A Celebration of the Life of

Ashley Paul Ronan Phythian

14 September 1992 – 23 December 2023

29 January 2024, York Cemetery
Celebrant: Steve Emmett

Humanist Ceremonies™ by Humanists UK

We have come here today to say goodbye to Ashley Phythian who died suddenly at home in Manchester on 23rd December at the age of thirty-one.

I'm Steve Emmett, a celebrant accredited by Humanists UK and it's my privilege to have been asked to lead this ceremony. I led the funeral of Ashley's nana, Enid, here ten years ago and his mum Jane would like to point out that the poppy seed heads in the natural winter-coloured arrangement (nicknamed a Twiglet) on the coffin, made by Jane and Fiona, contain poppy seed heads which are the descendants of those given out at Enid's funeral. Also included in the arrangement are some chillies, one of Ashley's favourite flavourings.

Tribute from parents

Jane and Mick have asked me to read this tribute on their behalf:

Ashley Paul Ronan Phythian (aka Ash, Fizz, Cheeser, Spog and Mymble) was delivered to this world at York District Hospital on 14th September 1992 at 2.26pm. Ashley brought so much love and joy to his parents, grandparents, and family friends. Soon, his smile won the York round of a bonny baby competition getting him his photo in the local York Press for the first time, as you will see in the Order of Ceremony.

Jane and Mick are vegetarians, so it proceeded from this that Ashley was brought up without eating meat or fish. From an early age he learned about cookery in the kitchen with his mum, initially from a Winnie the Pooh cookbook which is where his love of cooking and food came from. His dad's food tastes are somewhat bland, but Jane introduced him to the delights of the wide world of vegetarian food, which he enjoyed cooking when he left home.

Cats were always part of the family and Ashley learned to love and respect these along with all animals. He was also brought up with a love of nature which included regular visits to this cemetery from when he was small as it had also then become a recognised place for wildlife.

From Ashley being aged four until after he left for university, Jane and Mick became approved foster carers providing short-term care for disabled children. This allowed Ashley to develop a different world view by welcoming other youngsters with differing abilities into his family to play and share his toys. Although he had no actual siblings, the sharing care children in many ways performed this role.

One of Ashley's favourite books was 'Oh The Places You'll Go' by Dr Seuss and he certainly made a start as the family set out from his early years to such places as: Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Jersey, Isle of Man, Norway, Iceland, Egypt, Germany, Morocco, Poland, Sweden, France, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, Austria, Czech Republic and the USA.

Ashley progressed from Joseph's nursery to Hempland Primary School where one of the teachers identified his intelligence and mathematical skills, as he had to have more advanced class work. She also entered him on the Council's Gifted and Talented register which became commonly referred to by us as 'Galented and Tifted' that saw us going off to Newcastle and elsewhere in the region for him to do special classes on a weekend. This earned him the nickname of "Science Boy"!

At the same time, having earnestly danced about to his dad's Riverdance CD, he received an annual scholarship to the York School of Dance and Drama at the grand age of four. This then occupied most Saturday mornings, along with Sundays and evenings when there was a performance. His appearance as James Bond, aged six, on the stage of the Sunderland Empire gained plaudits from Cheryl Baker (of Bucks Fizz).

Ashley learned to play piano and read music with his Nana and later took lessons on clarinet as he was told he was too young and small for the desired saxophone. Later he expressed a wish to play electric guitar, one of which came one birthday or Christmas, and after trying to teach himself he finally gave in to having lessons, first on Saturday morning after he stopped dance, then on an afternoon after school.

He also started going to music gigs from an early age. We were often on the guest list when our friend Troy played, from Ripon Cathedral to the Southbank Centre in London. Troy had also introduced Ashley to magic tricks and, instead of pocket money, Ashley would buy one from a stall on York Market that Troy told us about.

He was also the youngest member of York Geology Club, initially joining with his Nana and, from a very early age, weekends and holidays were spent investigating beaches and quarries with him often losing geology hammers but finding prize fossils.

Ashley's mum worked as an organiser for Mathemagic on Maths Year 2000 and, aged just eight, his first wages were earned demonstrating along with his mum maths puzzles such as "Towers of Hanoi" to amazed adults.

He also used to attend York Chess Club of an evening with his mum at the then St Olave's School, where they were both warmly welcomed, his mum often being beaten by eight-year-olds!

Hockey also came along to fit into this packed schedule, and he joined York Hockey Club, even being selected for North Yorkshire. Although maybe not as sporty or athletic as some of his teammates he was identified as tenacious – "Tenacious Ash". He also did Taekwondo for a period!

When the time came for secondary school he chose Huntington School, perhaps because it was nearest, and he could spend longer in bed. Like his mother, Ashley was not a "morning person"! This often required a parent to drop him off at the school door at the very last minute...

Ashley made lots of friends at Huntington but was let down by the maths teaching which wouldn't keep up with him, despite him being chosen to compete in the National Maths Olympiad. Somewhere he also acquired the motto "Revising is cheating" which we couldn't dissuade him from. However, he managed to get the grades at GCSE to do Maths, Further Maths, Economics, and Photography at York College where, importantly, he no longer had a uniform or had to call the male teachers "Sir"!

Ashley made a whole new bunch of friends at York College to which he cycled on a daily basis. This was the real start of his love for cycling using a veteran restored bike that he managed to wear out in the two years! Despite his ample innate maths talent, the unwillingness to revise was not appreciated when he had been identified as prospective Oxbridge material by the College. Instead, he sought the "primrose path" (the easy way) to Manchester Met, that city's famous music scene, and a degree course in Maths and Economics.

For university, having worn out his college bike, he found an old lightweight Italian racer on eBay. This served him faithfully until it broke travelling to the university library during the revision for his finals whilst he was burning the midnight oil. That time, revision resulted in a high First Class Honours degree in 2014 and we found someone to repair the bike. This bike then served him a few more years before he actually bought a new one whilst employed at On The Beach, and a second whilst at Palace Skateboards. He was never interested in driving only to have a provisional licence for age verification.

Moving into halls at Manchester that first day in 2011 he was destined to meet some of the loyal friends that have stayed with him since, including Abi, Sean, Amelia and others.

Being a reasonably capable guitarist Ashley had, during the years from sixteen onwards, begun hankering for more electronic music. We bought him various keyboards, and he started to accumulate various "musical toys". The number of these toys grew as did the size of his keyboards. The house at Hasper Avenue has, in what was variously called his "office" or "studio" a range of equipment that he loved to play when composing tracks of all styles - from playing classical music like Satie's Gnossienne #1 (played earlier), to adding a backing soundtrack, including Uilleann pipes, to a vocal recording of the song Carrickfergus by Bernard, an old friend of his parent's, he'd met when younger. You will hear this later. He also complained about the inherited small hands from his dad that meant he could only reach a ninth which made some pieces impossible.

Upon graduation, Ashley had no idea what he wanted to do. He had long forsworn the IT career that had occupied his father since 1975 but, as was the case with his father, he fell into it, but with far greater talent, taking up a post as Software and Web Development Intern at his alma mater Manchester Metropolitan University from September 2014 to April 2015. He enjoyed the job, and his colleagues liked him to the extent that, whilst it was supposed to be a six-month contract, they tried to keep him longer.

At the end of that we discovered that On The Beach, an online holiday company, were recruiting and, following an interview, he started there. Who wouldn't join a firm with a beer fridge for after-hours working and other perks? Ashley stayed there for six and a half years proceeding from Ruby Software Engineer to Senior Software Engineer. He made many friends, two of whom he went to join at Palace Skateboards in March 2022 after they encouraged him to apply.

Sophie and Ashley first met online as teenagers, then lost contact, but years later she found an old letter that he'd had sent on her fifteenth birthday. As she had recently seen his profile on Instagram she reached out and sent him a photo of the letter. He replied and from then they started to chat again, reminiscing about their teenage years and where their lives had gone from there. After a year or so they decided to meet up in person for the first time.

The two of them had grown extremely close and found they had many things in common, including having a great love for animals and following a vegetarian lifestyle. With similar interests in art and media, Ashley and Sophie would introduce each other to new films and artists and would constantly send each other links and photos that they thought the other would appreciate. It had been the perfect time for them to finally meet and share these common interests in person.

After the long-distance relationship Ashley asked Sophie if she would like to move in with him in Manchester. She of course said yes, as Manchester was the best place for both of them. Ashley was already surrounded by so many friends and happily working in the city and Sophie loved Manchester from the moment she first visited him.

Celebrant: Just to deviate from Jane and Mick's words for a moment, Sophie would like to credit Ashley, his wonderful parents, and all of his friends who welcomed her into their circle and made her feel comfortable and supported to grow within herself and become who she is today. Ashley and Sophie were soul mates who planned to continue their life together with all their friends and family. He formed such an amazing group of people around him wherever he went and is the thread that binds them all together forever.

Tribute continues: The Covid pandemic meant that working from home had prepared Ashley for having an office in London with monthly visits and weekly meetups with his ex-On The Beach friend Tim in the city centre. However, he never liked talking on the telephone, Zoom meetings were a bane - apart from being able to show all his 'studio' equipment in the background, and remote conversations with us and others where possible were via WhatsApp. We had daily competitions with him, doing the New York Times Wordle and Connections puzzles online, sharing our results over WhatsApp.

Ashley was proud of the quality of the code he wrote and was often praised for it. He never wanted to enter management or any supervisory role, despite having excellent people skills. He loved cycling and socialising. He enjoyed walking and observing nature. He enjoyed learning and philosophical discussions. He watched films, often with his

friend Abi. He was our erudite and egalitarian son who, whilst he might not suffer fools gladly, could be kind and loving with others.

Latterly he had suffered erratic sleep, and often complained about back pain in recent years – something that both his dad, and grandfather, had suffered from. He blamed them for passing this on to him in his genes, along with the small hands. The Palace medical plan had provided a local physiotherapist who helped quite a lot with back pain. However, the severe right knee injury that occurred at the Moovin Festival on August Bank Holiday 2023, when he slipped and badly damaged it, meant he was in constant pain and less able to socialise and cycle.

We last saw him for his birthday on 14th September when he was limping badly as we visited the Lyme Park National Trust property, but we all had a thoroughly happy, fun time exploring the wonderful grounds and buildings.

We were concerned about the knee and encouraged Ashley to use his work health insurance again and he achieved a referral and was prescribed painkillers by his GP. He then proceeded to a consultant's appointment, then an MRI scan, and eventually another consultant's appointment, to be told it was a torn ligament and to expect a further six weeks before it was better.

The knee pain had been compounded when, on 7th October, his knee gave way one night in central Manchester and he fell badly, slashing the back of his right middle finger open and was sent from pillar to post in the period of a week, before it was finally sewn and dressed. The A&E who first dealt with his finger at least provided him with a crutch, but how do you use that with a painful and heavily bandaged right middle finger? He was also still unable to cycle or socialise. It was also difficult to near impossible to use a keyboard for work or pleasure. The pain walking also stopped visits to the London office or the city centre, although Tom came up from London on 14th December for a city centre meet-up with Tim and Ashley, and Tim and Ashley went down to London for the day on the 15th.

From early November Jane and Mick were planning their regular Christmas holiday with Ashley, to get away from it all. They had never spent Christmas day at home since he was small, preferring to go to the seaside for a picnic with his Nana and latterly a great-aunt. When these relatives both became less active, they went to "Indian" restaurants sometimes with other family and friends. More recently the three went abroad for a warmer picnic. For this last Christmas they had agreed on Faro because Ashley hadn't been to Portugal, so a holiday was booked to fly on Christmas Eve. It was all booked by mid-November, and they regularly spoke via WhatsApp about what they'd do there but Ashley was having to restrict any of the usual lengthy walks due to his injured knee.

As the flight was early on Christmas Eve, Jane and Mick travelled over the afternoon before as agreed with Ashley to exchange Christmas presents. Sadly, this meeting never took place as he unexpectedly died in the couple of hours between Sophie leaving to visit her parents and Jane and Mick's arrival. Sophie had left him wrapping ours and

her Christmas gifts but he had collapsed and was later found dead on his studio floor. There is currently no explanation for Ashley's untimely sudden death, and we will have to wait around six months for the Inquest to be concluded.

We love him greatly, which was constantly reciprocated. We'll miss him forever and the places he might have gone, and the things he might have done.

As we leave the chapel, the bell will be rung thirty-one times in honour of Ashley's age.

Personal Tributes

Marilyn Crawshaw

Where to start…

I had the privilege of being a Special Friend to Ashley, in Humanist terms. Or as Ashley apparently used to say 'I was his god mother without the god'.

Jane and I go back a long way but I know some of you here go back even further. We met when Jane was a key part of the social work admin team at York Hospital more than 30 years ago, working mainly with the maternity & gynae social workers of which I was one. Sue was another and she's here today too. We were remembering when Jane had her pregnancy confirmed. What a time for celebration that was. And Jane being Jane agreed – though with some trepidation of course - to her Consultant Obstetrician, David Pring, using her as a case study so that others could benefit from learning from her experiences. I'm sure they did.

And so the day came when Ashley was born. It was so exciting but also nerve wracking while we waited to hear if the caesarean had gone OK. I was with Mick when Mick held Ashley for the first time (before Jane came round from the anaesthetic) and he reminds me that I told him how to hold Ashley's head and get him in the crook of his arm. I still have the photo of me holding him that day up on the notice board in our kitchen, more than 31 years later. And of course Mick didn't really need any lessons; he quickly got into his stride and there was no looking back for either him or Jane.

No parents could have been more proud or more loving. I didn't know Mick's parents or Jane's Dad but I did know Jane's mum Enid (another wonderful person) – and when I say that Enid would glow when she talked about what 'our Ashley' had been up to, I'm not exaggerating. Ashley was of course the centre of their world - not in a clingy, overpowering way but in a way that made him safe and secure and able to go out into the world, confident of that deep love inside him.

And the years went by. Ashley grew from a lovely little baby – and my two children now in their 40s reminded me at Xmas that he was the first baby they ever fed and have the photos to prove it – into a delightful toddler, a bright inquisitive boy in his

school and sixth form years and then off into the big world of university and work where he excelled. He had so much ahead of him……

And talking of photos, how many of us got those Xmas cards each year with a photo of Ashley glued to the inside? Each year with that lovely smile to brighten our day. A treasure trove of the unfolding years.

How much pain and anguish it would have caused Ashley to know of the suffering that his death has brought to those around him. I lost the first of my brothers when we were in our 20s, not much younger than Ashley was. So my heart goes out to those of you who are his mates and to Sophie as none of us expect to lose someone at that age. And I lost my second brother in a sudden death when we were in our 50s so I know how unbelievably overwhelming that feels like. But those of us who are parents know that losing our child is our greatest fear – and that is why my heart goes out especially to Jane and Mick. You can be so proud of your lad. I know your world stopped on 23rd December. And I also know that our and your world is richer for having had Ashley in it and nothing will ever take that away. We'll love and support you all we can as you face the world without him physically in it. But what memories you have; and what a depth of love.

Abi McVeigh

We joked about talking at each others wedding or funeral but I never actually thought about what I would say, thought I'd have a whole lifetime to conjure up embarrassing stories. It's so surreal how unfunny that all is now but that's what our friendship was like. Ash was never afraid to push the boundaries. We'd talk about the most bleak things but somehow come out of it laughing. He was one of the funniest people I know, without even meaning to be. His big, loud, Yorkshire accent, booming anywhere he went. You'd hear him before you saw him. And you couldn't tell him to shut up as much as you tried.

It goes without saying that he was also one of the most caring people I know. I once text him freaking out at 3am because there was a mouse in my flat and of course he was awake, night owl that he was. He immediately offered to help me, no questions asked and I literally went to pick him up and we searched for an hour trying to catch the mouse. Basically Ash looking under every piece of furniture whilst I stood on a chair. We even moved the wardrobes and my sewing machine fell off and hit him on the head. The neighbours probably wondering what the hell was going on. But we were still laughing at how ridiculous it was. When we eventually gave up looking he said there's no one else I'd do a 3am mouse hunt for. He was the most generous with his time. It's not often you find a soulmate in a friend but that's what he was to me.

Over the years he's brought so many people together. Too many pubs, parties, bike rides, gigs and cinema trips to count. It's impossible to try trust me. I do remember our first trip to the Cornerhouse cinema in Manchester, back in our first year of uni, some bleak Austrian film. We shared a love of anything weird and foreign like that and became cinema buddies from then on. Semi rolling our eyes at the word

“arthouse” cinema. He was always up for a laugh. He'd tell you off for being boring if you didn't wanna go out. And he was the one friend who you'd most likely give in for. He made an impression on everyone he met, guaranteed to make a new friend on any night out that we went on. He really loved all of his friends and made sure they knew it too. Always greeted everyone with a sarcastic comment or a massive hug.

Last year, we went to a gin making class for my birthday. There were about 10 people there, all middle aged couples and then us and we were the only people asking questions the whole time, I say we but it was mostly Ash as you can imagine, he was always curious and interested and he secretly or not so secretly loved catching the guy off guard not having an answer for him. I'm sure everyone would agree he was a force to be reckoned with.

He was always unapologetically himself and I believe we have Jane and Mick to thank for that. I know he wanted to make you proud. Thank you for bringing him into our lives.

Ash, I'm so grateful I got to be your best mate. My go to person for so many things. Never failing to make me smile, even when we sat in silence with an arm around each other. What a ride it's been. I'll miss you.

P.S. you would have really suited a mullet

Danny Igoe

When I first found out that Ash had died, I was wearing a pair of socks I’d got off him as present for my last birthday. They were, of course, Palace socks. Palace being the ultra-cool clothing company where Ash worked as a software engineer for the last two years. A job he loved, a job he worked incredibly hard for.

Palace clothing had become a staple present Ash gave out to people, out of his yearly personal allowance – which to me is a perfect example of generosity and his kindness. As soon as he found out he got the job, he made a spreadsheet to properly and most efficiently allocate the goods to us all.

That was who he was - the most intelligent, thoughtful, and caring person I’ve ever had the privilege to call my best friend. He would go so out of his way when giving birthday presents to people. Really beautiful, thoughtful gifts that were uniquely tailored to the individual friendship he shared with us all.

His warmth was not only just for his friends – I remember one night at the pub, he met my mate who was doing a PHD in Linguistics and ended up spending the whole evening locked into a conversation with her about her dissertation.
Such was his innate curiosity and breadth of knowledge about literally EVERYTHING, -he was able to hold conversation with anyone about any topic.
He was the best person to make new friends with on a night out.

Not that he didn't sometimes have to come with the caveat – "this is mate my Ash … just trust me - he is amazing once you get past his foghorn voice."
He was the best person to go on a bike ride with. The best friend anyone could ask for.

I found out recently that after Ash met my friend in the pub that one time, he reached out to her to further help with the dissertation, even setting up a video call.. all off his own back, just because he wanted to help and was interested.
That is who he was.
So innately giving and loving to everybody.

I feel so lucky to have a special relationship with Ash, but the best thing is – we all do. Whether you'd known him for ten years or ten minutes, it didn't matter - he would take the piss out of you exactly the same.
He would love you the same.

The first time I met Ash, he was living with Helje in Levenshulme in 2015, in the converted Church. He was sat up in bed, fiddling with the parameters of a synth in one hand and playing Minecraft on his laptop with the other.
His brain worked a million miles an hour.
In the many nights we made art together he would be in a constant dialogue with himself, muttering away as he worked on a whatever mad piece of art he was making.
Creatively, I think he was a genius.
He certainly had the quirks of a genius.
His phone keyboard being invisible just to 'give him a challenge'. His wifi password being 'three words all lower case'.
The music he made was so meticulous and intricately beautiful.

In 2016, myself, Ash and Eddy Keegan lived together in Withington, which is where I first truly got to know Ash.
We bonded over a mutual love of hip hop, classic British TV comedies, and winding up Eddy. In Delacourt Road we shared many happy memories living together, and it was the start of a beautiful friendship.
We loved each other and I will always love him.

In 2017 Ash moved to 26 Hasper Avenue, where he started work on filling every wall of his house with obscure artwork, cramming every bookshelf with graphic novels and dvds, covering every communal surface with condiment bottles, every desk with strange musical gizmos, every little trinket, every road sign, every nook and cranny in that house … everywhere you look - Ash's personality is bursting out the seams.
Such beautiful chaos.

It's no wonder we would always end up outside at his parties.

Ash's garden, and the good times we shared there is … it's hard to put into words how much it means. The summer where we all gathered there to watch the Euros.
The TV outside, perched on a chair.
The glass table we sat around, moving further back into the garden to chase the last remnants of sun.
The broken chairs, grass overgrowing around them.
The paddling pool that quickly became another science experiment for Ash.
Playing frisbee, someone accidentally throwing it over the fence, and getting boo'd by everyone - most loudly Ash.
The sock game, all the countless hours of fun and games, all the parties we had in that garden will forever be etched in my memory.
All these beautiful memories and good times were only possible due to Ash, and his amazingly unique personality.
He brought so many people together.

Years ago, at one party in Ash's garden, a couple of people met, and at the start of this year they welcomed a beautiful and healthy baby into the world.
There is such beauty in that. Joy and woe are woven fine.
I know Ash was so excited for his friends' baby, and I know he would proudly be saying that it was all down to him.

Life will never be the same without him.
I will forever miss not being able to speak to him, to send him my most inappropriate jokes, all my thoughts and feelings and worries and hopes and dreams.
He was the person who I felt I could truly be myself around.
The last time we properly spoke, we disagreed about something. But it didn't matter. We talked it through, and hugged, said that we loved each other, and that nothing would stand in the way of that.
That was Ash - he gave love and was loved tremendously.

Helje Svensson (Who came over from Norway)

I never thought we would be here today. In the years I lived here, Ash was my home. He annoyed me, and I annoyed him, and he made me laugh and together we made food. He

was always just, there, and I never really thought that that would end. He was always just, there. And now he is not.

I remember my first week living in Manchester, everything was a bit scary and then I fell off the pavement and I sprained my ankle, like, really bad. And then I went to Ash´s for a house party, and I was on crutches and I was a mess. And I keep coming back to this memory, of being sat in his backyard the day after that party, and I remember feeling at peace. I felt safe. We´re just sat there, talking.

These past few weeks have been surreal. I am in pain. My chest hurts. I have been angry, I am sad and I've been jealous, of everyone. But I also feel lucky that I got to know him.
Because being friends with Ash felt like having this really cool secret. That I knew something the rest of the world didn't know. That he was actually the coolest person. Cos when I first met him, he just seemed like any other normal guy. But getting to know him I realised he was not, at all.

He was a walking library for all things weird. He always had something new and cool to show me. He loved cats, he also loved talking about old abortion techniques. He was at the same time very welcoming and surprisingly rude. He was kinda short but always so loud. And even when he was making fun of you he made you feel special. He is always gonna be one of my favourite people. And I'm sad I won't get to see who he´d be at 90, but he will still, always be with me.

I read somewhere that the most common thing to do, as just, a human, is writing your own name, saying you were here. Like on your desk or something. So that´s what I wanna do. I just wanna say: Ash was here. And he made a difference.

Mick Phythian

First of all we'd like to thank all those friends, colleagues and neighbours of Ashley's who despite their own heartbreak rallied round to support Sophie and ourselves. Likewise our friends and neighbours in York who helped us regardless of it being Christmas and the New Year. What a shit end to 2023, what a shit start to 2024.

A consolation for us has been the numerous messages we've received, including many with memories such as "Ash meant so much to me and brought immeasurable joy and love to my life", "he had such a wonderful sense of humour, he was so incredibly charismatic", "He was one of the most genuine, intelligent and creative people I have ever met", "All I can think of is Ashley's kind smile", and "he was such a cool and friendly guy all round". These help demonstrate to us that it won't only be his parents and partner who miss him.

In my youth I'd never planned on having children, I didn't think of myself as parental material, but Jane convinced me otherwise and Ashley Paul Ronan came along like a dream. I'll never forget Marilyn teaching me how to hold and rock him after he was delivered. I soon gave up smoking and skydiving after his birth and these were replaced by much better, healthier and shared pursuits. I remember we were warned to make the best of their childhood because they soon grown up, which he did, all too soon.

I don't think Ashley ever had a career goal and fell into the IT business after university but whether that was really his home we'll never now be sure. He did seem to be good at it.

He, Jane and I constantly conversed about everything but now he was in Manchester and we in York it was mainly electronically apart from the regular meetups and holidays.
Recently I'd spent time writing my memories of childhood in Greater Manchester for him with some new family history but he nor anyone else will ever see it.

Above his career he had the talent to make and experience music as we try to show in the samples you're hearing. When he finally tried skydiving he loved it and wanted more – my experience exactly but cycling was his passion until his knee injury…

He also loved walking in nature as well observing it in the school nature reserve from the back bedroom window. He loved art, drawing and creating. He loved film. He loved cooking. He loved eating and drinking.

Most of all he loved Sophie, and wanted to protect her. He had told some of his friends that he was ready to settle down and they'd been looking at houses in the summer but shit has happened and Sophie is on her own (apart from their strong band of friends). This is something I don't believe he would have ever intended.

If I had my three score years and twelve back again there's little I'd change as long as Ashley was there, and lived out his life with Sophie.

Shit has happened – he's been snatched from us and we don't know how or why yet. Ashley has been torn from our lives but not from our hearts. I've also lost my best mate. Jane has lost her beautiful boy. Sophie has lost her Spog.

I don't think any of us can believe what has happened, but he will live on in our very fondest memories.

When separating one of us always said "Love you" and the response was "Love you more". Cheeser! Love you more!