

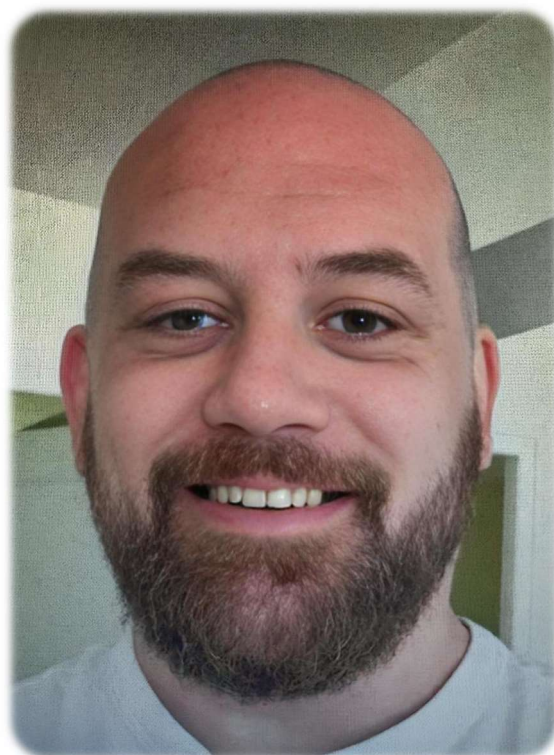
A Celebration of the Life of

Adam Wharton

27 January 1984 – 24 November 2024

12 December 2024, Wakefield Crematorium

Celebrant: Hannah McKerchar



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Adam's daughter Leigha has written something for her dad that she has asked me to read for her today:

*Dad, you carried pain that nobody could see,
Fighting battles that eventually took you from me.
But you never knew how many hearts cared,
How much love for you was always there.*

*I see you in the mirror,
A reflection of your face,
Your freckly cheeks,
Your smile, your eyes, your grace.*

*I miss you more than words can say,
In every laugh, in every day.
Now you're gone, but I see you shine,
A star in the sky, forever mine.*

I love you Dad

When I met with his mum Amanda and sister Bex, they told me of Adam when he was a little boy. He was always an animal lover; how many four year olds would rush home from school so as to sit transfixed by One Man and His Dog! (And that fixation never waned, even as an adult.) Because of his dad, Ken's work, Adam spent parts of his childhood in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, and he loved being outdoors, sailing, snorkelling, and playing with his friends Scott and Brad. They were fearless, as young children often are, building 'sand' castles out of dead jellyfish, and going fishing with Adam's little Fisher Price plastic fishing rod; one time they came running joyfully down the beach proudly waving their catch on the end of the line, and making every parent on the beach leap up and shout, 'Drop the fish!' They had managed to hook a lionfish, one of the most venomous fish in the sea!

Adam survived all these escapades unscathed, and with a healthy dose of cheekiness. He liked to cause a bit of mischief; having moved back to the south of England, after one Sunday lunch with friends the Engalls, Adam and their son John barricaded themselves into the living room, and made multiple prank calls to the police, unbeknownst to their parents until an officer came knocking at the door!

Amanda, Ken, Bex, Adam and younger brother Josh settled up in Yorkshire when Adam was 11, and he started at Kirkburton Middle School, where he found great friends in Swaz, Chris and Sparky, among others. He still managed to get up to mischief, including the time he built a den on the banking in Shelley and managed to accidentally set the whole hillside alight with his campfire, sidling home trying to look innocent as all the fire engines went tearing up Far Bank.

He may have been a little cheeky at times, but Adam was also really clever; he'd sit and do Bex's GCSE maths homework just for kicks (and probably to wind her up!). And though he wasn't in the mood to apply himself to his GCSEs, having more fun skiving and indulging in space cakes, (as well as performing his Wharton wiggle on nights out clubbing) he still coasted through his exams, before finding himself something he did want to work at.

Adam became an electrician (or an elec-chicken, as Leigha used to call him when she was too little to pronounce it right) and went on to become a master of his trade. He covered commercial and industrial work, and trained up as a CompEx electrician so he was qualified to work in explosive environments. Adam really enjoyed his work, not least because it took him all over the world, across Europe and to the likes of Texas and China. And he also took immense pride in what he did, and worked as hard as he could, for himself, and for his family.

Adam was only young when he became a dad for the first time, but he did all he could to provide for Leigha, and later for Alfie. He didn't always get things right, and he certainly had regrets that he wasn't always there for both his children. But he also had some happy times with them, including going to Disneyland Paris for Alfie's eighth birthday. His nephew Harrison also remembers the trip to Florida in 2015, where Adam hired a Mustang convertible and drove around with his nephew with the top down. Adam was so glad when Leigha started writing to him seven years ago, and they built themselves a relationship over chess games and movie nights and some exceptional roast dinners (we won't mention the flat Yorkshire pudding!). Leigha told me her dad was a good cook, which goes to show how times have changed since he was sixteen and living with Bex; she still remembers him putting a pizza in the oven before clean forgetting it and going out – she came home to a house full of smoke!

Adam's dad, Ken, has also shared some of his thoughts and memories of Adam with me and is happy for me to share those with you.

It was clear to us that from an early age Adam would be different. I don't think many parents can recall when their child decided during the final chorus of the School Christmas play that he'd rather be a critic than an actor, walked off, and sat out the rest of the performance at the side of the stage.

In his early life it would be fair to say that Adam rarely did anything without commitment. Whether it be work or play he gave it 100%. I believe he struggled to understand why anyone would do things differently and never fully understood how compromise is supposed to work. It has to be said that in both work or play he was always more focussed on the benefits to be gained, or the fun to be had by others, rather than anything he actually wanted for himself. In this sense I believe he had a very generous nature.

I cannot forget how proud I was when, at some point after finishing his apprenticeship, Adam found himself between jobs and came to assist me where I was doing some engineering work on a Chemical Plant. His work was of the highest quality, and I have to admit it was the hardest I have ever had to work to make sure I had enough work planned and ready to be done by a single electrician. Sadly, he went through the work all too quickly and headed off to his next job soon after.

We are all too aware of Adam's struggles, but they were not the sum of who he was. I believe his greatest sadness came from being unable to be the person he wanted to be for others. Even then he still tried.

Adam's struggles meant he couldn't continue to work as he had done previously. As a family we were all able to find tasks that Adam could do in our homes in order to keep him occupied and try to help his recovery. He was always keen to do any job that would improve our lives and our homes. We all have work that he did to remind

us of those times. For me this involved visits to France and Northumberland where it is impossible to walk into a room and turn on a light without remembering him either covered in paint or complaining that junction boxes just weren't big enough for his fat fingers.

When I look at how Adam has lived his life it is clear to me that he wanted little for himself in terms of anything material. He was at his happiest and best when he was able to bring happiness and cheer to others. Even in his most troubled times he would be happy to share the little that he had with anyone he thought needed it more than himself.

He was naturally gifted when it came to brightening the lives of others. His manner, his wry smile and his matter of fact way of expressing himself endeared him to many. Over recent days many people have shared memories of Adam where he brightened their lives, quite often at times when he himself was struggling.

Adam wanted to be the brightest light in our lives and very often was. In remembering him I would ask you grant him this wish, that he shared with some of those closest to him. On those special nights where there is a clear sky over Yorkshire, pick out the brightest star in the sky and remember the times when he shone for you.

When Adam's family met with the lady who found him, she commented on how peaceful he looked at the end. She also recalled having met him earlier in the summer, when he had stopped to chat with her and her dog. She said she was left with the impression: 'What a lovely young man.' And that's what Adam was; a caring, hard-working, lovely young man, fun-loving, when his demons didn't get the better of him. That is who we will remember.