



Richard Adrian May

Left us on the 22nd of May 2020

Aged 67 years

Memorial Service

St Nicholas Church

Godstone

11:00 am 14th May 2022



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The Memorial Service
Richard Philip Adrian May
Who left us on the 22nd May 2020 Aged 67years
St Nicholas Church, Godstone, Surrey
14th May 2022 11:00

ENTRANCE MUSIC

Mozart (Clarinet Concerto II)
Second Movement – Adagio

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Opening Prayers
Rev Peter O'Connell

There are a number of people that cannot be here today to remember Richard and I would like to mention Richard's elder brother Edward, who most people may know as Peter, who cannot be here due to ill health.

There is a Book of Remembrance at the back of the church if you want to sign that and add a comment on your memories of Richard. The book will also be at the White Hart so you can sign it there.

After the service, you are all most welcome to join the family at the White Hart on the Green at 12:30 in the Stable

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MEMORIES

read by Roger May

As I was going through a box of Richard's photos the other day I came across a small stack of his old school magazines, the Ottershaw Weekly News and this one dated 11 February 1967 and it is this little poem which quite struck me as I was thinking about Richard and preparing for this service,

"THOUGHTS"

By R.B.W. 1967

"If I died now,
 What would men think of me?
 Would they remember, or forget?
 What would they say of me?
 As I lay dead.
 Would they still see me,
 Though I was not there,
 Through things I'd done?
 Would they remember,
 Or forget?

We are here to remember my brother Richard and, indeed, as we remember, it is perhaps by what we do that makes us who we are and, in particular, what we do for others is what we are remember for and therefore who we are.

Richard was the youngest of all of us, six boys, Basil, or Brian, who sadly passed away a few weeks before Richard, Edward known as Peter, myself, Roger, then Jan and Michael who died at the age of three. When we first came to Godstone we lived in Dove Cottages in the triangle just off the green, Richard was about three. . They were times of fun and joy, we were always outdoors, there would be Jan and me with Richard as a toddler in tow, going over the Hilly fields and into the woods, across the Green or up the Bay.

Richard attended Godstone Primary School, just across the road here from the church and then to Oxted Grammar, but then got a scholarship to Ottershaw, a public boarding school at the other end of Surrey. He must have been about twelve when he went off to boarding school. I well remember Jan and I going with our mother to take him to school in an old

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1936 Ford "Y" type, Richard's metal trunk tied on the luggage rack on the back of the car, his number "931" painted in black on it. It must have been hard for Richard in those early years at Ottershaw, we were a close family, did everything together, and he was being left on his own in that daunting mansion, that first term not knowing anyone. But I believe he had great adventures there, especially as he got older, I believe sneaking out to the pub being a key one.

After leaving school Richard worked for while as a Theater Porter in the operating theater at East Surrey General Hospital where he took a great interest in the operations and as part of the theater team was shown a lot of detail and explanation of the operations, one surgeon even gave him a replacement hip joint that had been rejected in a patient. I don't mean a literal hip replacement! I mean, well you know what I mean....

In 1973 Richard embarked on the first of his hitch-hiking travels to the Far East. Loading up his rucksack with all he might need he set off, but after only getting about five kilometers into France he decided his rucksack was far too heavy and dumped most of what was in it. He travelled across Europe, into Turkey, through Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, India and down the Malayan peninsula to Singapore.

He made a second trip, this time to Nepal and Northern India before becoming ill and we were contacted by the British consulate and Jan paid to fly him home. His third, or maybe it was his fourth that was even less successful, having gotten across Europe he couldn't get any further than Greece and ended up selling blood. He told me that he went to one hospital, sold some blood, then went to another hospital and without telling them he had just given blood, he sold some more. He then decided that was enough and hitch-hiked back home. That I believe was the last of his hitching adventures, but not of his travel adventures, which continued often with his friend Kevin and his brother Jan.

Richard went to Aston University, Birmingham, and in 1977 Richard graduated with a BSc. in marine biology.

Richard love to travel far and wide, lots of trips, particularly to Greece and Norway, and Canada. As our mother got older, he would take her to visit family all over the place, home and abroad, so he knew the wider family more than any of us. As our mother grew older and began to suffer with dementia, he cared more and more for her up until her death in 2003.

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Jumping back, having gotten his degree in marine biology he trained as a teacher and worked as a supply teacher worked for in a school that was considered one of the most disruptive yet after teaching there for two terms his class calmed down and many were in tears when came time for him to leave. Richard, however, did find it hard and was not sure that teaching was for him. Consequently he settled down as a roofer, as a marine biologist and teacher would, working on the rooves of Godstone and the surrounding area, enjoying some wonderful views of which he has some unique photos. As a roofer he was not without adventures and interests. He worked on notable and ancient buildings, including this church and the almshouses next door, he also worked on an ancient, listed manor house in Cambridgeshire and in Norway, on the only house in Skien that survived a major fire in the 17th century. Thinking of it, Richard's link with rooves does go back earlier in his life, I understand he and a friend used to sneak out of boarding school over the roof to go to the pub.

There is much to say about Richard, I have touched on his early life, but others will now share other memories

MUSIC
VIVALDI THE FOUR SEASONS
Violin Concerti, Op.3 Nos. 6&8

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#**OTTERSHAW BOARDING SCHOOL****School Friend****An Ode to Ricky May****Written & Read by Guy Tarring**

An Ode to Ricky May

It was at Ottershaw Boarding School
That I stumbled across a young Ricky May
With whom I spent six youthful years
Indulging in sport and fun and play
He was indeed a fine sportsman
In the many games he did master
Being a constant tennis champion
And x country running where he got ever faster
He was my friend and sometime mentor
Teaching me so many many things
From rolling up incredibly tiny thin cigarettes
To how to mime when singing hymns
He was a most kind and modest chap
Whose company was indeed a pleasure
Calm and thoughtful and full of wit
Whether at work or play or leisure
I was most sad to find him departed
Over the years we would meet
And our school friendship would instantly be restarted
So rest in peace my friend
I hope you continue to be a tennis king
Maybe I'll meet you again in heaven
Where we can play guitar and sing!

MUSIC**VIVALDI THE FOUR SEASONS**

Violin Concerti, Op.3 Nos. 6&8

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BIRMINGHAM ASTON UNIVERSITY
University Friend
Adrian Staunton

My brother Chris and my wife Karen have contributed to this

It is certainly fair to say that the best thing that happened to me at University was meeting this tall, unassuming, sensitive, quiet man, Ricky May.

Everyone loved Ricky. My friends, my family but especially my girlfriend Karen and my brother Chris. His love of nature, the night sky and travel were totally infectious. He was a true believer in the maxim Carpe diem. He loved life and taught us never to waste a nice sunny day. We certainly needed little persuasion to skip lectures for a walk with Ricky in the Lickey Hills. He thought nothing of driving to Cornwall to get the best view of the solar eclipse in August 1999. He stayed with us on the way and our children were as enamoured with him as we were.

I never saw my old mate being stressy, he was such a calm presence. Even when the wheel came off his old Renault it was just a minor inconvenience to my hero. I remember one occasion when we were on our way home in his "Inspector Morse" Jaguar. The wipers stopped working in a terrible downpour. He calmly pulled over, asked me for my shoelaces and tied them onto the wipers, so that I could pull them back when they got stuck. Problem solved with no drama.

He was unique and we loved him for it. He was so far ahead of his time with his avid concern for the environment, the welfare of animals and his vegetarianism. He encouraged me to read James Lovelock's Gaia and I hope I have done him proud with my constant preaching about the environment during my years as a teacher. He was also the only human being I ever knew who loved a pint of mild and the song "Blue Spanish Eyes". His taste in music wasn't all bad though – he introduced me to Dire Straights and we think of him to this day if we hear one of their songs.

I may never have become a Biology teacher if Ricky hadn't lured me to Newman College with the promise of a ratio of 9 women to every man. My brother myself and two friends would never have camped all over America and Canada for 6 months without Mr May's inspiration and encouragement. Indeed, Karen's first trip abroad to Grand Canaria was down to Ricky, as was her first curry! We were completely in awe of Ricky, being brave and adventurous enough to undertake a solo trip to India at the age of 17 or 18, when the furthest we'd been at that age was Weston Super Mare!

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45 years later, Ricky's influence on my family and friends, the next generation, and indeed the many students I have taught, lives on. So many have adopted his principles.

Our message to Ricky would be "Amongst your many lovely qualities as a human being we thank you most of all for showing us what was possible and giving us the confidence to go out there and do it. I firmly believe the world would be an amazing, kind place if it was full of Ricky May's. Farewell my dearest friend".

MUSIC
VIVALDI THE FOUR SEASONS
Violin Concerti, Op.3 Nos. 6&8

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SCHOOL/WORK/SPORT/PLAY
Lifelong Friend Kevin Farrell
Sally Farrell

I'm going to say a few words about Richard, on behalf of Kevin and myself.

I met Richard for the very first time, back in October 1981, at a disco at Lingfield Hospital School, after having completed a three-legged pub crawl around the pubs in East Grinstead for charity. I can remember that night so vividly as 3 rather good-looking guys walked in to the hall, carrying cans of beer each. This was Kevin, Jan and Richard. As Richard walked in, he started to open a can, unknown to him, that Kevin had dropped earlier. Subsequently the whole tin exploded and he and anyone nearby was covered in beer!

This was the start of my long friendship with Richard and marriage, to Kevin.

Kevin and Richard had grown up together, going to the local primary school up the bay pond and becoming firm lifelong friends. At a class end of term concert, they formed a tribute band together (long before the days of such things), as The Beatles, along with Gary Carr and Philip Morgan. Apparently, the girls all screamed and chased them, only finding sanctuary in the boy's toilets! I think the boys believed they were the real thing! They got up to lots of mischief together, which carried on into their adult lives.

In fact, on my first date with Kevin, I went to get into his car, and the front footwell of the passenger seat was full up with fish and chip wrappers! It was explained away by the fact the two of them were having a competition to see who would fill the car up first! A very smelly and unhealthy bet!

One Christmas Eve, I met them both in Crawley as they were doing last minute Christmas shopping. They had stopped off for some refreshment in a local pub, so were just a little bit tipsy. I came across them as Richard was having his ear pierced behind a fruit and veg stall, just in time to put a stop to Kevin having a matching earring! Neither of them had any shopping bags! On another occasion, Richard and Kevin had gone up to Craven Cottage to watch Fulham play a game of football. At half time, they decided to brag their way into the press office to get free half time refreshments. So, with pencils behind their ears, a flat cap on their head and Kevin holding his fake press card, they waltzed in without being challenged. A little disappointed with the food and beverages on offer, they decided it wasn't worth the risk of getting banned from the club, so never repeated it!

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Before I met them, Richard, Jan and Kevin travelled to Norway together after Jan and Kevin's marriages broke up and Richard returned to live in Godstone. They had a fabulous time, and I'm sure I will never hear all that went on.

They were not only best friends, but work colleagues and teammates at the squash club and sometimes on the football field.

They would also challenge each other out in Belgium for the Bruges 10k race, I think Kevin was the over all winner, not because he was a better runner, but the fact Richard didn't take the training beforehand that serious, always having one too many Belgian beers the night before!

Richard helped out Kevin often on roofing work that he had, and then once work was finished for the day, they would drive down to Lingfield for a game of squash.

Back in those days, if you saw one of them the other one was not far behind.

Richard was our best man at our wedding, and did a wonderful speech, although I know how nervous he was. He also was one of the group, who decorated our car, ending up in a total re spray when we returned from honeymoon.!

We went on holidays and weekends away with him and Anne Battell (as she was then), the four of us inseparable. Always having great times and great laughs. KARS (K for Kevin, A for Anne, R for Richards and S for Sally) was our team name when took part in the Village Car Rally and won, thanks to Richard for his amazing knowledge and working out that if we reversed when we went wrong, it didn't clock up mileage (which was part of the overall marks) !

All our lives moved on, and we didn't spend as much time with Richard in later years, but when we did meet up, it was if it had only been the day before that we had been together. A good marker of true friendship.

It was Richard that got Kevin and myself into Vegetarianism. He educated us on the cruelty side of meat production, and we have never looked back.

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Richard told us the sad news of his illness over the phone, and like everyone we were devastated.

We both tried to help out whenever we could, and I know Richard appreciated that. Kevin often called in to see him at Alison's and went on to convert her garage into an en-suite bedroom for him, which sadly he never got to use. We would send him pictures of wild life that we saw when out on walks, and still to this day, when we see a bird that we can't identify, we go to photograph it to send to Richard. Although at times, I'm not 100% sure he knew what all of them were. His eyes would twinkle and give me a smile, I could tell when he was trying to pull the wool over my eyes!

We could go on and on telling stories about Richard, and I'm sure we all have many that we can share later this afternoon. Richard would be amazed by the amount of people here today, as he was a very modest man and so unaware of the impact he had had on us all.

Richard isn't a visible part of our lives anymore, but he will always live on through the influence he had on us, and the memories we all have. He will always be in our hearts. We love him and miss him so much.

MUSIC
VIVALDI THE FOUR SEASONS
Violin Concerti, Op.3 Nos. 6&8

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#**TENNIS**
Mike Gordge**Tennis Club tribute to Richard May**

I have known Richard since primary school days and count myself fortunate to have been a personal friend, but I want to speak today on behalf of Godstone tennis club, of which Richard was a member for most of his life. Richard joined the tennis club as a junior in the mid-1960s and continued as a player (with some interruptions when he was away from Godstone) for the rest of his life. He was still representing the club in matches well into his 60s.

Richard was a great servant to the club. As well as serving on the committee for a time, he played as a member of Godstone first team for many years in a number of local leagues – the Weald league, Dorking and Leatherhead, men's Surreys and the Tandridge tournament. He was successful in a number of leagues and tournaments, playing with various partners, most recently winning the Tandridge veterans men's doubles competition three years running, from 2009 – 2011, with Steve McLean.

Richard was a natural sportsman – in his younger days he played competitive rugby and football, but he was also a great tennis player. He had an infuriating knack of making the game look easy. Richard always seemed laid back and relaxed on court, but at the same time he was very competitive, so a game against Richard was never over until it was over. He had some signature shots – one particular one, that I have often been on the wrong end of, is a shot taken from out wide which he would somehow return diagonally and low across the net and out the other side of the court - almost unplayable. If ever I manage to pull off one of these shots (a rare event), I always think to myself – *that's a Richard May shot!*

So, Richard was a great player, but he was also a very sociable and friendly presence at the club. There was no "side" to him – he was open and accepting of everyone. He was a regular at club sessions, helping to promote a sense of community, always willing to go on for a drink and a chat after a game. He came with us on numerous tennis club weekends at places like Windmill Hill and Oakhampton. Richard loved his beer (as many

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of you know), and on one occasion, he specially organised for a barrel of his favourite Harvey's Sussex bitter to be delivered at one of our weekends away. I think the barrel was emptied within about 45 minutes – but I should make it clear that Richard didn't drink it all!

Richard was a great conversationalist – knowledgeable about all sorts of things, interested in everything and with a wonderful, dry sense of humour. I remember so many sessions down at Godstone club after tennis, discussing with him all sorts of questions ranging from

- *which is bigger, the height or the circumference of a beer glass?* , through to
- *what is the origin of the universe?*

He was interested in everything – and this made him an interesting person.

A few years ago, a film crew came to Godstone looking for sound effects for a tennis-related romantic comedy set at the Wimbledon tournament. For this, they arranged for Richard and Chris Hayns to knock a ball back and forth while the film crew recorded them. So, if you ever encounter this film – I think it's called "Wimbledon" - make sure you listen to the sound of the rallies. That's the sound of Richard playing!

Godstone tennis club was very fortunate to have Richard as a member for so many years. He is greatly missed and remembered by us with great fondness.

Mike Gordge

MUSIC
VIVALDI THE FOUR SEASONS
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Alison Powell

Richard and the natural world.

One of the great pleasures of being in Richard's company was his passion for the natural world. He was always aware and observant of the signs and sounds of animals, plants, insects, butterflies - he could nearly always identify them and then describe their habits and habitat, even their place in the food chain.

And then there were birds, which entranced him by their lives and activities. So many birds I can now recognise by song or sight - and this is really thanks to Richard. At home in my garden, we loved noticing their annual nesting. And out walking in the country, Richard was never without his binoculars, spotting birds of every type. On holidays abroad we saw Hoopoes in Turkey, Eagles in Crete, an Egyptian Vulture in the Canary Islands (strange but true!) and in Cuba, a Hummingbird hovering at a citrus tree. Richard would spot them, and I loved learning so much through his enthusiastic commentaries!

From boyhood Richard's favourite bird was the Swift - every year he would anticipate them, elated when they arrived, gliding and swooping, announcing early summer. One summer evening at Blakeney Quay in North Norfolk, we experienced a whole flock of Swifts speeding low across the riverbank where we walked, so close we could see their dark eyes shining with intent. For Richard it was an experience that he recounted - often over a pint - for weeks afterwards.

Richard was fascinated by the night sky, and the infinite number and distance of the stars. He knew the constellations, how to pinpoint the Pole Star, and how to spot the planets rising or setting. He loved spotting meteors - I have a fond memory of a family holiday on the Greek island of Lefkada, with Richard, my son Jonathan and my brother Mike's family - one warm late evening we all lay on our backs to watch an amazing meteor shower.

Richard would tell you that his love of nature began in childhood here, in and around Godstone. Along with some of us here today, he made the daily walk up The Bay Path, past the pond with its bullrushes, dragon flies, and moorhens, to Godstone Church School (just across the road). Like many Godstone people he came to know every corner of Tilburstow, White Hill, Diana's Fountain Woods, the fields towards Tandridge, places so familiar they were hard-wired into him.

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And he carried this love of the natural world on through school, university, travels around the world, his working life, always extending his knowledge, a lifelong commitment.

And he was concerned for the natural world, dismayed at global deforestation and cruelty in farming and fishing. He would do whatever he could for an injured animal. I remember him one evening, patiently and meticulously removing 20 or 30 ticks from a hedgehog that we found in my garden. The hedgehog survived, and Richard took it to a nearby wildlife centre the next day.

Nature, part of the soul of Richard. Even during his final weeks at Greathead manor nursing home, Richard was still observing and noticing - foxes on the lawns, bluebells coming out, a ravens' nest high in an evergreen not far from his window, with the parent ravens flying to and fro to bring food to the chicks. And despite his desperate physical condition, he would describe all this to me over the phone, as best he could, with the same fascination - ever the same Richard, surprised and inspired by the natural world right until the end.

We have found a poem that seems to relate well to Richard - his love of nature and power of observation.....'Afterwards' by Thomas Hardy.....

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#**POEM "AFTERWARDS"****By Thomas Hardy**
Read by Alison Powell

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
 And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
 Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
 "He was a man who used to notice such things"?

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,
 The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
 Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,
 "To him this must have been a familiar sight."

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
 When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
 One may say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should
 come to no harm,
 But he could do little for them; and now he is gone."

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,
 Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,
 Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
 "He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
 And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
 Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
 "He hears it not now, but used to notice such things?"

MUSIC**BRAHMS** (violin Concerto)
Anne-Sophie Mutter#
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#**RICHARD**
Roger May

We have heard memories of Richard this morning and I'm sure there are many more. I said earlier that it is perhaps what we do for others that we are remember for and I think what we have shared with others, and we have heard testimony to that this morning.

Jan and I would like to thank everyone that helped Richard when he became ill, a big "Thank You" to you all. And we would like to mention Paul Foster, his neighbor in Mountfield, Richard was all alone down there, and Paul stepped in and was there for him, thank you Paul.

Richard was caring, he was interested in pretty much everything, he was a free thinker, he questioned everything and wanted to know more. He didn't just accept his disease he studied it and fought it to the end. He didn't just accept what he was told, he insisted on having copies of all his medical reports and tests to follow up himself. Richard cared for the environment, for the world around us, but he didn't blindly follow the crowd or the latest fad. Richard was a "Free Thinker", But it is the memories he has left behind, it's the sparks of life, of varied interests that he has left with those that knew him. Sparks that have surely set embers glowing fanned by the memories of pleasant times.

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CLOSING PRAYERS

Rev Peter O'Connell

THE LORD'S PRAYER

***All* Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

THE BLESSING

EXIT MUSIC

"BEFORE YOU GO"

Piano Guys



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Richard May
1953 – 2020

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