

David's Eulogy

I'm David's brother. I'd like to say a few words about him before handing over to his son, Will, and a few of David's friends who have been invited to speak about him.

My big brother was the oldest of four children.

He was born in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, Ireland in 1954. He lived there with our mum, dad and our dad's mum for just over a year before our sister, Isobel was born. Breda joined the family 2 years after that.

David was in Clonmel long enough to start school and make his First Holy Communion.

The First Holy Communion is significant for me in particular, because his photo from that day was in our bedroom as kids in London.

His wonky, crooked fringe – presumably cut inexpertly by one of our parents, or by a barber with one leg longer than the other - regularly made me laugh for years!

In December 1961 the family, including a 7 year old David, moved from Clonmel to London.

David and Isobel started primary school in London, at St Joseph's in Camberwell, and Breda joined them soon after.

I was born 2 years after we arrived in London, and was always known as “The English One”.

We lived in Brixton, next to my dad's sister Auntie Eileen and her family, for the next few years, before getting our own place in West Norwood.

This was just after David had started secondary school at Clapham College.

Unfortunately, we weren't in West Norwood long (only 3 years) before our dad died in September 1969.

David was 14 and there's no doubt it hit him hard:

- firstly, because David was very close to his dad
- and secondly because it almost certainly changed the course of his life.

At 18, on leaving school, he started work at Barclays Bank, which was a great support to our family.

He possibly viewed this as his responsibility to us all, rather than continuing his studies.

If he did view it in this way, it wouldn't have been out of character. He was always dependable, reliable and took his responsibilities seriously.

He worked for Barclays until he retired in 2011.

There are 9 years between David and myself, not enough for him to be a substitute dad for me, but he tried hard, probably more than I ever appreciated.

He let me listen to his records – many were dreadful – but he started me on the path to being a Beatles obsessive.

He took me to watch my first football match – and started another lifelong passion for me.

He always managed to get me tickets for big Palace games, when he was a season ticket holder, and I no longer attended regularly.

That led to one of our rare moments of emotional connection, in 1990 when Palace finally made it to a cup final – we almost squeezed the life out of his mate, Chris Aleppo, who was unfortunate enough to be in between us when the final whistle went!

He watched me play football, and saw me score my first ever goal.

He even refereed matches I played in as a kid, but fortunately never sent me off – I think we would have both been in trouble with our mum if he did!

David's refereeing progressed way beyond kids' football – he twice ended up as a linesman in the top division of English professional football – once featuring on Match of the Day!

As a kid, he also played darts in our bedroom and landed one in my thumb. I still have the scar, and he got in loads of trouble for that! That was a great day!

We were both altar boys in our parish of St Matthew's - I resigned at a normal age...

David would have continued for ever - but he got too big for the cassock!

He was busy again, in an official capacity at St Matthew's, to take the place of our dad and walk Isobel down the aisle in 1979.

I did get the chance to go to university, and when I came home, in 1986, he presumably couldn't face sharing a room with me again (and have me laugh once more at his Holy Communion photo) and he bought his own flat.

His life took a considerable turn for the better after that – he had his own place, but could still go back to his mum's for a Sunday dinner and to get his shirts ironed!

When he sold the flat, the oven still had the instructions inside it and had never been used!

A further improvement to his life involved the fact that his mate from Barclays, Bruce, had a sister called Jean.

He started going out with her in 1989.

Everyone could see they were meant to be together, even though our mum continued to refer to Jean as “David's friend”, which made the rest of us laugh!

David took a little while to see what was blindingly obvious, but a few mates helped him to see sense... and in 1992, David married Jean.

There was a long wait for William, they were told it was never going to happen, but he turned up 6 years later in 1998.

David had a fantastic relationship with Will, and there was never a happier couple to have a son. Their story even featured in a national magazine!

My brother was a kind and gentle man – kind, reliable and honest.

I'll let Will tell you the story of my brother, and his dad, from there...