

# A celebration of life



## Richard John Maltby

2 December 1964 – 29 December 2020

14:45, Friday 22 January 2021,  
Southfields Green Cemetery, Rufforth, York

*a personal goodbye*

Humanist  
*Ceremonies*

Humanists UK is a registered charity no. 285987 and limited company no. 228781 in England and Wales. Humanists UK, 39 Moreland Street, London, EC1 V8BB, 020 7324 3060

We know that Rich wanted a green burial, because Debbie discussed it with him, thinking it would be her who would need the first grave, they never imagined how things would unfold. Debbie chose this cemetery as a beautiful, peaceful place for family and friends to visit. Brian also explained the strong family connection to Rufforth. Brian used to come here during the war to watch planes take off, flying just twenty feet above their heads as they sat at the end of the runway. Richard's grandfather, who was an engineer in the RAF, finished his service at Rufforth airfield in 1951. Richard walked through this village with his dad many times as a boy, on their regular twelve-mile circular route.

Richard loved the outdoors, nature and wildlife. He would enjoy the thought of the grass and wildflowers growing over his grave and the local fox and hedgehogs passing closely by. Nature's cycles and seasons give us a sense of perspective on our position in the world, the universe, and the whole scheme of things. Life ends and yet, life goes on.

I would like to introduce Peter Outhart now, to sing, 'The Leaf', a song which expresses similar thoughts.

## **Music**

*The Leaf, sung by Peter Outhart*

**What's the life of a man any more than a leaf  
Life has its seasons, so why should we grieve  
All through the world we appear fine and gay  
Like a leaf we shall wither and soon fade away**

**As I was a walking one morning at ease  
Viewing the leaves as they fell from the trees  
All in full motion appearing to be  
And those that had withered they fell from the tree**

**If you'd seen the leaves just a short time ago  
How beautiful and green they all seemed to grow  
A frost came and bit them and withered them all  
A storm came upon them and down they did fall**

**Walk through the graveyard and there you shall see  
Those that have fallen like leaves from the tree  
When age or affliction upon us do call  
Like the leaf we shall wither and down we shall fall**

When Richard and Debbie met in 1990, they quickly discovered a shared passion for motorbikes, history, folk music, the outdoors and much more: they had so very many shared interests they could just talk and talk, it was the most natural easy thing to fall in love.

People who met Rich were always struck by his lovely smile: he smiled often, **he laughed often, always cheerful, always optimistic** and his blue eyes. Richard was a handsome man with no trace of vanity or ego. He was not flash or boastful.

He was a big man, big smile, and a big heart.

**To those he loved Rich was loyal, loving and supportive and he would do whatever it took to keep them safe from harm. He was fearless and could not be intimidated.**

He was an easy man to love, an easy man to like, even the few who didn't, appreciated his humour and came around quickly, because there was never any malice, never any nastiness with Rich, he made fun with young and old alike, there was no favouritism or singling out.

He was **Adventurous** but safe, not an adrenaline junkie, an incredibly skilled natural motorcycle rider with nothing to prove. He had a quiet self-confidence; he knew what he was capable of. Richard was a free spirit; he did not like to be constrained.

Through their thirty years together, Richard and Debbie became pretty much inseparable. They did everything together, walking hand in hand, Richard always insisting on carrying the bags. They worked on DIY as a team; they rode their motorbikes together as a pair.

Although they had come close to getting married on a couple of occasions it was never a priority. Richard had told Debbie that he would have wanted to marry later in 2020 when he had recovered from the cancer, sadly that was not to be and they had to bring this forward as a matter of urgency when he received his terminal diagnosis at the end of February. In happier times he would have appreciated the irony of waiting thirty years only to have to marry in a hurry. As it was the registrars opened especially for them and they married on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at York registry office with just two witnesses: Debbie 's sister Sue and their friend Mick Waudby.

Debbie has chosen a poem to speak for her today, which she'll read with her sister Sue's support.

### **Reading**

*Funeral Blues (abridged), by WH Auden*

**Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,  
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,  
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum  
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.**

**Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead  
Scribbling on the sky the message 'He is Dead'.  
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,  
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.**

**He was my North, my South, my East and West,  
My working week and my Sunday rest,  
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;  
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.**

It must seem unreal that Richard is no longer here, not right, not how things are supposed to be. Richard was fit and strong from walking, cycling and all the other active things he did. He always recovered quickly from wounds and burns; he strapped them up and carried on. He was hardly ever ill; he didn't do poorly. He would have preferred not to have to tell anyone about the cancer; he thought he'd maybe mention it to you sometime after he'd recovered. There were few who knew the severity of his illness until recently. Richard became more unwell through December and was prescribed penicillin. By 28<sup>th</sup> he was feeling a little better, going out for a short walk with Debbie and they had a cosy evening watching a couple of episodes of 'Top Gear Grand Tour'. They had no thought that he would not live through the night. He died of pneumonia at 4.30 in the morning of Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> December.

This reminds us how random and fragile life can be. Richard's life was shorter than some if it is measured in years but if it is measured by his achievements and the joy and love he shared, it adds up to much more.

These are the words of an unknown author:

### **Reading**

*Not How Did He Die, But How Did He Live by an Unknown Author*

**Not, how did he die, but how did he live?  
Not, what did he gain, but what did he give?  
These are the units to measure the worth  
Of a man as a man, regardless of his birth.**

**Nor what was his church, nor what was his creed?  
But had he befriended those really in need?  
Was he ever ready, with words of good cheer,  
To bring back a smile, to banish a tear?  
Not what did the sketch in the newspaper say,  
But how many were sorry when he passed away?**

Richard was a true Yorkshire man with Viking ancestry:

He loved “Yellow label hour” and “Yellow Label Day” - Christmas Eve at Morrisons, when he could get all the reduced Christmas food bargains; he would often arrive home with several bulging bags of goodies. He loved to get value; he loved Ebay and would spend time tracking down all the parts needed for his current project. He also hated waste; it really grieved him to throw anything away.

He had ‘Yorkshire Generosity’ in abundance: he was a careful man with cash though he always stood his round, treated friends to meals out, entertained, sold vehicles to friends at cost or less than cost, but he also gave so very generously of his time and attention and that at the end of the day is a far more valuable thing than mere money.

Rich was a mediator: when problems arose, he would work to bring reconciliation, he spoke to both parties, listened to both sides.

A deep thinker: he did not jump to swift conclusions, but once he had made his judgement, he was steadfast.

Richard grew up in York with his mum Pat, dad Brian and sister Sarah who was older by fifteen months. Sarah and Richard were very close as they grew up.

When Sarah started school, he missed her and so he decided to leave home. At just three and a half years old Richard ran away; even then he was an adventurous free spirit, on three wheels, rather than two at that time. He pedalled his little trike all the way to his gran's, three streets away, asking the postman to see him over the main road; he was not allowed to cross that road on his own. He told his gran he was moving in, but when it got to lunch time he decided to go home; he always loved his food.

Richard was a keen walker as a boy and completed the White Rose Way, a thirty-five-mile trail. The family enjoyed holidays to Guernsey, Jersey, Belgium and Italy.

After school Richard trained as a Stonemason and travelled to work on historic structures in Edinburgh and even as far as St Magnus Cathedral Kirkwall on Orkney.

Aged nineteen he moved to Falmouth, where he worked in a Quarry before joining English Heritage and working on sites at Pendennis castle and St Mawes.

On returning to York to support his family, he Initially worked at a tool hire company and later joined Adams Hydraulics on Peasholme Green, where he worked as furnaceman until 1991 when they relocated and made a large number of their workforce redundant including Richard.

For the rest of his working life Rich was a postman, a job he enjoyed, out in the open air and it gave him free afternoons to ride his motorcycle or go into his workshop or pursue one of his other interests.

Rich's lifelong love of motorbikes began when he was seventeen. If he wasn't riding bikes, he was working on them. He always did a good job: these were bikes to be ridden and he knew how to get them to very high standard. He was incredibly clever at anything mechanical, servicing his own cars and made extra income doing up motorbikes to sell. He was always really happy when planning work and tracking down parts.

He and Debbie loved to go out riding, they knew all the local backroads and would go out as a group with friends, but latterly it tended to be just one or two friends, or just the two of them. They were active members of Motorcycle Action Group, MAG for many years, going to motorcycle rallies and loved sitting around campfires chatting to friends. They also attended memorial and demonstration rides in Europe and the UK and enjoyed very many motorcycle holidays in the UK, Ireland, and mainland Europe.

Yogi and Helen met Rich and Debbie through MAG in '91. When their son Jason was born, they naturally asked Rich and Debbie to be his godparents. Rich was pleased that Jason grew up loving motorbikes and gave him a 250 when he passed his test at sixteen. Jason reignited Yogi and Rich's interest in rallies. One time when Yogi and Jason called round for Rich to set off to a rally on a very wet weekend, Rich noticed Jason was wearing trainers and so, resourceful as always, Rich quickly dug out a pair of boots to lend him and a raincoat. Rich saved the weekend for Jason and Yogi because Rich had already come to Yogi's rescue by lending him a bike!

Yogi and Jason described Rich as a "really great guy": always helping if he could, quick to come up with solutions, a skilled mechanic, hugely knowledgeable but "humble" and he was great fun. They've shared so many good times with him. One they'll never forget is going away with Rich and Mick in 2017, to Bovington Tank Museum, Fleet Air Museum and Duxford; a brilliant lad's weekend of motorbikes, tanks, spitfires and loads of laughter.

But it was not just vehicles, Richard could fix pretty much anything, appliances, plumbing and buildings, and he used his skills and time to help others, often offering before he was asked. He was reliable and was a person people would naturally turn to.



Richard got the opportunity to take early retirement from Royal Mail at the end of April 2015. He was fifty. It's so fortunate that he did. But he and Debbie did not put off epic holidays until they retired: over the years they have enjoyed many holidays and adventures together and with family and friends, across the UK and abroad.

Richard lived a short life, but he packed so very much into it: he has walked the Inca Trail in Peru, saw Condors rising above Colcha Canyon, he has ridden a motorcycle across New Zealand, seen the Southern Cross, stayed on an Island in the middle of Lake Titicaca, walked the Inca Trail and entered Machu Piccu through the Sun Gate, slept in a straw hut in the amazon rainforest and driven a dog sled team 200km across the high Arctic sleeping in wilderness cabins beneath the Northern Lights. He loved the natural world, walking in the countryside or at the coast. He was quick to spot wildlife others might overlook, he rescued at least twenty hedgehogs over the years and was always ready to assist any creature in trouble, scooping snakes of unknown origin from swimming pools abroad. He was absolutely delighted when he got a kitten of his own, Bobbie was his cat and she was his first proper pet. He and Debbie also had Giles, Henry, Pip, Vinny and Ticky but Bobbie always held a special place in his heart. In May this year Rich got his long-awaited puppy Benny, who was a source of great joy and comfort although at times his boundless enthusiasm and absence of an 'off switch' could be tiring.

Richard was generally a quiet man: two eyes, two ears one mouth sums Rich up. He always listened and watched more than he spoke, but when he did, he was well worth listening to.

He had a breadth and depth of knowledge about so many subjects: history, particularly WW2, geography, wildlife, and nature, much came from reading, but he also soaked up information and had an excellent memory.

He had an amazingly acute observational wit: he was so sharp and quick and often came up with an hilarious quip taking the mickey out of people or telling outlandish stories and winding people up. He was very funny.

Rich was a “Big Naughty Man”: bouncing on rope bridges to create a wave, climbing trees in Kew Gardens to pick mulberries, kidnapping Pete and Caroline’s ostrich picture, soggy Sam had a snowball placed on his van seat and the heating turned up to full. Jason fell for all his wind ups and was the constant brunt of jokes. He has a continuing reminder of this, from a squeaky horn on his motorbike handle bars.

Many, many, TALL TALES, some of which were pure fantasy, and some had truths woven in, he was always delighted when he could get someone to dismiss the truth concealed in the fantastic tale and it is nice to think that this may have been inspired by his Viking heritage.

Richard was great with kids: playing with them and going to the wildlife park. Jack was particularly close to Rich, always wanting to be chased and Rich was happy to oblige. He thought the world of the children and was especially close to Jack.

When they went to the Viking Festival early last year with Sue, Laura, Tom Molly and Jack, as soon as Richard walked through the door, Jack declared, “You’re my best mate”. When later they all went for dinner and Rich could only manage a bowl of soup, Jack was extremely concerned and wanted to give Rich some of his meal.

Artists Richard enjoyed were, Fairport Convention, Jethro Tull, Vin Garbutt, Steeleye Span, also 80’s Electric but he had an eclectic taste in music and he continued to find new artists. Richard and Debbie enjoyed going to Poppleton Live where they first saw Gilmore and Roberts, they then made a point of following them and attended their gigs several times in recent years.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Jamie Roberts to sing ‘Peter Pan’.

## Music

*Peter Pan, written and performed by Jamie Roberts*

They call me peter pan from time to time  
Cos I often act an age somewhat younger than mine  
But 40 years a joker, soon to be cut off short  
Betrayed by a failing body shutting down before it aught  
So just hold my hand and ease me on through to neverland

Now I can't help going over all the things that may have been  
With images of the life I've led thrown somewhere in between  
I just pale in the memories that the kids forever hold  
Cos now I'm peter pan and I'm never growing old  
Now I'm peter pan and I'm never growing old

What would've been my next new favourite song  
I wonder how I'd look when 80 years had been and gone  
And who'll take on the work I'm forced to leave  
Who would've copped for the April Fool hidden up my sleeve

Now I'm out of time, but I know I've made good use of mine  
Cos there's so many little things just too easy to ignore  
But I still know every face that ever came through my workroom door  
I'm just proud I played a part whatever life may now behold

Cos now I'm Peter Pan and I'm never growing old  
Now I'm Peter Pan and I'm never growing old

Now I can't help going over all the things that may been  
With images of the life I've led thrown somewhere in between  
I just pale in the memories that the kids forever hold  
Cos now I'm Peter Pan and I'm never growing old  
Now I'm Peter Pan and I'm never growing old