

Dominic James Church

21/07/92 - 29/06/19

Eulogy by Gabrielle Church



On the last weekend of July 1992, during a monstrous storm, Mum went into labour with Dominic at about 2am. Dad was living with a friend in Essex at the time as they were in business together down there, and so was unsure if he would get to the Paget before the birth because of serious flooding and high winds, but thankfully for Dad (not so much for Mum), Dominic would take 16 hours to deliver, leaving plenty of time to get there.

Dom and Mum lived with our paternal grandma in Southwold for the first three months, with Dad only able to visit at weekends. All three then moved for a brief time to Welwyn Garden City for Dad's therapy training, and finally settled into the family home in Wangford at the end of 1993.

Thirteen months later the best and possibly most scarring day arrived for Dominic. I was born. At home no less, so Dom was really part of the action. You would expect a two-and-a-half year old boy to be disappointed with a little sister but Dom was really excited to be a big brother, and to look after his baby sister, so much so that the night I was born he refused to go to bed because he wanted to be there the moment I arrived.

Dom was a very creative child, and from quite early on was interested in the elements of film. At the age of 5 he would run around the living room, saying in the most Suffolk accent, "Loights, cameras, action", with a homemade clapper board crafted from two of our finest readers digest books.

As well as filmmaking, he was also known in our house for giving very unique cards for birthdays and Christmas. They looked like something between a ransom note and beautiful collage.

From clapper board maker and director, he then moved onto producer and camera man, starting out with what now looks like a really retro s-vhs recorder, that dad bought to capture as many childhood moments with as he could. Well, I say to capture us but it was roughly 35% of us and a lot of slow, panoramic views. Something tells me Dom must have caught on to this, because there are several videos where in the corner of the shot, Dom would be waving his arms around for the camera to point in his direction before suddenly appearing extremely close to the lens.

Later he got his very own Sony handycam and would spend hours getting footage of his old teddies, exploding aerosol cans and getting whoever was around at the time to drive around the lawn mower, so that he could edit the footage together to create action packed movies.

As he got older he became a typical video and computer gamer, which meant he had to stay up to date with the latest consoles and games. Once Dom had an idea or an item that he wanted he was very determined to get it, and thus was very good at bargaining with our parents for these new things. He would start by gently dropping something into conversation over time to gauge my parents thoughts, and then would move onto the hard sell of listing all the benefits this item would give him over and over again if they seemed unconvinced. Eventually, mum and dad would strike a deal that he would earn pocket money to put down half of the cost and the rest they would contribute towards in lieu of a birthday or Christmas present.

I watched him do that countless times but I could never quite get the technique down. He had made it a fine art; a natural salesman.

Growing up its fair to say Dom and I had a pretty good home life. He loved a good boardgame and he would often plonk a game on the dining room table, and we'd spend a Sunday all together playing Risk or Hotel. He would still manage to win even though I was in charge of the bank, and have to admit, would slip notes out into my own hand. Mum and Dad would get involved with our outdoor games of night time hide and seek in the orchard, we would play baseball with the apples from the trees, and Dom would try relentlessly to teach mum to hit the incoming apple with the bat and not her face.

We were also lucky enough to have mum cook us at least two different meals every night, because we didn't like the same food and Dom was a very picky eater.

I absolutely idolised Dom, whatever he was doing I most likely wanted to do too. Though we were quite inseparable, and Dom loved me joining in as much as I did, there were exceptions when it was boys only. One year Dad took four days off to take one or both of us to Wales, but if I went Dom was very clear he wouldn't go because he wanted a father-son trip. He won that time, and Dom and Dad had a great time fishing, cooking together and roaming the Welsh hills.

At school Dom didn't have such a good time, in his junior years he was one of the smaller boys with a kind and sensitive way about him, which made it easy for the other boys to pick on and make fun at his expense. He also struggled academically with dyslexia which made his whole school experience a really unpleasant time and Mum or Dad would have to take him into school literally kicking and screaming.

The headmaster of St Felix at the time of Dom entering his GCSE's wouldn't allow him to sit his exams because his academic performance wasn't deemed good enough, which resulted in both of us leaving the school and moving to Framlingham College, where in a short time he turned his grades around and successfully passed his GCSE's.

Becoming a boarder was great for Dom because he loved to be around people, and he subsequently made some great friends with the international students particularly. However, like most young boys away from home for the first time, he did get up to no good, and we would sometimes get to hear of how he'd narrowly escaped getting caught out of the boarding house after lights out, or trying to sneak a cigarette on the golf course.

Much to our parent's disapproval, Dom took up smoking at 17 and one holiday decided with helpful persuasion of some friends, to bring back cigarettes that he would sell. Unfortunately, news travelled about this and it wasn't long before Dom was brought up in front of Mrs Randall, the head of school. Luckily for Dom, although he did face the consequences with a strong warning not to do it again, a reminder of the school rules and being gated in house for a few weeks, Mrs Randall recognised an entrepreneurial spirit with his endeavour.

Dom left Framlingham before completing his A levels for various reasons which left him with some decisions to make for his future. To earn, whilst figuring it all out, he would cycle back and forth to Southwold to work evenings at The Electric Picture Palace, loading film reels. Eventually he saved enough

and combined with cashing in premium bonds, he decided to travel to Australia for a year's work experience. A bold step for a young man with no friends or family on the other side of the world.

Initially he worked for the flagship Sony Centre in Sydney, a target driven sales role that involved a vast amount of information to learn on stock and regular knowledge tests. Given his background interest in cameras and computers, it was a great fit for him and he enjoyed the product side of the job but not so much the cut throat mentality of the salesmen. He must have been doing well though, because on his birthday he treated himself to the appropriately named bottle of Dom Perignon, not your average backpacker.

He then moved on to the not so glamorous life of building fun fairs across the country, an interesting choice and definite confirmation that none of us should be going on fair rides anytime soon with bodge construction he talked about seeing.

The visa conditions meant he needed to complete three months voluntary agricultural work to apply for a second-year visa. He was offered a position at a remote farm in Bredbo, 230 miles south west of Sydney, if he could get there within a certain time frame.

He made the long journey on time and lived on his own in a cabin for those three months, weeding garlic fields, avoiding large spiders and attempting to feed and heard pigs. I say attempting because he told me often how sturdy pigs are and how hard it was to get them to actually move on command.

We were ecstatic to welcome him home in 2012, because although for the first time ever I got my parents undivided attention (Dom had a knack for taking a lot of it) it meant I got my best friend back and the phone bills were way cheaper.

We started doing a radio show together for the local station which was essentially just two hours of Dom and I gabbling on about things and telling jokes that most likely only he and I found funny. The summer of 2012 rolled around fast and because Dom hadn't yet taken his driving test he cycled or walked everywhere.

One night after a rugby event, only a week after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, Dom being the gentleman and protector that he was, walked a female friend home to Reydon, which put him in the path of a car doing 50mph which veered across the road and crashed into them from behind. Luckily for the friend, she walked away with minor injuries and shock. Dom was hit full on, leading to severe damage to his skull and subdural hematoma.

Initially, they were both taken to Paget, but with no suitable neurology department, Dom was taken to Addenbrooke's intensive care unit. The severity of his injuries and the volatility of a hematoma, we were all terrified he wouldn't pull through.

Dom stayed in the hospital for two weeks while the doctors waited for the bleed to drain. Even being incoherent on strong pain killers, Dom was very strong willed and would argue the toss with mum and dad that he was allowed at least one cigarette. Ultimately Dom needed surgery to remove the blood clot, which all went well and soon Dom was able to leave the hospital.

In 2014 Dom took off to the other side of the world again, this time to New Zealand. He travelled across both islands, seeing as much as possible, even undertaking a solo skydiving course at Lake Taupo. Being the fearless boy that he was, he was doing solo dives pretty quickly, despite his slim physique meaning that he needed to have extra weights attached to him to freefall at the same rate as everyone else.

As soon as I arrived in New Zealand for 6 weeks of travelling together, he was persuading me to do a skydive. I wasn't immediately sold, so he drove us to the skydive centre to "have a look", the next thing I know I'm strapped onto an instructor, Dom is in his skin tight ninja suit and we're climbing to 15,000 feet. The terror of watching Dom launch himself out of a plane was by far greater than when I was dangling over the side myself. I still don't know how he had the courage to do it, but I'm very thankful for his persistence to get me up there with him.

We had so much fun for those 6 weeks, from surf boarding directly after birthday champagne in Raglan (warning: you will get hit in the face if you do this), to climbing hills in the far north at Spirit's Bay to get a better view; I'm almost certain the fence we climbed over was there for a reason, but Dom assured me the wild horses roaming were fine, if we didn't make too much noise.

One thing I learned about Dom at the time was that he lived with such a sense of adventure. There was always something or somewhere he wanted to see and learn about, which he would just go out and do without endless debate. Most importantly, it gave him so much happiness to be able to give those he loved the opportunity to share in these experiences.

Dom was extremely family orientated and always looked forward to seeing our aunts, uncles and cousins. When our cousins Gerard and Kieran would visit around Christmas there wasn't a lot of entertainment in Southwold, but

grandma's neighbours did delight us every year by discussing Handel's Water Music at length. It became a running joke to bet on how many days the neighbours would be in town before they came over to grace us with said music.

He was great at getting involved with our younger cousins Rema, Shyma and Xander while they were growing up too, giving his all to the activity or game at hand. Xander had one of those cool toy cars, but with a dead battery, so Dom spent an hour pushing him across the garden in it, only stopping when our aunt said he didn't have to keep going if he'd had enough. I'm sure he would have been there for hours longer to keep his little cousin laughing.

He was caring and invested in the feelings of others to his core, which was evident when on my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday he flew over to San Francisco to surprise me, and during the night out, my friend's car was broken into. My bag and passport were stolen, and Dom was so upset for me that I ended up comforting him and reassuring him it would be ok.

In recent years Dom had struggled a lot through various ups and downs in his life. After the head injury, it felt as though his temperament had changed and he wasn't the even-tempered and easy-going boy we knew. He became dependent on alcohol and would get frustrated quickly, which resulted in words being said in the heat of the moment. Even in this difficult state, he would always apologise later once he had reflected and his heart was nearly always in the right place with whatever he has said.

In 2017 Dom was accepted onto a Chemistry foundation course at the UEA, an amazing opportunity he didn't think he would have without A levels and being out of education since 17.

Given the struggles in the years leading up to and during the course, the timing wasn't ideal, but nonetheless he gave his first year a good attempt. His severe depression made it hard to do most anything, yet still without as much preparation as there perhaps could have been, he managed to get 80-90% in his biology modules and presentations, with encouraging feedback from his professors.

I truly hope that I've done Dom justice in trying to convey in a short space of time how deeply caring, protective, funny, creative, intelligent and loving he was. The most genuine young man you could ever wish to meet. He will be an unimaginable and irreplaceable loss to us all.

Dominic James Church



Lake Taupo, New Zealand. 2014.



Australia. 2012.