

Exeter Cathedral, November 9, 2015

- This tribute begins with a poem, written and delivered by my father's 11 grandchildren and dedicated to their beloved Grandfather...:

Grumpy Devon

G is for Grumpy whom we love so much,

R is for rural, a true country man

U is for umpire his passion was cricket

M is for meat, he hated his veg,

P is for Powderham, his pride and his joy

Y is for Yeomanry; Honorary Colonel

D is for Diana, his wonderful wife

E is for elephants met on safari

V is for vintage, his Bentley and guns

O is for October the shoot season starts

N is for never, never forgotten

WE LOVE YOU GRUMPY!

- Welcome to Exeter Cathedral and, to many of you who have travelled long distances, welcome to glorious Devon. On behalf of the whole family, and my dear mother in particular, thank you for your love and support, and for being here to celebrate my father's life.
- What would Daddy think of this? Probably a bit embarrassed. He was modest, often shy in public, and rarely comfortable with his prominence as the Earl of Devon. Despite this, he played many public roles, being both Deputy and Vice Lord Lieutenant, and working for many entities represented here today, such as the Bath and West and Devon County Shows, the Cathedral and Historic Churches' Trusts, the Racecourse, the Yeomanry, the gun dog and wildfowlers' societies, the young farmers' club, the Hunt, the local council, plus an alphabet soup of worthy causes including the PCC, CLA, HHA, NFU, WWF, and many more. To all these he devoted his time for the common good and from a traditional sense of duty – playing a role to which he was born, not to which he ever appeared to aspire.

- My father was a passionate supporter of Somerset County Cricket Club, and in latter years spent many happy hours snoozing under an ill-fitting sunhat in the County Ground at Taunton. Ian Botham was a favourite, not only for his brilliance, I suspect, but also for his irreverence. I once played rugby against Botham's son, Liam, and I recall my father commenting that, however good young Liam was, he'd never escape the shadow of his father's achievements. Typically self-effacing, he suggested that his gift to me was never to excel too much at anything, so as to cast no such shadow over me...He could not have been more wrong. We sit here today in his shade, all touched in some personal way by my delightful, dutiful and devoted Dad. I cannot hope to capture all his accomplishments, I can simply share my understanding of him, and hope to stir memories for each of you to treasure, because: *“to live in hearts we leave behind, is not to die.”*
- Despite his unease with this grand setting, the Cathedral is a good place to remember my father:
 - Take yourself back 73 years, 6 months and 5 days, to the 4th of May, 1942. Exeter was ablaze after a furious night of bombing. St. James's Chapel here had taken a direct hit, the south tower was teetering, the High Street was decimated, and scores were dead and wounded...Follow the departing German bombers some 5 miles south down the Exe to Powderham, where a much depleted staff huddled for safety in the Castle cellars together with young Rose and Paulina, and the baby Katherine. Absent at war were the men folk, including Christopher, my grandfather, fighting in North Africa. Absent too was Venetia, my grandmother, because she was upstairs, where life was to carry on...in the State Bed she went into labour and gave birth the following morning to a baby boy. Aunt Rose remembers how his cries rung around the Castle and drew everybody from their hiding places – new life to celebrate amidst the carnage.
 - Also here lies the medieval tomb of the second Courtenay Earl of Devon, Hugh, from whom that baby boy took his name. It was that Hugh whose marriage brought the Manor of Powderham to the family. It is fitting therefore that another Hugh should be so integral to ensuring Powderham's survival nearly 700 years later.
 - Third, we all sit here beneath Great Peter, not the Apostle, but the massive medieval bell that hangs atop the north tower, donated by Bishop Peter Courtenay, also of Powderham. Tradition is that Great Peter is tolled whenever an Earl of Devon dies – the number of tolls corresponding to the number of years he was Earl – and in

the decade before my father's birth, Great Peter was called into action no less than three times, each for tragically few tolls as my Grandfather's two uncles and father died in quick succession.

- So things were not rosy in May 1942: warfare, inheritance tax, and social upheaval threatened; Powderham's future was bleak. 73 years later, much has changed: Exeter and its Cathedral are rebuilt and prosperous; Powderham, after decades of decline, is a hive of activity – its gardens, grounds and graceful interiors gently restored and shared with thousands; and the family flourishes, with 11 wonderful and talented grandchildren, who you have just enjoyed.
- What were the steps on the journey from those dark days to this bright present?
 - Hugh and Kate grew up together at post-war Powderham – the first Courtenay children to do so for 150 years – and they brought great joy to the place at a difficult time. During those early years, my father's lifelong bond with Powderham was forged, particularly for its nature and landscape, as was his passion for animals and a close appreciation of family – surrounded by sisters, aunts, cousins and more.
 - With Christopher away in those early years, and many women around the house, there was a strong female influence on my father, and it was not unknown for him to sport a kirby-grip as a child, creating that neat parting that he handsomely wore throughout his life. He also developed an ease with female company that made him a devoted husband, a doting father, a great friend and a kind boss to many special women that were so important in his life.
 - And here we should pause and offer a thought for Kate, one of the most special and constant women in his life (second only to my mother). She loved him dearly and willingly endured a lifetime of fraternal pranks and teasing. He loved her too, in his way, and took great support from her, particularly in recent years. Her devotion to family history and preservation of the past complemented perfectly his focus on the Estate and its future. Selflessly, Aunt Kate carried a major illness uncomplainingly throughout the last few months of his life and she died only weeks after him, leaving a second great void in our lives, and no oracle for me to check my facts with (so excuse any inaccuracies). We can only hope that they are once more together again, and that he is not teasing her too much.

- With such strong female influence in his childhood home, my father sought male friends outside, and his resulting love of the outdoors made him a consummate countryman, always at ease in rural company. He left this behind when away at school, first at St. Peters, and then Winchester, where his intelligence shone, but he missed the fields of Devon. At Magdalene College, Cambridge, he flourished, forming lifelong friendships, living at Thompson's Lane, and spending time with the Drag hounds, fighting on the fens, and dining at the Pitt Club.
- It was not long after leaving Cambridge that he met and fell madly in love with Diana – a beautiful young Scots lass, who stole his heart on a visit to the Borders. Ever impulsive and romantic, and wise to strike while the iron was hot, he abandoned plans to travel the world, proposed to Diana and they were married in Kelso in 1967. They married young, and that marriage formed an unshakeable foundation upon which his later life and success were built. The way my parents dedicated themselves to each other, to us their children, to their friends, and to their work at Powderham and across the County, is a great example and a wonderful achievement.
- My father became a chartered surveyor, mastering a profession that served him for life; particularly from 1970, when he returned to manage Powderham. Under his steady and wise stewardship, Powderham has been transformed:
 - Gradually he took farming in hand, taking hard decisions, such as selling his much loved South Devon cattle, and creating a successful farm business. He enhanced the Park with planting and water features; he lovingly restored the American woodland Garden, the pavilion, walled garden, and the Belvedere, all of which he brought back from the brink of oblivion. Old farm buildings were renewed and the Country Store was born.
 - In the Castle, he modernised the heritage business, welcoming visitors from around the world; he opened his home to conferences, weddings and events; and he created world class music venues both inside and outside the house, at which leading musicians from classical maestros to modern chart toppers have entertained many thousands.
 - He managed the Powderham collection with care, sadly selling some items, but always at a good price, while also negotiating successful in lieu agreements to keep treasures in situ while resolving the last of his father's crippling inheritance tax burdens.

- He supported formation of the Courtenay Society, reclaimed the foreshore of the Exe Estuary, ran the Powderham Horse Trials (along with my tireless mother), and introduced the Point-to-Point course at Blackforest Lodge.
- All the while, he maintained Powderham as a traditional, working estate – a rural idyll among the spreading housing estates of Teignbridge. Indeed, if St. Peter had asked him at the Pearly Gates to state what he had achieved during his 73 years, my father could have pointed him to Powderham today with satisfaction.
- He loved his animals and sports, and combined them masterfully. He was an excellent horseman: eventing, racing, and hunting bravely, always in tune with his horses – particularly McGinty, and then Glen Clova. Similarly with shooting, he shot sportingly and straight and was particularly attached to his loyal and able gun dogs – first Dick, his long-lived lurcher-retriever, and latterly his spaniels, Brimble and her offspring: Daschel, Daisy and Tansy. With them he amiably ran the Powderham shoot, never happier than hosting with a spaniel at his heel.
- Together with my mother, my father created comfortable and welcoming homes, first at the Stables, then the Castle, and latterly at Wilsworthy. At each of these homes, he was a gracious and generous host; full of good humour, inevitably the last to bed, and willing to open his doors to all-comers – rugby and cricket teams, and even boyfriends with earrings (though *not* if they were wearing a baseball cap indoors). As children, our home was often full of friends, and in recent months I have received so many condolence letters commenting on his kindness and ability to enthuse and engage in young people's lives.
- My father also loved to travel, regularly heading both north and south. In Scotland, he indulged his threefold passions for fishing, stalking and whisky, while on regular trips to Africa he indulged his threefold passions for wildlife, photography and sundowners with Diana. It was a fond ritual of our childhood to sit in the dining room and journey on his slide-show-safaris.
- I am leaving to the end two topics about which it is not appropriate to talk at polite parties – politics and religion. Being polite and liking parties, neither were subjects about which my father much talked, but in both he was to assume a national prominence.
 - As a politician, in March 1999 he became the last hereditary peer to make a maiden speech in the House of Lords by right. His own father was distinguished for never making a maiden speech, despite a record 64 years in which to do so. When Christopher died in

1998, my father had only a matter of months to take his seat before his likely abolition. Traditionally, maiden speeches occur in minor, non-contentious debates, but due to timing the only debate available was on the future of the House of Lords itself. Opening two days of debate before a packed house, my father delivered a confident, well-considered and passionate defence of the hereditary peerage. Of course, he did not carry the day, but I was honoured to sit on the steps of the throne to watch and, save perhaps for today, I was never prouder of him or more proud to be his son. As he himself said in that speech: *“My ideal is to come here today so that I can tell my grandchildren that I made my maiden speech in this House, and then... to go home with a clear conscience.”* Sickness denied him time to tell this story to his grandchildren, but I am glad to have been able to do so now; and we can all take comfort that he did come home and lived his life with his conscience clear.

- In matters of religion, my father maintained a constant faith and a firm adherence to the traditional liturgy, as followed so timelessly at St. Clement’s, Powderham. He was not overtly religious, but he practiced his faith with dedication and conviction, acting as church warden for many years, always reading the lesson and leading the singing with his rich baritone voice. Many will know that his traditional, religious conscience did not permit him to allow homosexual couples to marry in his home, resulting in his wedding license being withdrawn and considerable press attention. This was not an issue on which we saw eye to eye, but I must admit a grudging respect for his doggedness and his willingness to stand up for his beliefs. True to his word, when Powderham Castle was no longer his home and he’d moved to Wilsworthy, he restored the civil wedding license and found some peace with the issue.
- In his later years, ill health slowed my father considerably – years of shooting without ear defenders and refusing to eat vegetables did not help. But he was incredibly fond of his grandchildren, to whom he was known affectionately as “Grumpy.” His last few months were tough, particularly for those caring for him, principally my mother, ably assisted by Rebecca. But he bore his decline with dignity and his cheeky sense of humour was never far away. He did not want to live to old age if it meant incapacity, and we take some solace in him passing away while we all enjoy recent memories of him in good spirits.
- As a family, we will miss him terribly, particularly for his grandchildren whose achievements would have delighted him. I cannot hope to speak for my mother, whose loss is so much deeper than any of the rest of us, save to note her remarkable strength and resilience during a brutal year. I

think Devon will miss him too – as he was a tireless champion of the County, and his replacement is a little wet behind the ears...

- Personally, I miss him on a daily basis. Over the weeks since he died, my respect has only grown, and I have missed him all the more as AJ and I wrestle with the running of Powderham, and have so many unanswered questions; and I miss him as a father, as a guide in life, and as an example of a man supremely comfortable in his own skin, who was willing to fight for what he believed was right.
- May he rest peacefully and be remembered with warmth by us all.

Charlie Courtenay