

A celebration of life Caroline Susan Louise Green

8th April 1980 – 20th October 2021

11am, 20th November 2021, East Dean & Friston Village Hall



a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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Many thanks to those of you who have so generously shared your memories of Caroline to contribute to this ceremony today, including her father Richard, Charlotte, Alex, Emma, Gaz, Rhoda, Suzy, Rupert, another Richard, Vicky, Bekks, Rose, Roger and Alexis. Those of you who have not yet been able to share your memories will I'm sure do so in the pub later. And a special thanks to Gaz for stepping in to organise the ceremony today.

Caroline was born on April 8th, 1980, in Sussex, the elder daughter of Richard and Sandra Green. Richard will talk to us now about her about her birth, and other memories:

As Caroline's father, I'd like to say a few words about her at this sad time.

The fact that so many of you, her friends, have come to pay your respects today is testimony to what a remarkable young woman Caroline was. I am proud to have been her father.

Her birth in 1980 was something of a traumatic experience. I remember it was mid-morning on Easter Monday. I was putting the finishing touches to her nursery when her mother announced she thought her waters had broken but wasn't entirely certain. We rang the hospital, St Thomas's in London, who said it was probably a false alarm but to come in just to make sure.

On arrival, Sandra was taken off to be examined and her mother Lydia, who was staying with us at the time, and I, waited patiently. Well over an hour passed and we began to wonder what was happening - no-one had come to tell us and being a public holiday it was difficult to find anyone to ask. Eventually, at about 1pm I found a nurse who told me that Sandra was already halfway through her labour and the baby should arrive before she, the nurse, went off shift at 6!

But Caroline had different ideas. At 2am the following morning she was still safely ensconced in her mother's womb. We were told there were complications and that the consultant was on his way. The dreaded forceps were readied. Just as he arrived (in black tie as I recall), the theatre doors were flung open and about 15 junior doctors came flooding in to watch and learn.

So from the very outset, Caroline was accustomed to lots of company, to being the centre of attention and to helping others. And that's how it was for the rest of her life.

As a baby, she was always happy and smiling, had a marvellous appetite and was a sound sleeper - the perfect baby. Pretty too - her mother would often tell me when I got home in the evening how many times that day strangers had stopped her in the street to admire Caroline.

Once she could talk she never stopped. She'd talk to complete strangers about anything and everything that was on her little mind at the time. As she grew older it was noticeable how other children were attracted to her and this ability to get on well with others remained with her until the end. I remember taking her to Bali for Xmas and the New Year in 2016.

Within an hour or two of arrival at the resort she'd made friends with numerous fellow guests and almost all the staff knew her and couldn't do enough for 'Miss Caroline' as they called her.

And it wasn't just her ability to make friends - she truly valued those friendships above all else and went out of her way to maintain them. I remember her telling me that her friends were the most important thing in her life. And by your presence here today it's obvious that feeling is reciprocated.

Sadly, Caroline and I were not part of each other's lives between her university years and 2015, something I regret. By the time we reconciled, she was a full-grown woman of independent mind. Although we differed in our politics and much else, I would like to think that during her more thoughtful moments she understood that I loved her and tried to support her. But it was far from easy as I believe some of you also found. I hope, like me, you have found it in your hearts to forgive and forget any unpleasantness and remember only the good times.

Once again thank you, Caroline's friends, for coming and giving her the send-off she would never have sought but which I know she would treasure.

And thank you, Richard

Charlotte and Caroline met when they were both nine, and Charlotte has glowing memories of this vibrant, warm, funny girl, and how they spent hours trying to catch sheep in the field next to her house, being welcomed in warmly afterwards by her mother who served wonderful lemon chicken. She also told the story of how Sandra picked them up from riding one day, and there was a beautiful rainbow. Caroline asked her to find the end of it, so they went driving off round Sussex trying to find it. Unsurprisingly, they didn't, but it was fun trying.

As teenagers Charlotte and Caroline had a shared interest in music – Bob Marley, Bob Dylan, the Kinks - and it was then that Caroline's love of clubbing started. They once visited Charlotte's older sister in Newcastle where she was at uni. They waited till the sister had gone to bed, then headed off to those clubs.

Another school friend, Emma said *"Perhaps Caroline's greatest love in life was her music - whether singing, dancing or creating her own. She had an incredibly natural rhythm and loved many different types of music. During our school days we'd regularly hit the night spots in Brighton, and whilst always joining us at the bar for drinks, she'd invariably be the first on the dance floor and just absorb her mind and body in the music. She'd have the widest grin spread from ear to ear, hands in the air as she bopped her way through the nightclub tracks - she always looked so blissfully happy - at her happiest in fact - when dancing."*

Emma, Caroline and others went on holiday together in the summer of 1996. Emma said *"Pinching ourselves that our parents had agreed, we booked the tickets quickly before they could change their*

minds. Ten hours' journey on the National Express coach to Cornwall didn't deter us and we spent a week staying in a cabin on a campsite - spending time at the beach during the day and clubbing every evening before heading back to crash at the cabin and doing it all again the next day. We spread our wings further afield the following summer and spent a week in Malia in Crete - the same routine of beach, clubbing, repeat as the previous year although the hem lines had shortened. We were a strong group of friends who just loved hanging out together, falling out at times with our hormones and strong opinions but quickly reconciling with our love of being together and laughing."

Much later Caroline and Charlotte went to South India together. They hired a boatman, Takkoshen, who took them to the hamlet where he lived, and to his house. They had dinner, went out to drink moonshine, and then Caroline said "Why don't we stay the night?" They borrowed his wife's nighties and they slept in the only bed while the family bedded down in the kitchen. Charlotte lay awake all night, watching the rats run across the beams above her head, thinking "How on earth did this happen?" She knew that it was only Caroline's energy and charm which could have led her there, and that Caroline was the only person she knew who could engage with anyone, whoever they were. Her principled curiosity led her to be the perfect travelling companion.

People told me over and over again that Caroline was a magnetic person, beautiful inside and out. Alex, who met her when they were both 13, was drawn to her as being a person "*full of energy and sunshine*" who "*turned heads, and always had a presence*". They played tennis and netball together and messed about in boats at Barcombe Mills. Caroline was the one who would leap off the rope swing into the water, without hesitation.

When Alex's eldest son, Jack, heard of Caroline's death he was devastated. He loved her because she never spoke down to him and was always so interested in what he had to say. He added "*I'm so lucky I'm a child, and usually only see grown-ups when they're happy*". As Alex said, quoting Flavia Weedn, "*Some people come into our lives and leave footprints on our hearts and we are never ever the same.*"

Gaz, please will you talk to us now?

What struck everyone who met Caroline was an innate beauty that far transcended something merely skin deep. She was beautiful in every sense of the word, and that ran right through her, deep into her soul.

I'll never forget the first time I met Caroline at Nottingham University. I stuck my head out of my window in Rutland Hall on a gorgeous sunny day on the first day of term. I looked to my left and there Caroline was, with her head stuck out of her window. She kind of looked like she was from another world, the kind of person who might be part of the elite 'in-crowd' that I had never been allowed into, so I tentatively ventured a greeting, half expecting her to bat my overtures away. Instead, the most wonderful and heart-warming conversation flowed - she was just so easy to talk to - and I came away feeling, (but not yet knowing), that I had made a friend for life.....

I wasn't the only one. Everyone who met her was subject to the Green effect. They came away feeling touched, special, energised, treasured. Caroline had this special talent for exuding an incredible warmth, being personable and friendly that was able to break down and transcend the usual divisions between people, be they social, cultural, political. No matter what someone's background was, Caroline's genuine interest in them and their perspective, offered without immediate judgement, meant people often came away feeling like the most important person in the world. The evidence of this is here today for all to see, by the number of people who have come (and those who would like to have been here) to celebrate Caroline. You have come from all walks and many different countries, and you are a testament to her adventurous spirit and her friendly and engaging personality. She loved you all deeply.

Caroline had everything going for her in life. She was intelligent, passionate, curious, adventurous, fun, the life and soul of the party. Anything she turned her hand to she made into a success. She had a very promising and interesting career, taking her on adventures from Hong Kong to Germany, seeing her rise to become a senior executive at Sky Deutschland. Yet despite being incredibly successful and fortunate in life, Caroline never lost touch with her basic humanity and never felt she was above people. She led a modest life and did not ever fall into the trappings of materialism, job status, hierarchy, or of being a show off, despite the many temptations, and financial and career wherewithal to do so. She also had a very strong sense of justice, equality, fairness which manifested itself in many ways.

She valued the good things in life. Good company, good (but not necessarily expensive) food, good music, good experiences, fun times with friends. She was enthused by life and shared adventures. For my part, I feel so lucky to have shared some unforgettable experiences with her over the last 23 years – with many of you too: From unrepeatably university antics, to holidays in Ibiza, Berlin, Munich, Amsterdam, and a particularly special week walking the Italian Dolomites together. We danced, we debated, we laughed, and we grew up (sort of!) together. She was the best kind of friend. That will never go away.

When Caroline fell ill, this came as such a shock to everyone particularly because she had been so full of life, happy go lucky and so sound of mind. Witnessing her painful experience was particularly difficult for everyone here and a tragic reminder that mental ill health can affect anybody from any walk of life, no matter how well their life may appear to be going. But I know from conversations with her, and from my own perspective that she couldn't have wished for a better set of friends. Thank you all so much for fighting the good fight on Caroline's behalf.

Let us not dwell on the end, but let us instead dwell on the journey that brought us here and the many, many fantastic memories we all have of the Caroline that we hold dear. The love and joy that each of us shared with her is in direct proportion to the raw pain of the wound we now bear. Over time it will heal, but a scar will always remain. And as you go about your lives, this scar, these wonderful shared memories bubbling up unbidden will give you an

opportunity to pause for a second and transcend the busy minutia and stresses of daily life. To take a moment to remember and love deeply your dear friend and the joy you shared, and in doing so, her beautiful spirit can help remind YOU to take that precious moment to appreciate more fully the world and those you hold dearest around you, hug them tight and make the most of everything, like she did.

These moments will mean that although we say goodbye to Caroline today, her memory, spirit and her incredible soul, will live on forever in each and every one of us.

Green, Verte, Cazza: we are all better for having been loved by you. The world is better for having had you in it.

Thank you, Gaz.

Rhoda, another of that group who lived on the same floor at Rutland Hall confirmed that Caroline was full of light and joy, and was the person everyone wanted to be with. She told me a story of how, later on, they were having lunch together and the manager of the restaurant, who Caroline had talked to, brought her over a rose to tell her how beautiful she was. One of Rhoda's first memories of Caroline was that she wore Cerruti 1881, which seemed enormously sophisticated to Rhoda at the time. She's recently bought a bottle of it to remind her of Caroline. And Rhoda also remembers her generosity – she once lent her her skiing clothes and equipment, even though Rhoda was a beginner and it might have ended badly.

Caroline spent the summer after she left Nottingham working on boats in the South of France, and she travelled in Spain with another of her childhood friends, Suzy, who had recently moved there. Suzy said *"I remember how she chatted her way round Spain on the long bus journeys – didn't matter she did not have a word of Spanish"*.

Sandra suggested Caroline should apply for a graduate traineeship with Swire in Hong Kong. She got the job, working on the Cathy Pacific account. This in itself was a huge achievement – she was one of only 5 trainees accepted each year from thousands of applicants. Richard, another of that group of five, speaks of her as *"an adventurous spirit"*.

Sadly, Sandra became ill while Caroline was in Hong Kong, and she returned to the UK for a while, becoming her mother's primary carer until she died. Suzy, whose father died around the same time, remembers *"Caroline handled it all so incredibly maturely, but it hit her very hard, particularly the injustice she felt for her mother who was supposed to have been starting a new life"*.

Meanwhile, Alexis and Rupert had arrived in Hong Kong, and found everyone in their circle keenly anticipating Caroline's return. They said it was *"as if Helen of Troy was coming to town"*. Once they met her, they were blown away. She was so positive, gregarious, enthusiastic, ready to try anything and of course brilliant, politically engaged and well, beautiful.

They did not overlap there for long, because Caroline grew tired of Swire. Although it was a prestigious traineeship, in truth the trainees could find themselves selecting the film shows for planes rather than doing anything more significant. And Caroline wanted to do something significant. She also wanted to return to England so she could see more of Vicky.

Because Vicky was quite a bit younger, they were not particularly close as children, but they bonded in those years after Sandra died, revelling at late night parties and sweaty raves in London and festivals in the English countryside. They set off on a journey of discovery, free to express themselves, dressing in outlandish clothes, and sitting in small open-sided circus tents with friends, drinking chai and chatting as the sun came up. Their first festival was Bestival, where it rained so much that people were leaving as they were arriving. But that didn't put them off having fun and there were many adventures, including Vicky's sleeping bag being stolen and Caroline sourcing an odd miscellany of clothes from the lost property tent for her to sleep under. Vicky remembers this as a wonderful time, one of openness, liveliness, and inclusivity.

Vicky can't be with us today, but has asked for "I Remember" by Rick Holland, to be played, because it makes her think of their treasured festival years.

*I remember the tone the sunlight made
Reflecting as it did
That first breath of late night morning air
The feeling that here was anywhere
And anywhere was kind
Plumes of smoke funnel overland and meet us there
As though our late night tales joined to feed our breathing
And each breath kept golden remnants of a fireside tale inside
Safe but boundless
To hang like bubbles over us with each completed breath
Not born or dying, but reassembling the very air
A ceiling to our meaning, or spring for new sounds to bound from
No essential measure of beginning or belief
No escape and no relief, but safe
Safe as shapeless
Shapeless on a turning wheel of casting possibilities that change the wheel
The tick becomes imagined and steel to silk.
I remember the tone the sunlight made
And each time it comes to visit I remember
And taste and scent, and sense released from sense
The sense of everything as golden and remembered
Even as it slips into the course of these events
And this my friend is home
Right here and in this tone of sun and fire and form
Where listening is a birth each time
And feeling creeps to embers
Notes suggest in emblems reminiscent of a nascent form of wealth
From long before gold could be held
When cold was felt and breath was celebrated for that very rearrangement of the air
Which placed us, here.*

Meanwhile Caroline was working as a freelance project manager for a number of agencies which were based in central London. She was very punctual and organised and Vicky said “I think she secretly quite liked getting to boss people about although she did admit it was very stressful at times”. She also liked it because she was around creatives and involved in the creative process.

She tried various entrepreneurial endeavours - one of them was asking local artists to create designs for T-shirts and printing them and selling them online as Chief T Shirts - many of you may still have one, or even be wearing one today. She was gutted when someone else pipped her at the post in introducing the giant pretzel to the UK. Vicky said *“She wanted to see results quickly which led to having doubts whether it was the next big thing and she had this insatiable drive to keep coming up with ideas and moving forward. Her energy and sparkle were the things that people who met her were attracted to, and one of the reasons I looked up to her”*.

Bekks, who she had first met in Hong Kong, lived in Caroline’s flat during this period, and stayed on when Caroline moved to Germany. She said: *“I shared a flat with Caroline, and 31B Eglantine Rd was my home for a number of years which I remember fondly. Chatting over a cup of tea, evenings listening to music, enjoying a glass and putting the world to rights with Mimi Loulabelle le Chat, her adorable, beautiful, very high maintenance cat who had a penchant for eating cashmere, and who I think we were all convinced was part human part Burmese cat”*. As she did with so many of you, Caroline travelled with Bekks, including one memorable trip to visit Inge in Paris when they ended up dancing together on a Gay Pride float.

During the years she was London based, both then and later, many of you remember having lunches and dinners with her – often in noodle bars in Soho, or dim sum restaurants so she could indulge her love of Asian food. She continued to be always up for an adventure. There were dinner parties, Christmas parties, late night sessions putting the world to rights, and great gatherings in her flat, with her dancing with Mimi on her shoulders *“like a bemused fur collar”*. She went on holidays with some of you and created deep relationships with the families of others.

She was the very best of friends, the kind of person you might not see for weeks or months, but when you met up again it was like you had never been apart. There was a glow, a familiarity, and meeting her was always a joyful thing to do. She was always incredibly supportive. She never missed one of Richard or Rhoda’s productions, and Rhoda said that, were she ever to win a major award, she would want Caroline as her plus one on the red carpet.

And there was the music. Everyone remembers the clubbing, the gigs, the festivals, her passion for Gilles Peterson, and her pride in the photos of the two of them together. Bekks and Rich called her “Karaoke Carol” because of her habit of just breaking into song.

She and Tamsin wrote songs together, as she did with Rose and Rhoda. In 2010 she joined Gaggle, an all-woman indie choir described in the following terms by the Evening Standard: *“Twenty women in bright coloured capes are belting out songs about crows, lying men, drunks and cigarettes. Choir practice never looked like this when I was growing up. But Hackney collective Gaggle, who bill themselves as London’s only sci-fi riot choir, are rather different. The NME and Radio 1 love them. So does the Culture Show’s Lauren Laverne. “They look like a bunch of nu-rave Pre-Raphaelites, and*

they've all got these amazing technicolour cloaks on," she says. Sexy, scary, very loud and ranging in age from 21 to 37, the stomping all-girl choir is made up of teachers, fashion designers, even an anti-terrorism expert". As usual, Caroline made many friends in Gaggle, and kept in touch with them.

So we're now going to see Gaggle performing:

Gaggle: Make Love Not War

She had so many interests. She loved 5Rhythms Dancing and Salsa, she ran, she did a half-marathon for Amnesty, she cycled, she played guitar, and she wanted to write a novel.

It was during this period, that she met Christian in London. She brushed up her German and together they moved to Munich, Caroline taking a job with Sky Deutschland, first as a Project Manager and then as Director of Marketing Campaigns. Colleagues described her as *"an extremely skillful and dedicated professional who was passionate about what she was doing"*.

And despite being away, she kept up with her friends, going to Richard's wedding in 2013 and Rupert's in 2014. And Rup and Tamsin went to visit Caroline and Christian in their flat in Munich and had a great time. However, things were changing. She started talking a lot about not wanting to work in an office and for anyone anymore, and particularly not for "The Man". She found it hard to cope with the demands that the corporate life was putting on her, on Christian, and on their relationship. Fundamentally, she no longer believed in the work she was doing, and wanted to find out more about her inner self, what she could achieve, and how she could test herself.

Rose met Caroline when they were both at Sky, and was drawn to her radiance, beauty, kindness and sense of fun. Everyone, male and female, was besotted with her, and it was a source of real pride if she wanted to spend time with you.

Rose will now talk to us about Caroline.

Dear Richard Green, dear family and friends,

I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak today and to honor Caroline.

I'll never forget how we got to know each other. We started working in the same department on the same day, and two weeks later I was supposed to fly to a trade show with another colleague. But to my surprise, she showed up at the airport – turns out, I had mixed up two similar names. It was on that trip that I quickly realized that she was beyond comparison or a mix-up, but that she was truly in a league of her own.

We didn't work on the same projects, so my main touchpoints with her were to grab a quick cigarette between meetings, where she always knew how to make me laugh and feel uplifted, or hearing other colleagues speak of her. Needless to say, the whole company was

besotted with her. Her contagious laugh, her wit, her open heart and her beauty made everyone fall in love with her, quite literally. She was so intelligent and capable that she got promoted not one but two levels up the hierarchy at once, and that's probably also the reason why she got bored of the job anyway.

As it turned out, we not only joined but also left the company at the same time. That was the summer before she left Munich, and I'll forever be grateful for the carefree summer days at the English Garden that we spent hanging out and trying to figure our lives out. Or that one night when we went clubbing with a few friends and in between all the people there, she made me feel like the most special person and it lit up my world. Although I bet she made everyone else feel like that as well; she just had so much love and light to give.

In the past few years since she left Munich, we would spend hours chatting on the phone in the evenings, where Caroline would regularly fall asleep mid-conversation on her end of the line. One day she asked for my address, and I soon discovered a postcard that she had sent me titled "sorry I fell asleep while you were talking" – I have no idea where she found it but it was so funny and thoughtful.

All of you are a testament of how amazing she was. I've known so many of you for years, without having met you. Her spirit created a bond between people that are scattered all over the globe. That's truly unique. As if we needed any more proof, it just goes to show that Caroline was one in a million.

The pain of losing her is overwhelming right now, but there is one small thought that gives me a little bit of peace sometimes, so I'd like to share it with you: we need to realize that everything in this life is borrowed. The things we have, and most importantly the people we love. We try to hold on to what we cherish, but it's not ours to keep. We can only be thankful for having known her and accompanying her through this life. Until we meet again, in another life.

Thank you.

Thank you, Rose.

Over the next few years she travelled extensively. Her LinkedIn entry tells us *"It was at this time that it she felt strongly about helping Syrian refugees settle into their new life in Austria, supporting a niche Sri Lankan orphan charity to raise funds and reach new audiences, while co-managing a London-based support charitable service programme for young adults with HIV."* What it doesn't tell is that, from now on, she was in and out of hospital.

October 2014 was the turning point for her mental health when she took ayahuasca in the Austrian woods where the leaders and guides did not have people's best interests at heart.

Through this period she was suspicious of and sometimes hostile to those she loved, though there were good times too – Rupert recalled a fantastic family Christmas, and she and Alexis grew closer. She became very friendly with his mother, and last December he moved into her flat, an arrangement which suited them both. She continued to be a great friend to everyone during her better times and became even more sympathetic and supportive to those who were struggling in some way, like Alexis's mother and Charlotte's father. And her friends rallied round, of course, to support her, despite the fact this was often difficult, setting up a Facebook Messenger group to support her, even when they could not do so in person.

After she had broken out of hospital in England in May 2019 she headed for Wales and then Ireland. She spent her first night in Wexford, meaning to head on to Galway, but went to a pub that evening where there was live music, an obvious attraction, and there met a woman who gave her work looking after her animals. It was in Wexford that she met Roger. They were immediately drawn to each other, through a sense of shared experience, and were a huge support to each other over the next two particularly difficult years, spending much of lockdown together. Roger speaks movingly of her distress during this time, of her fear that her illness would strike her down again, and of her growing desperation at the state of the world.

Which is not to say that there weren't good times for them too. They loved walking, boating, being on beaches away from the crowds, or in London parks away from the reality of the streets. And they went to Ibiza together, where Caroline fully came alive in the sun, telling Suzy that she felt so good being there with the sea and the sun, revisiting where they'd gone in 2004. Caroline and Roger were hoping to do more travelling in the future.

Alexis, who began his friendship way back in Hong Kong, will now talk to us:

I met Caroline over 15 years ago, in Hong Kong. I'd only known her for about 5 minutes before she challenged me to a game of Scrabble. She was warm and beautiful and those early days in our friendship were very happy times. I enjoyed her company: She challenged the status quo, she was forthright, she was encouraging and she was loyal. She was always willing to try new things and stir up mischief. She could judge, and she didn't suffer fools. She was very true to herself and honest about how she saw the world and her place in it.

We were only in Hong Kong together for about a year, but we remained in touch, and I enjoyed hearing all about her adventures.

In recent years, when I came back to London, we spent a lot of time together. We'd joke that we were like family, we'd get on each other's nerves, but we were close. We talked about our friendship and the different guises it took over the years. She was open about her illness, and her anxieties. But it wasn't all about her, not at all. She was a good listener and was quick to offer help when I was in need. She joined me on nights out, and I joined her on day trips. She was a good friend to me, and I to her and I'll have very fond memories of Caroline in both phases of her life.

When someone takes their life, they leave an enormous amount of sadness behind, and they leave a question behind: "Why", why did this person decide to make such a choice, and I've asked myself the same question. But the truth is, with Caroline, we know why. We knew all about her struggles, she was very open about them with people she knew well, and people she'd just met. She'd lived a full and brilliant life, she had friends who she loved and who loved her. She'd travelled and she'd had a lot of great relationships. She had big dreams and aspirations, and now she saw the road from here on in, beset with difficulties. A future of medication and psychiatric wards wasn't a life to her.

We'll all miss her very much, our fun, mischievous, dancing friend.

As one of her favourite authors, Julian Barnes, puts it: *"Books say: She did this because. Life says: She did this. Books are where things are explained to you; life is where things aren't. I'm not surprised some people prefer books."*