

Maybe this is an obvious thing to say, but something that he didn't know and I never got to tell him is that I was so incredibly proud to be his Nephew. I often spoke about his work to friends and work colleagues and shared his work with them only for everyone to be blown away by it. I also loved his tales of his travelling exploits with Noel, they inspired me when I was younger and contributed to my appetite to travel around the world. To have had the means and time to visit some of the most amazing places on earth and with everything else Stuart has achieved, gave us comfort knowing he had a pretty awesome life.

If there was one regret it would be that Stuart never got to meet my son, Eli, in person. However we did chat over text. I had kept him up to date and sent him loads of pictures, he was smitten with Eli and told me how proud he was of Me and Dani. His last text to me was to tell me we should arrange a visit soon. It's saddening now knowing that will never happen but I will make sure I tell Eli all the stories we've shared today about Stuart and that he knows he would have loved to have met him.

I'd like to finish by saying we loved you Uncle Stuart, probably more than you knew. We will never forget you. You will live on in the fond memories we have and the amazing artwork you've left behind, which was your gift to the world and a part of you that will comfort us for years to come. You were funny, kind hearted, generous, caring and the brightest of energy on your best days; and the funny thing about energy is, it can't be destroyed, whether it be transformed or transferred from one form to

another, it lives on. Until we meet again.

### Tribute *From Stuart's friend Lesley Tucker*

The Adagietto that we heard as entrance music and that was used so poignantly in the film "Death in Venice" means a lot to me because Stuart's and my 1<sup>st</sup> conversation ever was held in a school corridor in 1986 and was about Venice. It was Stuart's 1<sup>st</sup> term and I'd heard that he was taking his A level art group there and I was enthusing about how exciting it would be for them to see the stunning setting of "Death in Venice" and "Don't Look Now". We talked about how we both loved those films and Mahler's haunting Adagietto which was used in "Death in Venice". I couldn't believe it when Stuart said, "Come with me". I was incredibly thrilled but I remember replying, "But you don't know me! And I'm not an art teacher!!" And Stuart said, "It'll be great-stop worrying!"

### ...VENICE STORIES

So Stuart and I went to Venice in 1987.

The trip was for East Riding 6<sup>th</sup> formers from several schools, and was organised by the county art adviser which meant Stuart and I didn't have too much responsibility to get in the way of OUR enjoyment! We laughed SO much during that week.

1. Sitting at the front of the coach-"Who'd like to go to a disco?" Shrieks of laughter made us turn round... to discover that Stuart and I were the only ones to put our hands up! Then everyone followed suit and went, and we had a really good night-which was made even better for Stuart when one of the girls said, "Ooh Mr. Wilson, you dance just like Jimmy Somerville!"

2. Stuart liked posing for photos in Venice, and I took lots. The one leaning with his knee bent and his foot up against the wall-(cool Italian style) under the Arci Gay poster is my favourite photo- which Noel has included in the order of service.

3. Neighbourhood café near hotel, frequented by local workmen, who would stand at the counter drinking coffee with grappa. These men had Bruce Springsteen-style rolled-up sleeves which Stuart copied. He wanted to appeal to these rugged Italians by ordering "caffè con grappa per favore" like a native. I taught him the phrase but Stuart was not a natural linguist, got muddled, returning from counter, "I can't remember it. Tell me again" x2: then "Oh, you order and I'll stand next to you". It didn't work – none of them were remotely interested in EITHER of us.

### BHS STORIES

I first saw Stuart in 1986 when he came for his interview for head of art at Beverley High School, a fairly traditional girls' comprehensive. The other candidates were worthy-looking ladies who sat unobtrusively and mutely in our staff room whereas Stuart, in a tweedy suit and crisp, luxuriant curls, was pacing up and down, smoking (well it was the 80s!) telling everyone present how incredibly nervous he was, and I immediately thought "I hope he's appointed. He looks lively and fun" - and so he was!

Very good teacher: big bold Fauvist style paintings displayed in the canteen which were stunning, and I watched his tuition in Venice-encouraging them to sketch quickly and spontaneously. The girls loved Mr Wilson.

Stuart and I couldn't resist teasing each other at work (what sensible teachers we were!) Our whole-school, end of year assembly was a very formal affair, with staff very visible to the girls. I was standing next to Stuart (big mistake!) When we sang the school hymn Stuart looked sideways at me DEMONSTRATE and he knew full well that was all he had to do to set me off giggling uncontrollably until I had to leave the assembly hall! Stuart meanwhile would carry on singing the hymn (or mouthing it anyway) as if butter wouldn't melt! It was impossible to leave assembly unnoticed and afterwards my form asked why I'd left. My claim of "about to have a coughing fit" was totally discounted: "No, Mr Wilson made you laugh!"

Colleagues' responses to hearing of his death included: "A big character in a small package" (he might not be so happy with that!), and "exotic" (he'd have loved that!), and unsurprisingly "a lovely man".

### ART STORIES

Not only a lovely man - Stuart was also a wonderful artist. And what an apt Christian name- think about the spelling: StuART!

I'm so glad we have so many of his beautiful vibrant paintings. His taste in art and artefacts was unfailingly exquisite, due- as he reminded me- to his "trained eye" to which I replied "Just the one?" His exhibitions were a stunning showcase for his paintings, especially the one at Denbies.

Stuart really enjoyed teaching art classes in Trevarno Lodge and valued the friendship of his students. Those of you who attended his classes will sorely miss him and the fun you had. He referred with great affection to his students as "my girls" and when I was staying with him and Noel I witnessed his encouraging and expert tuition and I heard frequent gales of laughter coming from the studio!

I always loved talking about art and visiting galleries with him. When he took me to Tate Modern he gave me an understanding and a real insight into the use of balance and colour in modern abstract art. He also whispered "Shite!" when he thought the work was pretentious.

### We all know he was DELIGHTFUL COMPANY, MISCHIEVOUS and SUCH FUN

We watched the film "Alien" together and both screamed at the shocking John Hurt moment. After it finished he was still so scared I had to walk him to his car and he claimed that he was still too terrified to brave the alien perils that he was sure to encounter on his drive home across the Yorkshire Wolds to "Bloody Wetwang" where he lived. His village was called Wetwang (yes really!) but he never referred to it without the prefix "Bloody" and it's always Bloody Wetwang to me too – like Chipping Norton, Tunbridge Wells-Bloody Wetwang!

I enjoyed seeing him reinvent himself as a gun-slinging cowboy in preparation for a themed party. Stuart in chaps, stetson plus holster was a joy to behold –and again we laughed!

When I was in a restaurant with Stuart and Noel a few years ago Stuart told me he had a nipple ring! Well of course he HAD to undo his top button so that I could peer down his shirt to see it and I HAD to take a photo of it. Unsurprisingly we were the noisiest table. Whenever I think of him I hear his laugh and I cherish the sound of it -long may we all continue to hear it.

### KINDNESS

Stuart was such a kind and thoughtful man. I will be forever grateful to him for supporting me continuously during a very unhappy time of my life. On one occasion when learning I was particularly upset he immediately drove all the way from Woking to my house in East Yorkshire, arriving early evening and having to leave 1<sup>st</sup> thing the next morning. Needless to say he cheered me up enormously and was a huge comfort to me. It was the action of a very special person and that memory has always moved me.

Both Stuart and Noel were so kind to my elderly father and particularly sensitive to his needs when he and I stayed with them immediately after my mother died. My father loved seeing “the boys” as he called them.

My children are understandably fond of Stuart too. Hospitable as ever, he invited my son to spend part of his honeymoon in Woking so that his American bride could visit London for the 1<sup>st</sup> time. What a tribute to Stuart and Noel that he accepted the offer-to honeymoon with his mother’s friends! My daughter fell in love with Stuart at the age of 3. She called him Sturt-which he liked because he thought it made him sound butch! He was lovely with children and was clearly a wonderful and very proud uncle, telling me about Hannah’s singing only 2 weeks before he died. Stuart had a genuine and heartfelt concern for others-and I’m sure you can all think of examples of that.

### NOEL

Stuart and Noel met shortly before our trip to Venice and Stuart talked a lot about Noel whom he described as tall, dark, handsome, intelligent- and “gorgeous”. At our 1<sup>st</sup> meeting I realised S was quite right: N was completely gorgeous-and he has remained so. StuartnNoel roll off the tongue as one beloved entity.

They complemented each other in their humour: often Stuart would utter some exaggeration then Noel would bring him down to earth with an incisive response! In this post card they sent me in 1994 from Barcelona. Stuart begins with culture and waxes lyrical about Picasso, Miro, Gaudi etc but continues with a description of Sitges (you can probably guess what’s coming?)- “We sat on THE gay beach shared by 1,000 gay men (NOT kidding) – all too good-looking for comfort”. Then Noel writes “You would think that sharing the beach with one good-looking gay man would be sufficient!”

Spending time with them both it was clear that Noel put Stuart before himself: Noel was always steadying and reassuring, gently humorous-and lovely to be with. Everyone should have a Noel in their life.



We're lucky to have had Stuart and, as Stuart often told me, he was very lucky to have had Noel. Stuart was a gem, and Noel was the setting which allowed him to shine.

CLOSE

We will miss Stuart terribly, and the world will be a duller place without him. But it's a joy to have known and loved him, and - as in the Neruda poem we have just heard - "we don't want his heritage of joy to die".