

# Timothy Forbes Adam – Eulogy



**13 April 2019**

Hello everyone, lovely to see you. I'm Tory, Timmy's eldest daughter.

It seems so strange to be standing here in Dad's place. Who better to speak at his own funeral than he?

But on this occasion Dad, we'll try to do you justice – I say we because this is a collective speech – helped by Lucy and Charlie who wrote, and by Sonia's thoughts and memories.

So many things to say about this long life of Timmy...

## **Childhood**

He was born in Bombay but the family returned to Escrick when he was one. He told us how much he loved it – how the gardens were “never ending” and there was always something to discover. There was an old railway carriage in the woods where the children went in a pony and trap to have picnics.

Dad found moving to Skipwith painful as the children were sent to live with strangers for a year. He got over it, but was sad and bewildered anew when his mother announced one day at lunch that “*Timmy will be going away to school in September*” – when Dad was only 7.

Yet he enjoyed Abinger, his prep school, where he met his lifelong friend Nick Mosley. He said he learned there that life was not about rules or work or uniforms, but about enjoying it; and especially laughing at it.

I'm sure we can all agree that Dad upheld these principles for the rest of his life!

And then to Eton in 1937 which he thought a prison and disliked intensely. He and Nick spent many hours making dens by the river. His reports from those days suggest that schoolwork was definitely not a priority!

## **War**

War came and Dad enlisted in the army in 1942. He was commissioned to the Rifle Brigade and served in Normandy. In 1944 he was shot in the leg and badly wounded. He found it deeply frustrating to be out of action for nine months, and always regretted having a “bad war”. He was later assigned to Malaya and Java until he was decommissioned in 47.

## **Marriage**

After the war Dad went to Balliol College, Oxford, before becoming an actor. While in London he met a young actress – our mother Penny. They married in 1954 while on tour in Dundee. After the wedding Dad went back to the theatre for his evening show. Mum and Dad soon moved to Glebe Cottage, a stone's throw from here. Dad worked at the Estate Office and we lived there until my sister Kate and I were toddlers.

This was when Dad's Christian faith emerged. He described going to confession and being flooded with a powerful sense of joy. He began visiting Mirfield where he found a great sense of fellowship and love. He decided to become a priest and eventually became Rector of Barton and Thrumpton near Nottingham.

### **Family**

We were three girls by then. Lucy had arrived in 1960 and we became four in 65 when Sonia was born.

The church was a big part of our lives as children and we all sang in the choir – an untidy little tribe in our blue gowns. The Vicarage was across the road and sometimes our dog, Shane, would come wandering up the nave, wagging his tail as he saw Dad. We were very free in those days. As Lucy said, Dad was not the kind of father to take us to a weekly riding class, he would have thought that a bit of a bore. Instead we had some grumpy old ponies that Kate and I wandered about on. Or he might take us on a wild gallop in Portugal or the beaches of Ireland. He was a brilliant rider, but Lucy remembers hanging on and hoping the horses knew what they were doing.

At home we saw Dad doing the hard work of being a priest, the hours of thought and angst that went into his sermons and finding exactly the right words and prayers for weddings and funerals. He was very dedicated to his faith and parishioners and stayed in touch with many of them for the rest of his life.

We moved to the West Country in 1970 where Dad first assisted, then became Vicar of South Stoke near Bath, a place we all loved and are still connected to. He and mum made our home there and Dad created a beautiful fragrant garden.

By then we were teenagers and Dad was the lone man in our noisy, competitive, family – a tricky situation for any father!

We often argued furiously about politics. But actually Dad loved a good row and often threw a match to that flame. It was impressive that he let us get so angry with him; he took it in good part. That said, his views never changed; so the arguments continued – even unto Brexit!

I shall speak no further of this matter.

### **Travel**

We all loved holidays and Dad organised early trips to France. I remember flying with Nigel and Toppet and the boys in a tiny plane with the car in the hold!

Dad often drove long distances in his Volvo, with dogs and us in the back. He was an excellent driver, though his speed was alarming at times. He was also the world's worst back seat driver! Which in later life translated into rage at the voice of Google Maps! Even when he himself was totally lost he would rail furiously against "her" convinced she had taken us on a crazy route.

He visited me on my travels, in Mexico and Haiti, and went to see Sonia in New Zealand aged 87. He was a very savvy traveller, up for anything and delighted to meet all kinds of people. Wherever he was he went to church on Sunday. It gave him a different perspective; and he was always humbled by people's faith – often in the face of great hardship.

### **Woodhouse**

In 1992 Dad returned to live at Woodhouse Farm. He bravely rebuilt the house with Bill Pinner and made it beautiful, homely and full of light. And another glorious garden – a place much loved by his grandchildren.

He was a wonderful Grandpa, providing endless supplies of Crunchy Nut cereal and chocolate biscuits. Also riding lessons, swimming and bonfires at dusk, badminton and, best of all, Racing Demon or any other game he could shamelessly cheat at. And when the third generation began to question his approach to feminism or climate change he did listen without shooting them down. He was loving, tolerant and appreciative of their presence; and they loved him too.

In later years Dad's Yorkshire life was greatly enlivened by Mary Rose; and their long partnership was a very happy one. They shared a love of the arts, with many trips to Opera North and the Ryedale festival. He also came to know and love Mary-Rose's children and grandchildren.

Looking back it's amazing to realise how active Dad was on all fronts. He was a member of the Sydney Smith Society and took up acting again on several occasions. According to Charlie, he and Nigel spent their time trying to upstage one another, whilst vying for the attentions of the leading lady – both on and off stage!

He loved hunting and everyone involved, and was *ex officio* priest for the Middleton Hunt. He continued to shoot, retiring frequently only to return – always shooting from the high ground, even when the partridges were flying low!

He was very keen on vermin control at Woodhouse and kept his loaded 12-bore in his bedroom. Recently one of his carers was startled to hear a shot ringing out from the upstairs window. A rat had appeared at the end of the lawn.

I can't talk about Dad without mentioning the Forbes Adam family and our maternal family also. He was an affectionate uncle, offering comfort, advice and lots of fun; nothing would deter him from attending a family event, no matter how far away. He was a true friend to Charlie, and always supportive of the Estate and its work. He had a way of being funny and self-deprecating that was very human – we remember him chatting endlessly with Uncle Nigel, both laughing with pleasure at their own jokes!

Throughout it all, Dad's religious life remained so important; and until a few years ago he often took communion. He was disciplined and diligent to the end: Services at the Minster and Escrick every week, twice-daily prayers, and retreats at Mirfield. And of course over so many years christening, marrying and burying friends and family members, always with faith, love and humour.

Dad once told me it was important "not to buy into this old age thing" and he was determined to enjoy life for as long as possible. He danced a wild rock and roll at my 60<sup>th</sup> and last summer he swam in an unheated pool in Norfolk. Magnificently, he made it to 95!

Inevitably, things were becoming difficult – he was very deaf and wobbly on his feet and the details of daily life were hard to remember.

His last months were stricken by the sudden death of his beloved daughter Kate, in November; followed six days later by our mother Penny. This was a hard blow for our family. And unbearable for Dad being so far from London. It goes without saying that he visited and took part in both funerals.

Yet Dad forbore with courage and faith. He knew his own death was coming and I think he accepted it. He walked in the fields and garden on his last days; and in the gloaming at Escrick. He loved everyone visiting in hospital.

He was in dying as he had lived: brave, funny, sympathetic and full of life.

*Victoria Forbes Adam (Daughter)*