

Chris Fardon

27th December 1954 - 25th December 2024



Funeral Ceremony  
Putney Vale Crematorium  
7th February 2025

Celebrant: Andrew Bone

*Entry Music - Adagio for Strings - Samuel Barber*

Please be seated. Welcome everybody. My name is Andrew Bone, and I'm a Humanist celebrant, accredited by Humanists UK. We're here this afternoon to both celebrate and honour the life of Christopher Fardon. Please stand for the opening hymn, Abide with Me.

## **Opening Hymn Abide with Me**

### **Welcome**

On behalf of Mary Therese and Rachel, may I thank you all for being here today, in particular Mary Therese's sister Claire, who has travelled all the way from New Zealand to be with us, cousin Julian, who has come from Norway - as well as those who are unable to travel; Chris' oldest friend, Tony and his wife, Stephanie, dear friends in Oldham, plus, of course, family and close friends in New Zealand and Australia. All of those joining us online are as much a part of this afternoon's ceremony as those who are able to be here in person.

Sincerest thanks and welcome to all.

## **First Reading Psalm 23**

***read by Claire Newman***

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

# Eulogy

## *read by Rachel Fardon*

### Intro

If Dad were with us now, I think he'd be slightly embarrassed by all this fuss—and would mainly be looking forward to the after-match function, as he called it, at the pub later. But first I have the privilege of trying to capture some of the stories, memories, and moments that made him the incredible dad, husband, and friend we love so much.

### Childhood

Dad was born at home in Oldham, Lancashire on a cold December morning in 1954 - a time when expectant fathers were kept well away from the business end of childbirth. You can picture the scene with his Dad, Arthur, anxiously pacing the downstairs hallway while his Mum, Clara, was hard at work upstairs. When Dad finally made his appearance, the news was delivered in typically down-to-earth fashion by his Aunty Annie who marched halfway down the stairs to briskly announce "It's a boy. And that's your lot" before marching straight back up again. It was a fitting introduction to the first of many headstrong, take-no-prisoners women Dad would love in his life.

Dad had a wonderful childhood growing up in Oldham with his parents and older brother Howard. A childhood which seemed to largely revolve around his first love – football. Specifically his local team, Oldham Athletic Football Club, who he'd regularly go and watch play at Boundary Park on a Saturday afternoon with his Dad and brother. Dad was totally devoted to Latics for life. From August to May there was never any doubt where you'd find him on a Tuesday evening or Saturday afternoon. At times, being a born and raised Latics supporter could be a cross to bear. There were plenty of expletive deletives or exasperated groans and shouts of "clowns" to be heard from the kitchen when the boys let yet another last-minute goal slip into the net. But there were also plenty of highs, especially watching Latics play at Wembley in 1990 with his family and best mates. And Dad was thrilled to see Frank Rothwell take over as manager of the club in 2022, giving his hopes and dreams of a Latics promotion a new lease of life.

Playing football in the back garden was also the gateway to meeting his oldest mate Tony when they were seven years old. Tony and Chris together were a magnet for mischief. Tony recently shared one example from when the boys were eleven. For his birthday, Tony received a chemistry set, and naturally, the boys decided to test it out in Mr Fardon's back garden. Their first experiment created a small explosion, but the boys thought they could do better. So for their second attempt they set up at the bottom of the garden, which just so happened to be Mr Fardon's vegetable patch. They boys scarpered away to watch from a safe distance, not really expecting much to happen. But all of a sudden there was an almighty explosion with vegetables flying all over the place! When they opened

their eyes, Mr Fardon's brand new fence was on fire and Mrs Fardon had to save the day with numerous buckets of water. Needless to say, the chemistry set was confiscated and the boys were grounded for two weeks. The Fardon's back garden seemed to be the site for plenty more Chris & Tony escapades, whether that was trying to fly off the garden shed in a cardboard box, accidentally painting that same garden shed a fetching shade of pink, or Dad shimmying up the drainpipe to try and get back into his bedroom window after a big night out. It was a childhood filled with fun, adventures, and wonderful friends.

### Studies & Work Life

In between football, music, and giving his parents more grey hairs, Dad also managed to fit a bit of studying in. After school he studied English and History, before getting a degree in Library Studies from Lancaster University. He moved to London where he worked first as a Librarian and later for the Arts Council. Dad was very modest when it came to discussing his work achievements. We used to tease him that perhaps he wasn't a civil servant at all, and really worked for MI6 across the river from our old flat, because he kept so tight-lipped about his day-to-day work. But from the messages and memories his former colleagues have shared with us we know Dad was highly thought of. They tell us he was a fountain of knowledge in all things libraries and generously shared his expertise to benefit everyone around him. Many have reflected on what a kind, supportive, and warm man he was and how much they enjoyed working with him. Towards the end of his career he was particularly proud to have played a role in setting up The Story Museum in Oxford which aims to immerse visitors in language, stories and creativity. Dad strongly believed that all children, regardless of their background, should be able to benefit from stories, arts, and cultural initiatives that could inspire their own imaginations.

### Move to London

While Dad originally moved down to London for work, he stayed because of the people he met. Through Howard he met Bob, Graeme, Chip, Kevin and Tony, a group who would go on to be known as "the gang" and become lifelong mates. In the early days, the gang would often meet at Regents Park & St James' Park for a game of football followed by a pint. Later on, the meet-ups tended to centre on the pub, with plenty of time to set the world to rights on football, politics and music. I know how lucky Dad felt to have such a close group of mates.

While living in St John's Wood, Dad met another of his lifelong friends, Malachy. Many nights were spent dancing and drinking at the Irish National in Kilburn, often followed by a Sainsburys bacon burger the next morning to recover. Sunday afternoons were meant for laundry with a trip to the local laundrette, but the routine usually included a stop at the pub while the washing was on. More often than not, that quick pint turned into a few, resulting in a mad dash to retrieve work shirts and trousers at 8am on Monday morning. They stayed close friends over the years, with weekly five-a-side football games at the Seymour Sports Centre in

Marylebone and regular drinks at The Churchill. In later years, both Mum and Dad loved their visits to Tavira and spending time with Malachy and Karalyn in the sun.

### Mum

And of course, flatting in London is also how Dad meet his Kiwi soulmate, Mary Therese. It wasn't the most auspicious of first meetings. When Mum came around one afternoon to view the flat she tripped straight over the pedal of Dad's bike, which he'd left cluttering up the hallway, and Dad stumbled out of his bedroom half asleep in a ratty old dressing gown to apologise. But once Mum moved in, they quickly moved from flatmates to friends to something more. Dad upped his game for the first date, taking Mum to a Rolling Stones gig at Wembley. Mum remembers walking home together after the gig where they didn't stop talking the whole way, and knowing something special was developing.

As a seasoned traveller, Mum also broadened Dads horizons who had never ventured further than the Isle of Man when they met. Their first holiday together to Ibiza was a memorable one, with Dad getting a bit carried away exploring the rocky beach and ending up with sunstroke... in late October. He became known as the "crazy Englishman" to the hotel staff who had to raid the cupboards to find enough blankets for him. From then on, Mum and Dad shared many wonderful holidays, but one of the greatest adventures was their year in Dunedin New Zealand, filled with hiking, sailing, swimming, and tramping through the bush. Dad loved exploring new places – sometimes to Mum's exasperation. On a trip to Hong Kong she woke at 4am to find Dad missing from the hotel room. Jet lag had struck, and rather than tossing and turning, he had wandered off to watch the locals practicing tai chi in the park. Mum may have expanded Dad's horizons, but he made sure every trip was filled with fun, adventure, and lots of happy memories.

When Mum looks back at their forty years together, the attribute of Dad's that most stands out is his gentle, caring nature. Four years after they met, Mum became seriously ill with ME and was mostly bedbound for two years. This might have been enough to break up many relationships, but Dad stuck by her and looked after her through these two years, and during ongoing ME flare-ups throughout their lives together. At a time when ME was treated dismissively by many doctors and viewed with scepticism, Dad's steadfast belief in her, his constant love and support, and his willingness to shoulder work, housework, and later childcare responsibilities were a testament to the depth of his love.

### Family Life

Mum and Dad built a home together in Pimlico, where I joined them in 1994. Dad was overjoyed to become a father and it was a role he was destined for. He brought all of his boundless creativity, imagination, and fun to make everyday activities into a Rachel and Mr Daddy adventure. Whether that was playing hide and seek behind priceless artefacts in the Tate Britain, concocting unique signature dishes like Mrs Mashy's Mushy Mess, or coming up with silly songs and

funny poems spending time with Dad was always a treat. He was especially talented at making up bedtime stories. One of my favourites was the tales of Dr Quack and Nurse Nincompoop, perhaps sowing the seed for my future career choice. Dr Quack was a loveable, well-meaning but somewhat hapless buffoon always getting into scrapes and accidents while Nurse Nincompoop was his long-suffering, unflappable wife who always came in to save the day. Looking back, I imagine he didn't have to look too far from home for inspiration for those characters.

Dad was always incredibly generous and supportive of Mum and I travelling back to New Zealand to see family, even though for several years this meant he didn't get to have a holiday himself. When he couldn't travel with us, he would pack me a little goodie bag of gifts to open on the long flight to break up the journey, usually magazines, books or a small toy. On one memorable occasion his thoughtful planning backfired spectacularly when we discovered while transiting through Australia that he had packed a "Build your own bath bomb kit". The border force officers didn't take too kindly to this carry-on item and I think he was relieved to be on the other side of the world when Mum phoned him to give him an earful for that one.

As I got older Mum and Dad were always there as my biggest supporters and cheerleaders. Dad faced his fear of heights to take me on rollercoasters, and his squeamishness at all things medical to accompany me around medical school dissection rooms. When we went to an open day at Kings College University, unbeknown to either of us, the campus tour included a visit to The Gordon Museum of Pathology. This is the largest medical museum in the UK, with three floors covered floor to ceiling on all four walls with a plethora of pathology specimens floating in various jars and tubes. Poor Dad was glued to my side, eyes firmly fixed on the floor for the hour we were in there, and he was ready for a stiff drink once the tour was over! But anything I could ever need or want, he would be right beside me.

### Retirement

Dad retired in 2022 and wasted no time filling his days with activities he loved. Monday mornings saw him up bright and early for walking football, returning to his first love. Many a short break away had to be planned around Dad getting back for his Monday morning football. Wednesdays and Thursdays were kept busy with keep-fit classes and aqua aerobics, while Thursday afternoons became a highlight as he joined the local men's walk-and-talk group, exploring the area and sharing coffee at Hooky Street Café with wonderful new friends. In between he would be keeping up with all the latest political news, which Dad and I could talk about for hours over Zoom or snuggled on the sofa, and listening to his favourite music. He managed to squeeze in a few more special holidays and trips with Mum, including a wonderful Beatles themed visit to Liverpool with Tony and Steph in October.

### What Dad meant to us

To sum up a life as rich and well-lived as Dad's is an impossible task. He was a warm, kind, and gentle man, easy to talk to with a beaming smile and a wicked sense of humour. He was unwaveringly loyal to his friends and family, and of course to his beloved Latics. A natural host, he welcomed visitors from all over the world and made them feel instantly at home. Though never the loudest in the room, Dad's quiet integrity and strength spoke volumes. He treated everyone with fairness and never hesitated to stand up for what was right.

In our tightknit family of three, Dad was the anchor whose quiet, gentle and unwavering love kept us grounded whilst encouraging us to fly. He had an incredible gift for making life fun, and with his boundless imagination and creativity could turn everyday moments into memorable adventures. To have had a dad who was not only a wonderful father and role model but also my best friend is a gift I'll carry with me forever. He was my biggest champion, my safest place, and my most constant source of love and support. I couldn't be prouder or more blessed to be his daughter.

### Saying goodbye

Right now, losing you Dad feels like a gaping and raw wound in the fabric of our lives. But it is only because you are so precious to us, your love so treasured, that saying goodbye is so hard. You have left us with an abundance of happy memories, wise words, funny stories and sayings, and above all the deepest, purest, most overwhelming love. We will miss you loudly and profoundly in the big moments to come, the birthdays, Christmases, graduations, weddings, and holidays that you should still be here to see. We will miss you quietly and deeply in the everyday moments that we long to share with you. But we know you will be with us always, a constant thread in the fabric of our lives. And we will look forward to the day that you are there again with your big smile, your warm bear hug, and your delighted "Hello Darling" to welcome us home again. Sleep well Dad, we love you always and forever.

## **Moment of Reflection Photo Memories of Chris**

*Accompanied by - In My Life - The Beatles*

**Second Reading**  
**I'm There Inside Your Heart**  
*Read by Howard Fardon*

Right now I'm in a different place  
And those seem far apart  
I'm closer than I ever was dot dot dot  
I'm there inside your heart  
I'm with you when you greet each day  
And when the Sun shines bright  
And there to share the sunsets, too...  
I'm with you every night  
I'm with you when the times are good,  
To share a laugh or two,  
And if a tear should start to fall...  
I'll still be there for you. And when the day arrives  
That we no longer are apart  
I'll smile and hold you close to me...  
Forever in my heart.



## **The Committal**

We have now reached the time of the committal. Please stand for the formal words of farewell.

Today we have come together to remember, honour and celebrate the life of Christopher Fardon.

We do this in the knowledge and acceptance that Chris returns to the elements from whence he came to which we ourselves too will one day return.

From this moment forth, his memory is committed to your hearts.

Chris lives on in the unending consequences of all the lives that he has enriched with his kindness, creativity, selflessness, decency, sense of fairness and equality, his love and support for others.

He will be much missed by all who knew him here, but remembered always with both love and with gratitude for all that he brought to your lives.

And as you go forward in life from today, when sadness strikes that he is gone, draw strength from the fact that he lived and that knew him and loved him and remember that as dear as he was to you, you were to him too.

Chris, thank you, and farewell.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Final Hymn Amazing Grace**

## CLOSING WORDS

Thank you. We have reached the end of the ceremony. On behalf of the family, I would like to thank you all for being here today; for showing your support to them and to each other, but, most of all, for showing your love for Chris.

For those of you wishing to make a donation in honour of Chris, two charities are suggested - The British Heart Foundation and The Children's Library Trust.

May I think the pall bearers for so honourably performing their duty at the beginning of the ceremony - Chris' brother, Howard along with Malachi, Steve, Bob, Kevin and Ian, all long-standing friends.

Everyone here is now invited onwards to The Harts Boatyard on Portsmouth Road in Surbiton. And for those not driving or without space in a car, transport has been provided to ensure that no one is stranded.

It's been a privilege to have played a part in honouring a very special life.

