A Celebration of the Life of

William Howard Gibb

29 January 1947 – 12 May 2025

6 June 2025, Eden Valley Crematorium
Celebrant: Heather Raine



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Hello and welcome to you all family and friends of Dr William Howard Gibb, known by everyone as Will.

Will was loved and admired within his friendships and family. He was a loving and caring son, an older brother to Richard, an uncle, the cherished husband of Polly and a wonderful father, stepfather and father-in-law to Jo, Sandy, Lindsay, Sorrel, Tom, Stuart, Ollie, Kathryn and Kate. Will was also grandfather and step-grandfather to fourteen grandchildren.

Will was not religious. He recognised the cultural environment into which he was born and lived, he enjoyed the Christmas festivities, Church weddings and the like but he held no religious beliefs. Will's values led to his family choosing a humanist ceremony as a way to celebrate his life, his presence in their lives and the impact he had on those around him.

Throughout his life Will set his own moral compass to naturally provide immense kindness, caring, love and compassion to others as part of his ordinary, human, nature.

Will's care, compassion and consideration for others were qualities that had certainly been felt by his family and friends. His capacity for providing nurturing care created the family he was so immensely proud of.

Dad's Eulogy, read by daughters Jo Barnden and Lindsay Tomlinson.

JO

William Howard Gibb – Dad – was born on January 29th 1947. Sixty years later, when I was presenting 'This is your life' at his birthday party, I accidentally gave his birth date as Lindsay's – January 20th. Never one to be shy, he promptly called out the correction – mortifying me! Well, Dad, I'm afraid, much as it would pain you, you can't interrupt now. I hope you're listening though, because you're about to get a whole lot of love coming your way.

It wasn't long before Dad got a little brother – fondly known by him and his friend Martin Manning as 'Tich' – a nickname that has stuck in the family despite 'Tich' growing taller than Dad. Tich remembers him as one of the bad boys at their boarding school, often sneaking out for a few beers - a hobby that was to last his lifetime! They had a particularly happy home life once they moved to Hillview Cottage in Gullane, the back garden proving the perfect pitch for Dad, ever the older brother, to bat to Tich's bowling and shoot past his goalkeeping!

Young Will only had one problem in his happy childhood – a small hole in his heart. This led to him having a then revolutionary operation to sew it up, carried out by 'freezing' him in an ice-bath to lower his heartrate in a time before bypass machines. I can't imagine what it must have been like for his parents, but the operation was a total success, mending what was going to turn out to be a very big heart indeed, open to

huge numbers of family and friends – so many of whom are here to honour his memory with us today. Thank you.

LINS

Dad met and married our Mum, Jenny, at St Andrews, whilst both studying organic chemistry staying there to secure his PhD and to have Jo. They then moved south to Keyworth and had Sandy before finally settling in Sutton Bonington where I was born and where we grew up very happily. Dad became a big part of the local community involved in the cricket, badminton and squash clubs and I fondly remember him as an auctioneer for the Christian Aids auctions and as a dashing compare in the local variety show – even if we were slightly mortified at his dad jokes at the time!

For me Dad was always a reassuring, calm and supportive presence. He had a positive attitude to life, an enduring ability to always see the good in people, and a strong belief in fairness, alongside a great sense of fun. Certainly all qualities I hope will live on in me.

My standout childhood memories are of walks and bike rides along the river with our dog Bramble. I remember cycling side by side down Pasture Lane as he helped to itch my nose as I was too frightened to let go of the handle bars! We spent many happy hours in the sea with him teaching me to snorkel. And also many hours sat at the kitchen table as he tried to help me with my maths - not quite such fond memories for either of us!

He was always there for life's key moments, a calming presence at times of sadness and a practical support for the positive steps in life. He helped Ollie and I to choose our home and was always on hand in the lead-up to our wedding with what became his infamous clipboard of lists and plans - with Dad of course keeping ultimate control of the Majestic [Wine Warehouse] *order!*

JO

A key memory of Dad, for me, was if I ever woke in the night wanting comfort. He slept nearest to the door and I'd slide into bed with him in the dark, always finding his arms open to cuddle me close. I'd lie there, the curtains clicking in the breeze from the open window and feel utterly safe.

I vividly remember Sunday night games of Boggle and Happy Families and the time Dad shaved off his beard, coming out with it half removed to delight us all – complete with wicked grin and silly dance.

More recently Dad was my first and finest beta reader for all my novels. When I was newly published, and nervous about sending an initial draft to my editor, he would read it for me and we'd meet up for him to give me his thoughts, usually over a good pint. They were always very honest - this is the only man in the world who, when asked by

his GP how many units he drank a week answered 'fifty'! But I valued that honesty and his input and unending support meant the world to me.

LINS

For Sandy, important memories were going out to North Berwick with Dad to take Grandpa's boat out on the sea, something that later turned into treasured trips up the Soar in Sandy's own boat. He also fondly recalls Dad taking him onto the Power station's private roads to learn to drive aged just 16, both of them as impatient as each other to get going! In latter years, they had wonderful times in the pool room at Wayside, Dad sat on the day bed, whilst Sandy played with the boys in the pool – always with a good pint afterwards! For Sandy, especially in their shared 'bachelor' year, Dad wasn't just a dad but a best friend and that's a bond he'll always cherish.

But a lovely man like Dad wouldn't stay a bachelor for long and thankfully he was soon to meet Polly. Both she and Dad were bruised from break-ups and really only dating on the encouragement of friends. But they clicked and – a little unexpectedly at first - fell in love, moving into a wonderful new phase in life together, forming a bond as the supportive loving couple they came to be.

Along with Polly, Dad got himself two new children and embraced Tom and Sorrel with his usual loving warmth. He and Tom clicked over sport, with Tom having a fantastic memory of Dad securing him an illegal day off school to see Graham Thorpe score his maiden test century at Trent Bridge. He also remembers him insisting he watch Jonathan Edwards triple jumping at the World Champs, saying he was sure something special was going to happen. He was right – Edwards broke the world record. Twice.

Tom loved playing golf and cricket with Dad and this active fun translated into grandchildren too. Sorrel fondly recalls him enthusiastically joining in the fun in the pool at Centre Parks with her family as well as earnestly matching up to Austen in endless games of chess – and being hugely proud when, in their last ever game, his young opponent forced a hard-fought draw.

JO

Dad was a man of enthusiasms with many passions in life. One was travel. This started with wonderful Canvas holidays in France, and many adventures across Scotland and Wales. We all remember trekking miles down a seemingly uniform beach lugging buckets, spades and coolbags of beer, to find Dad's 'perfect spot' to set up our rug and fry sausages! Later, once Dad and Polly were childfree, they ventured further afield, travelling as far and wide as the Galapagos islands, Costa Rica, Namibia and around the British Virgin Islands on a catamaran. Some trips they did alone, some with dear friends, many of whom are here today. They loved their holidays and, to cap it off, they loved coming home – and what homes!

Their first house together was the sprawling Hillcroft, with puppies in the utility room, ducks in the orchard and chickens coming clucking into the kitchen. Thankfully by then Polly had decided against any more rats! The centre piece of the garden was a generous table, perfect for hosting guests and, one memorable summer, the giant paddling pool in which the two of them were caught unawares – and unclothed – by some poor puppy-purchasers!

Then they branched out, building Wayside on the next-door field, and living in a mobile home on site in the winter of 2010 – the coldest on record in years. They had ice on the inside of the windows and only made it through with a log burner, Polly's cooking and Dad's dogged determination and optimism. This was a true house for the family with a fantastic pool that saw many fun afternoons and kids' parties, and a giant dining table for meals with family and friends – Polly doing the cooking and Dad the drinks and carving – and most of the talking.

Never one to sit quietly in the background, Dad, as I'm sure you all know, loved to talk. I'm told his dear childhood friend Martin recently emerged from a long conversation with Dad, to ask Polly if he had a 'receive mode'. If he did, it was sometimes hard to find. And yet his interest in the world and enthusiasm for life made him great fun to listen to.

LINS

One of Dad's favourite subjects was sport – any and all sport. From the cricket, to the golf, the snooker, the tennis and, of course, his beloved Man Utd, he could - and did - talk for hours. He could name stats and recall the intricacies of games with the same legendary memory that saw him conjure up the dates of specific holidays, the precise soundtrack to his favourite films, or the names and calls of hundreds of birds. He could probably even tell you the score of the Scotland five nations match that nearly caused him to miss my birth!

He loved to play sport too, notably squash, and I can still remember him defeating an opponent so soundly that the man come storming out of the court and threw his racket into a plant pot right in front of a startled ten-year-old me.

JO

On a similar note, I vividly remember the time he was hit around the head by his opponent – by accident, I think – and a ten-year old me came back from reading my book to find the court empty and blood all over it. I was so relieved when a bandaged Dad came out of the men's changing room to hug me – and wonder if he was OK to finish the game!

Dad was an excellent sportsman who loved to win – even when playing his children. We weren't allowed stabilisers when learning to ride a bike because it was better to 'just get on with it' and we had to earn our victories even at 'fun' games like French cricket on the lawn. Tich believes that being banned from sport for his hole-in-the-heart made

him even more competitive when he was finally allowed to get going. And also suspects that his relatively early retirement from golf had nothing to do with a sore ankle and everything to do with the fact that he'd beaten his brother 10 and 8 at North Berwick and wished to rest on his laurels!

LINS

Another thing Dad loved was music, any music, but ideally thumping beats he could 'Dad dance' to. From Mull of Kintyre down the drive at New Year, to his questionable impression of the Swedish chef from the Muppets, to embarrassing us as teens with his lively rendition of Right Said Fred's I'm too sexy for my Shirt, he loved a good tune. A favourite of ours to sing together was Sunny and Cher's 'I got you babe' and we gave an excellent (well enthusiastic!) rendition on the dance floor at my 21st! Sorrel also fondly recalls him getting up again on his wedding night to come and dance with everyone in his dressing gown – he was never one to miss a party!

We all remember journeys to Scotland to a sound track of Dire Straits, Queen, Fleetwood Mack and Bob Seiger. And the grandchildren will tell you fondly of evenings with Papa clutching his precious Bose speaker possessively on his lap to control the play list as the evening went on – and a whisky, or two, went down. The songs played today are three of his favourites and although we think he'd have been very amused by Tom's suggestion of AC/DCs 'Highway to Hell' – another later night favourite – we decided it wouldn't do. The devil would never let such a kind, loving, generous man in.

JO

In 2019, Dad and Polly decided they had one more house to build and, after much deliberation, moved up here to Cumbria and their perfect spot in Lazonby. Here, they made some fantastic new friends and built their dream home – a dream troubled by COVID and rising prices and all the little difficulties of a build, but kept alive by their shared passion for the project.

Dad loved the house and it was his wish to die there, as he did, looking out over his beautiful balcony to his brand new pond and the buzzards flying over the Pennines beyond. None of us wanted him to do it so soon but Dad always said that he wanted quality over quantity and he certainly achieved that. Dad was kind, open, honest, generous and endlessly positive. He was a man who lived life to the full – embraced his passions, embraced his challenges and, above all, embraced those he loved. We all consider ourselves hugely lucky to have been among them.





Tribute to Will



Will was born at home in Hartford, Cheshire to parents Jamie and Courtney Gibb. Jamie was Scottish born and bred and had been in his 50s when Will, then Richard, were born. Jamie met Courtney whilst working for the British government in Washington during WWII and would later tell the story of Courtney being his reverse G.I. bride.



Will's formal education began at age 5 at the Grange School in Hartford, Cheshire. Aged eight Will then moved to Malsis Hall private school near Keighley. It was at Malsis that Will's heart condition became apparent and during his stay in Liverpool hospital Will was treated to a visit by Princess Alice. Meeting royalty in the late 1950s would have felt quite special.

Will's education continued at Loretto and then St Andrews University where he achieved the best First-Class Honours degree in Chemistry amongst his year.
Will pursued a career in combustion engineering which kept him in close proximity to the power stations and cooling towers he had a life-long admiration for. Will's favourite power station, Ratcliffe in Nottinghamshire, was once spotted by him during a return flight from Australia after he had visited the Paiton Power Station in Indonesia. Upon

sighting Ratcliffe Will enthusiastically woke Polly to share the exciting moments of viewing Ratcliffe from above.



In 2007, aged 60, Will retired and his family pulled together an amazing celebration including a 'This Is Your Life' styled biographical account of his life. Amongst the photographs and beautifully graphical accounts of Will's life were catchphrases including the somewhat quizzical:

"sophistication? I've been to Leeds!"

that Will had adopted from a Harry Enfield sketch show. Will was also reported as fondly declaring:

"any port in a storm"

whenever the port bottle was brought out.

After his retirement Will and Polly began thinking about moving and started searching around Loch Ore in Scotland. Over the years they tried on three occasions to move to Scotland but one thing or another frustrated those plans.

Skip forward to one day during 2018 when Polly was looking through Rightmove and saw an advertisement for Amberley House in Cumbria. Polly knew the area and the advert sat at the back of her mind for a while. Then, with a subsequent journey to Glasgow planned they booked a viewing at Amberley House and Will and Polly had a good look around. They didn't say very much to each other until, continuing on their drive to Glasgow, Polly asked
"well, what do you think?"

Will responded quietly

"I love it".

Will and Polly's life in Amberley was blissful and Will adored Polly. They played bridge together and travelled through to Carlisle for matches. Will's photographic memory has already been mentioned and it was very handy for their bridge games; he knew their opponents' hands, contracts, results. There would even be times when that particular quality of his memory would waken him at night. Will would then waken Polly and begin to explain how playing a hand differently might have ended in such and such a way.

At Amberley Will loved the light, the warmth and the quietness, and the perhaps not so quiet whelping box full of grandchildren and puppies. When young granddaughter Bella visited she would say

"Oh Papa, I can breathe!".

Sentiments that Will very likely once held close to his own heart.

In the garden Will was immensely proud of the pond he designed and organised including the removal and repositioning of a sizeable rock. He recognised the natural beauty of the ancient ice-age boulders deposited throughout the entire glacial valley and Amberley's garden and used the rocks as naturalistic features. Polly fondly commented:

" he was very clever at doing things, recognising the stones, doing the heavy work".

Polly plans to place a bench beside the pond; to be known as 'Will's bench'.

"A place to sit and remember".

Earlier this year as Will's health increasingly went downhill a bed was brought into the family space for him. Will died at home, in the sunshine, looking over to the pond. He knew he was dying. Polly is so proud at her strength in keeping Will at home until his death. It could so easily have been different.

Will and Polly shared so much during their 31 years of marriage and today you have heard some of the most treasured memories carried by members of his family. In Polly's words Will was:

"The kindest man who ever lived, he always brought out the best in people, he could cope with anyone, from any walk of life, he liked just about everyone, he was very intelligent but lacked common sense."

Polly's tears for Will shall not end soon, however, she knows what Will would say to her if he was to see her tears and how she misses him. He would gently say:

"Pull yourself together woman".











