

# A celebration of life Hugo Slack

19<sup>th</sup> October 2021– 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021

Ceremony to honour Hugo's life held on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021  
At Grenoside Crematorium



*a personal goodbye*

Humanist  
*Ceremonies*

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*How is it that the world  
keeps going, breathing  
in and out unchanged,  
while in my soul there is a  
permanent scattering...*

*(Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)*

*Welcome to you, Sophie and Greg, and to all of you, the family and friends of little Hugo. My name is Hannah, and I'm a humanist celebrant. And I say welcome, though this is the last place you would want to be today, or any day. But it is important that we are here, to say goodbye to Hugo, and to mark his significance in all of your lives. He may not have been with you for long, but the impact of his short life will be felt the length all your lifetimes. The pain you feel today is a reflection of the depth of love you have for Hugo, a love that is boundless, and which will always be a part of you.*

*And there is some comfort to be found in one another, in the arms of family and friends, who hold you, and support you, and love you. I hope there will also be some comfort to be taken from today's service, as we acknowledge who Hugo was, and the ways in which he has changed your lives.*

*His impact is felt most of all by Greg and Sophie, but also the rest of his family, who were so excited to welcome him: his big sister Eira, his Nanny Louise and Grandad John, his Papa Peter, and of course his Nana Sandy, or Nana Wales, who is also so deeply missed, today and every day. And Hugo's uncles and aunts, all his cousins, and those friends who are close as family.*

*I don't have the words to confront the loss you are all facing; I don't presume to speak to the enormity of your grief. But both Greg and Sophie managed to put down something for today, about their son. Once Greg has spoken, I will read Sophie's words on her behalf:*

*I want to tell you the story of a lifetime. Hugo's lifetime.*

*One of the worst things that can happen has happened. Waiting in the little room next to the operating theatre was the longest and most worrying wait of my life. I'd been there before when I was waiting to meet Eira but this time I knew, from the time that it took before they were able to come to me with any real news, that something terrible had happened.*

*Yet hope is a strange thing. Whenever someone isn't certain there is hope. I vividly remember seeing Hugo for the first time. Being brought into the room that he was in. There were a lot of people in there and I couldn't tell you how many, who they were, or what they looked like apart from two of them. Leaning over him for the first time, stroking his hair and his arm, there was no one else there. The love I felt for him then and the hope I had was like an explosion.*

*After that there were reality checks, and checks on Hugo. Then Soph and I got to see him again. This time machines were in place to check on his heart rate, temperature, brainwaves and breathing; and where he needed it, to help with his beathing too.*

*Hugo was cool. Quite apart from his good looks and the fact he'd come back alive after his heart had been stopped for such a long time, he was on a cooling mat to reduce his body temperature and give him the best possible chance.*

*Looking back over our photos from that second meeting in the High Dependency Unit, I can see how much hope Soph and I have. You can see it in our eyes. You can also see in those photos that we're all in love. Over the following 36 hours you can see the hope dim, the tiredness ebb and flow, but the love for Hugo only grows.*

*I'm so proud of Hugo for enduring what he had to in order to come and meet us.*

*I'm proud of him for getting through that first night so that he could meet a few more of us.*

*I'm sure he was proud to see how well his big sister took the news that he was poorly; how good she was with him; and how much she's helped me and her mummy.*

*I'm certain that he was proud to have a mummy who gave him a lifetime of love in just over nine and a half months.*

*I know that he would have been proud to know how our family, friends, and neighbours, those of you here today in particular, have been so moved by his short time here with us. I'm sure, like us he would have been overwhelmed to see how many people have sincerely come forward to offer us support, kindness and love.*

### **Such Little Plans**

*Forest School when you were two.*

*Walking up to the Mustard Pot.*

*Sitting on the sofa watching TV while mummy took your sister to the park.*

### **Such Big Plans**

*A little brother.*

*A big sister.*

*A Son.*

*I jotted that down the other day. It might have been the day Hugo passed away or it might have been the day after. It wasn't until I came to write this eulogy that I realised at least his big plans were achieved.*

*In the end of course little Hugo went in the early hours of Thursday 21 October. He went so peacefully and calmly, all his tubes and wires were removed and he drifted off in our arms.*

*We love Hugo completely and will always treasure the short time we got to spend with him. Life will never be the same for us. We're going to cry. We're going to be sad. But in a while, I'm determined to try to be happy again. To try to make Soph and Eira happy. To remember our love for Hugo; not our sadness that he was with us so briefly.*

*As Sophie carried their little boy through those nine and a half months, she not only had the challenges of pregnancy to cope with, but also the loss of her mum; Sophie told me how close they were, and how much she counted Sandy not just as a mum but also a friend. She also said:*

*Eira and Nana Wales had a really special connection that you can only wish for with grandparents. One of the last text messages I got from my mum was her telling me how Eira had asked her to come for a sleepover in Stocksbridge when she was all better. Unfortunately she didn't get better, but we know that Nana would be there in a heartbeat if things were different.*

*My mum was so excited about this pregnancy and seeing Eira stepping up to her Big Sister role. I still remember like it was yesterday when I called home to tell Mum and Dad our news...my mum shouting to my dad through tears of joy, "Peter, Sophie's pregnant!"; the excitement in her voice only added to our excitement. Unfortunately, Mum didn't get to meet Hugo, but we were lucky enough to be able to share our news with her before she was sick, and she knew we were having a little boy.*

*Hugo made the trip to Anglesey many times as a bump, so had already heard the cry of the gulls and the sound of the waves on the Welsh seashore. He also managed to make it for a picnic up at the trig point above Stocksbridge, a favourite family spot, though he was better protected from the showers than everyone else.*

*Sophie wrote:*

*Although my pregnancy with Hugo was hard at times, it was filled with love and excitement of what was to come. I spent many hours picturing our future lives...the newborn cuddles, the sling walks, the colourful baby outfits, the moments watching our 2 children together, the carnage of getting 2 little ones ready and out of the door on time. (I felt ready for all the challenges!) Every day Eira would give the bump a kiss as she went into nursery, and every evening a cuddle and a kiss, always the bump first and Mummy second!*

*When we told Eira she was going to be a big sister, the look of excitement on her face is one that I will remember forever, closely followed by the words "can I have a snack now, please!"*

*Eira took the scan picture into her nursery to show everyone "her baby", and kept it under her pillow at night time. She has all the assets to be the best big sister: she is caring, gentle and quite the entertainer; she was ready for Hugo to come into our lives; and she showed us during the short time we had with Hugo how loving and brave she is, and what an amazing big sister she is. We are so proud of her and how she continues to hold us together, even through the darkest of times.*

*Eira even let Hugo borrow her precious bat teddy when he arrived, and it is 100% guaranteed that he would have grown into as much of a bat fan as she is. Hugo was also given a little dog teddy by his papa, which Eira is now taking good care of for him.*

*And Eira, and all of Hugo's cousins, have brought some special things for him today. They have pictures or letters for Hugo, that will stay with him when we leave. And they have pebbles that they have been holding and warming with all the love they, and you, have for him; these pebbles, which have come from the earth to which we all must return, are as solid and strong and unchanging as that love. Would you like to bring your special things to Hugo now?*

*Thank you all so much.*

*Sophie said Eira was sitting on her knee when Hugo gave one of his very first noticeable kicks, so his sister felt him almost as soon as his mummy, and beat his daddy to it. She also said:*

*Hugo was always an active baby, letting us know his presence with lots of movements from early on. He was "all arms and legs" as our midwife described him during a routine appointment...and when we finally got to meet him on 19th October, I realised she was right! He was long and was destined to be tall like his Dad!*

*The next 36 hours with him in the High Dependency ward were a blur of hope and love for him. I hope that he knew we were there with him, that he could feel our touch and that he knew how much we all loved him and wished things could be different, for him, for us and our families.*

*The one thing you do know is how much love surrounded Hugo, from the moment he was conceived, and especially for the 36 hours he spent out in the world with you. Some of you were lucky enough to meet him; all of you were sending him, and Sophie, and Greg, and Eira, all the love in your hearts.*

*Those 36 hours were incredibly precious, and so too were the days spent at Bluebell Wood Hospice, giving Sophie and Greg time to just be with Hugo. There were also more toys, food and activities than any four year old could possibly want.*

*When Sophie and Greg asked Eira if there was anything she wanted us to say to, or about, Hugo for her at this ceremony, she thought long and hard about it over a few days, and eventually came up with: "I'm so glad he's part of our family."*

*Hugo was often surrounded by music; it was part of his life, and of your lives with him, and it is part of today too. So we're going to listen now to The Foo Fighters and take some time to think of Hugo.*

*(Music heard: Disenchanted Lullaby (Live Acoustic) by The Foo Fighters)*

*Though the hardest part of today - saying goodbye - is soon to come, we are first going to pause to acknowledge the place Hugo will always hold within this circle of family and friends. The name Sophie and Greg chose for their son carries the meaning of bright mind or spirit, a name to treasure for a little boy who could not be more treasured in all the world.*

*Today we mourn for this gorgeous little baby boy who was in this world far too briefly, but also for the person he would have grown into. As the years pass you may reflect, and wonder, 'What would he have been like now; how much like his big sister; where would life have taken him?' But the important thing is that he was here, and that he is, and always will be, part of your family.*

*At a time when words say so little, and tears so much, we are going to say farewell to that part of Hugo which cannot remain with us. But with gladness we remember that the greatest part of him will live on in you and through you all, who had so much love for him. Let the love you share for Hugo and your love for each other be your strength, because nothing - not even death - can take away love.*

*The poet Mary Yarnall wrote:*

### ***Too Soon***

*This was a life that had hardly begun  
No time to find your place in the Sun  
No time to do all you could have done  
But we loved you enough for a lifetime  
No time to enjoy the world and its wealth  
No time to take life down off the shelf  
No time to sing the songs of yourself  
Though you had enough love for a lifetime  
Those who live long endure sadness and tears  
But you'll never suffer the sorrowing years  
No betrayal, no anger, no hatred, no fears  
Just love – only love – in your lifetime.*

*So, I end, with the words of committal; if you are comfortable to do so, would you please stand.*

*Hugo, those who love you salute you. Your life we honour, your death we mourn, your memory we cherish. Thank you for all the happiness you brought. Now with love we leave you in peace, yet hold you and keep you forever in our hearts.*