

PETER DAVID OVER DL – Presented by Bill Baker

St Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds, 5th February 2026

My Lord Lieutenant, Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen. I have been given the greatest honour by Kate and the family of saying a few words about our very dear friend and my best mate Peter.

Kate said to me that all Peter wanted in life was to be loved and looking at the number of people here today he most certainly was. Today we have come together to show our love of Peter, to comfort his beautiful family and each other and to celebrate and give thanks for everything that he gave to us all.

Kate has asked me to thank you for the hundreds of letters and cards that she has received. They are full of wonderful comments; How loved he was, a true gentleman, genuine, generous and kind. He filled the room with laughter and made time for everyone, young and old. The finest raconteur and pillar of the community, always charming and charismatic, a real "people's person" respected by all. He was trustworthy, loyal, inspirational, dependable and a stalwart in society. He had natural warmth that made everyone feel welcomed and valued.

It is exactly these qualities that were recognised by Lady Clare when she gave Peter the greatest honour of being asked to become a DL. He was both humbled and delighted to serve and excelled in the role.

Jim Carroll wrote; It is better to have a life well lived, than to just live a life. Peter epitomised that and I would now like to share with you some examples of how he did just that. I am grateful to many of you here today for sharing your stories with me, some of which however are not suitable to repeat in this church!

Peter was born on 10th June 1962, Second child of four to David and Paddy Over, brother to Stephen, Jane and Susan. He grew up at the Gables in Kentford and afterwards the family moved to Saxham, before he married his beloved wife Kate in 1987 and moved to Elmswell Hall.

PETER THE SCHOOLBOY

Peter's first school was at Fairstead House where he was milk monitor (he was very proud of that apparently!) then onto Nowton (NOTON) where he became head boy, an early indication of his leadership qualities that would feature throughout his life. That said, it proved to be a temporary promotion due to a misdemeanour.....Peter was tasked with taking his classmates to Confirmation classes in town one Sunday but as they all peddled off on their bikes, he had a better idea and decided to take them to the Cinema instead. The headmaster was called by a disgruntled lady who lived next door to the cinema complaining that she was unable to get out of her house due to all the bicycles the boys had left in her garden. When the headmaster turned up at the cinema he easily identified them all sitting along the front row in their bright yellow school caps. After unceremoniously marching them out of the cinema and back to school, Peter was relieved of his position of head boy!

Peter went on to Brandeston and then Framlingham College and made many lifelong friends from his time spent there. He excelled at school, well more accurately he excelled at **sport** at school, especially Hockey and Cricket. However after a further misdemeanour, this time being caught drinking, he was instructed to see the headmaster to be punished after the cricket match the following Saturday. Peter knew what was coming and was in no hurry to get there so stayed at the

crease, notching up a cool Century and delaying the inevitable punishment as long as he could. When he arrived he was lectured about the sins of alcohol and duly given the due punishment.

“How did the match go?” said the headmaster
“we won sir” Peter announced proudly, “and I hit a Century”
“Excellent, well done boy” said the headmaster.....would you like a beer?!

Mr Michael Cook taught Peter when he was at Framlingham College. He tasked the boys to present to the class an invention that changed the world. When it was Peter's turn, he chose the wheel, Mr Cook was hugely impressed with both his choice and the argument he made that the wheel was indeed an invention that had a huge impact.

What he didn't know but later discovered was that the wheel was one that Peter had removed from his precious Morris Minor outside in the car park!

He was still teaching when Tom went to Fram so probably made sure he had locking wheel nuts fitted to his car just in case history repeated itself!

Later in life, Peter was honoured to be invited to become a school governor of Framlingham College where his wise counsel was highly valued and he was proud to serve the school that he loved so much.

PETER THE SPORTSMAN

Peter was a natural sportsman with excellent hand/eye co-ordination, coupled with determination and a strong competitive streak which is why he excelled at all that he did. He played Hockey to a very high standard transitioning from Bury to Cambridge City where he played in goal. In his first season at Cambridge, playing in the East league with his cousin Mike Mitcham and great mate Nigel Gadsby he only conceded 4 goals in the entire season....none of which he insisted were his fault! They were promoted to the National League and he continued to shine both on and off the pitch.

Guy Robins shared a story with me about Peter meeting up with the Javelin thrower Steve Backley in a bar the night before Peter was due to play in a big National League Hockey match. Steve was also due to compete at an important athletics event the same day. They got on famously and the pints flowed but eventually they both fell into to bed (not together, that's not the story!), both the worse for wear. The story has it that Peter was awarded man of the match for an outstanding performance in goal and Steve Backley threw a Commonwealth world record so the late night clearly didn't do either of them any harm!

Peter loved his golf and played regularly his lowest handicap was 6 although latterly that rose to 12.2. He was a member and past captain of Flempton and latterly a member of Aldeburgh where he especially loved to play with his sons Tom and James and his many good friends. We also had some memorable golf trips abroad to Le Touquet and Portugal organised by his brother Stephen.

It was on one such trip that I confided in Peter that I needed to do a bit of shopping (strictly frowned upon on a boys trip when drinking and golfing were the priority) as I wanted to impress my new girlfriend (now my wife I hasten to add) and would he cover for me if I slipped out for a while. He said he could do better than that and agreed to join me in my quest to buy something nice. We found ourselves in a ladies lingerie shop in the heart of Le Touquet, Peter happily holding up various skimpy options as I joked that he was the perfect shopping partner as he had the same cup size as my girlfriend!

He was a keen squash player in his younger days and continued to play tennis every week and had just started to play padel too which he loved.

For many years four of us, Peter, Stephen, Ian Fulcher and myself played snooker at the Farmers Club every Tuesday evening, supposedly friendly but always keenly contested with the Overs on opposing sides! Peter even boasted (and he did often!) that he was the Farmers Club Champion back in the 90's and would remind us by pointing to his name on the honours board after sinking a long pot....usually followed by missing the next ball altogether.

He played Cricket for Gents of Suffolk and Golf for SEFGA (South Essex Farmers Golf Association) and was the life and soul of every event held.

PETER'S LOVE OF FOOTBALL

This might shock those of you from Ipswich Town Football Club here today but Peter grew up supporting Arsenal and often went to matches at Highbury where he had a debut. Of course more recently he saw the light and became a devoted ITFC fan and I am grateful to Mark Ashton for his comments about Peter;

“Peter was not just a close personal friend but from Day 1 when I joined the club, he was quickly identified as someone we could trust implicitly. His knowledge and connections throughout Suffolk have been invaluable and he was a Trustee and passionate leader of the Community Foundation. He was made a Club Ambassador, which brought him into the inner sanctum of the club, attending all matches home and away and just recently was made Chairman of the PLC Board”

Mark went on to tell me that he has received numerous messages of sympathy from the clubs within the Football League, all of whom held Peter in such high regard and loved his company at matches. Another typical example of how Peter's infectious personality and love of the sport made such a big impact on so many people.

He was also loved by Kieran, the manager and all the players, past and present and when he kindly took me to Portman Road on occasion, I loved to see him interact with everybody, from the guys on the gates, to the grounds staff, the players, management and visiting team officials. Everybody made time for Peter because he made time for them. He knew them, he knew about them and he was genuinely interested in them.

Peter even had his own parking space at the club, I'm not sure if it was meant to be an actual space but he found he could slot his 4 x 4 conveniently into it and if he was busy on the farm and hadn't had time to wash his landrover before match days it was pretty obvious whose car it was in the car park set against the rows of neatly washed footballers cars!

When Simon Milton had his testimonial year, he turned to Peter to organise it and was incredibly grateful for the tremendous job he did for him.

For several years we used to go to the Larling Angel after a days shooting with Paul Rackham. The landlord of the pub (and most of the locals) were passionate Norwich City fans and every year, as the drinks flowed, the inevitable Norwich/Ipswich banter ensued. One year Peter decided to take it to the next level and stripping out of his plus fours and tweed, entered the pub in full Ipswich Town Kit. It was like the scene from American Werewolf In London at The slaughtered Lamb as the pub initially fell silent in disbelief before erupting into a chorus of abuse from the locals! I am sorry to say that most of his clothes were torn off him and ended up on the open fire!

PETER THE SHOWMAN

I have often heard of Peter being referred to as “Mr Suffolk Show” and it is a tag that I believe he thoroughly deserves. The Suffolk Agricultural Association has a long and proud history and is often referred to as the “best Club in the World” which might be stretching things but for those of us involved it truly feels that way. We are a huge family with great friendships made, especially when we all come together to stage the annual two day Suffolk Show making us an incredibly tight knit group.

Peter was firmly at the heart of everything we did. He started as a steward in the Art Tent (I’m not sure what he knew about art but he charmed everyone into buying plenty of it!) before moving on to become Senior Steward of Catering. This is a highly stressful job on the showground but Peter’s meticulous planning and organisational skills were perfect for the job. His real skill however was dealing with things when something didn’t go to plan and he could defuse a situation by finding a quick solution or if all else failed he would give someone a hug or make them laugh and everything would be back on track.

He was quickly identified as a youngster with potential and went on to become Deputy Show Director and then Show Director himself for a three year term, setting the highest bar for anyone who followed him into that role, introducing many new features that endure today. He linked with the military and persuaded them to bring an Apache attack helicopter to the showground and fly it into the Grand Ring, a nervous moment for him when stands began to lose their flags from the down draft and the odd tree branch went flying but the most incredible attraction and one he was most proud of. He arranged for his father David, a former soldier with the Parachute Regiment to take the Royal Salute on behalf of the Association and tears welled up in Peter’s eyes as he looked on with such pride.

Peter was instrumental in setting up the commercial trading arm of the Association, bringing important new revenue streams by utilising the showground all year around. Incredibly he set up and ran Polo matches in one of our car parks.

Peter went on to be my Vice Chairman at the SAA and I could not have wished for a more supportive and trusted confidant. We spent many hours discussing the show, it almost came up in every conversation we had, such was his passion for it and his desire to be involved in it. He was a wonderful role model, ambassador and importantly mentor to the younger generation making it his mission to ensure that the next group of youngsters got involved, in part to ensure that the Association had a bright future but also introducing them to “the club” because he wanted them to enjoy it as much as he did. He was particularly proud that his son Tom was following in his footsteps and has recently become a senior steward.

Peter loved to be at the heart of the fun too, he was responsible for bringing the now famous “Mascot Race” to the show and anyone who has been lucky enough to watch it will remember his first introduction. Dressed in his best suit and having lined up the mascots, microphone in hand, to comper the race, he thought it would be a good idea to demonstrate the course to the eager participants. As he rounded the course, jumping bales of straw, he caught his foot on the last bale and took an almighty tumble and the assembled crowd roared with laughter, as did Peter thankfully when he got his breath back!

Peter was master of ceremonies at the prestigious pre show Directors Dinner and compered the Annual Awards Dinner, roles he was brilliant at where he was able to blend formality with humour in his own unique style.

He will be massively missed by everyone at the Suffolk Agricultural Association and there will be very few people who will have left a more lasting and proud legacy than Peter. He has helped modernise whilst maintaining important traditions and brought hundreds of new friends to us from his wide network of contacts. Peter Over and Suffolk Show will forever be synonymous.

PETER THE SPEAKER

Peter's talent for after dinner speaking is legendary and I imagine most of you here today will have enjoyed listening to him easily rattling off jokes, maybe even been the butt of some of them. As previously mentioned, he was never cruel with his humour and only targeted people that he knew could take a joke and often making fun of himself too. Whilst he had a quick mind and felt comfortable on his feet, it didn't come without effort and he explained to me that he would practice for hours in front of a mirror for big occasions. He also overcame a childhood stutter, although apparently he was just copying his brother from an early age and he didn't have a stutter at all!

You will all have your favourite jokes of his from his vast repertoire I am sure and I have been comforted reminiscing with some of you over recent days as you remind me of them. My particular favourite of his was at a Show Dinner where he apologised on behalf of a well known member of the association who had well receded hairline;

"Roy would like to apologise for his appearance this evening, he spent a long time combing and brushing his hair before he came.....but forgot to bring it with him!"

He was invited to speak at Rugby, Hockey and Cricket Dinners with some arranging their dinners around Peter's availability such was their eagerness to have him speak. He was invited to speak at an international timber trade dinner at the Grosvenor Hotel in London to around 1200 guests and he didn't know anyone in the room. He was justifiably nervous and questioned why he had accepted to do it but as he told me later, after the Prime Minister of Finland spoke for nearly an hour about wood, the audience were so bored he couldn't fail to raise the mood and went down a storm. His speaking career could well have gone into overdrive after that as he had offers to speak all over the country and abroad but he politely declined, preferring to focus on more familiar audiences closer to home.

PETER THE FOODIE

Peter of course loved his food but he was famously fussy about what he would eat. He was spoilt as a child by his dear Mum Paddy who regularly cooked five separate meals in the evening to satisfy the different tastes of her children. Invariably this meant the standard fair for Peter was Steak and Chips and he was never too ambitious when it came to sampling unfamiliar meals. If we were out to dinner I would see him look over to Kate when presented with something he was unsure about with questioning eyes "will I like this Kate?" and she would oblige with a nod or a shake of her head, invariably it was "No!".

They were invited to Dinner by their dear friends Roger and Sarah Orford many years ago and Sarah was surprised to see that Peter had eaten the olive bread that she had served with the starter.....however it wasn't until a few days later as Sarah was dusting that she found said olive bread cleverly concealed behind a wall light!

On football away trips, if he was offered something like a curry, he would excuse himself and find the nearest MacDonalds. For years he rarely left home without a diet coke and a Mars Bar in his pocket, a habit I am pleased to say he managed to wean himself off when he lost lots of weight and returned to the athletic build of his youth. His other great love was Becks Beer and everyone knew to stock up

when he came to visit. Caterers would get to know him too and numerous times I have watched them serve maybe 400 people at a big dinner with either the meat or vegetarian option of the day and a special order for Peter!

PETER THE HUSBAND, FATHER, GRANDFATHER

Peter would be the first to admit that he would have achieved little in life without the unstinting support of his dear wife Kate. They got married in 1987 and spent 38 blissfully happy years together. They shared a love of hunting....well Kate loved hunting and Peter would always say he did too because it meant that he would be free to play or watch sport!

Peter and Kate were blessed with the arrival of their two lovely boys, first Tom and then James. Peter was not the best at dealing with newborns and legend has it that on the rare occasion that he was left on his own with one of them, if they filled their nappy he would load them up in his car and drive them 10 miles down the road for his mother or sister to deal with!

He was much more interested when they became old enough to play cricket with him in the yard, kick a football or swing a golf club and they followed in their father's footsteps of becoming superb sportsmen themselves. Peter never missed a school match, which often involved driving long distances, especially when James was at Uppingham School. He loved to watch his boys play and was incredibly proud of all they achieved, passionately shouting encouragement from the touchline and occasionally being warned to calm down by the officials!

Peter and I had a saying, that it was only possible to be as happy as our unhappiest child. This was particularly relevant during James' recent illness when the whole family endured the highs and lows during his treatment. If James had allowed him, I think Peter would have moved his bed in next to him at the hospital as he was so frustrated that James wouldn't answer his phone to him every half hour of the day and night for an update!

Peter and Kate were naturally thrilled with the arrival of their Grandchildren, Peter became "Pops" and Kate "Granny Clip Clop" to Angus and Matilda and whilst he didn't quite get the chance to meet Tom and Alice's new arrival, he would have been absolutely delighted with dear little Jemima, but not on hand to change nappies of course!

PETER THE SON AND BROTHER

Peter had a charmed upbringing and adored his mother and father. He was devastated to lose his Mum far too early and carried the pain of that loss for the rest of his life. It was not unusual for Peter to speak to his Mum four or five times a day on the phone and it was accepted by all of his siblings that Peter was, without doubt, his mother's favourite.

Peter idolised his older brother Stephen and the pair of them got up to all sorts of mischief together. Most of the stories that I am unable to share today involve the two of them. Peter was intensely loyal to Stephen and even if he knew Stephen was wrong, would defend him come what may.

There is a story from their youth when they attended the local fair, Stephen was intent on winning a large Elvis Presley mirror, a prize on the air rifle stand and all that they had to do was shoot various objects off their stands in order to win it. Try as they might and despite hitting the target repeatedly, they didn't budge and Stephen became increasingly frustrated. "get ready to run" Stephen whispered to Peter and as the man bent down to offer a consolation prize to them, Stephen picked up the air rifle and shot him in the backside! Luckily they were fast enough to avoid being caught!

Stephen's passing hit Peter terribly hard. He was another person that Peter would phone multiple times a day and then share a beer or two in the evening. I would like to think that the two of them are now reunited, propping up a bar somewhere, sharing a beer or an Aspull Cider whilst debating the upcoming England rugby team selection or arguing whether or not Ipswich will be joining Leeds United in the Premier League next season.

Peter, Stephen and Jane were all sporty growing up and worshipped their "little sister" Susan, who Peter affectionately nicknamed "Bulldog" for some reason! When Peter was old enough to drive he loved to take Susan back to Boarding School and wouldn't leave her until he had given her 100 kisses to last the term.

PETER THE FARMER

After Peter and Kate got married, they farmed the land at Elmswell Hall and were my farming neighbours. We helped each other on numerous occasions and we quickly became very firm friends. We were both invited to go judging farms in Newbury and Peter was nervous that he didn't feel qualified to judge but was persuaded anyway. Bruce Kerr was paired with Peter and after a heavy night in the bar it was a steady start the following morning. After a quick trip to the local garage for a restorative diet coke and a mars bar, they headed off to their first farm which happened to be a dairy farm. This was well outside Peter's area of expertise and his anxiety rose higher but Bruce expertly asked all the necessary questions whilst dragging Peter across numerous huge fields and through cow sheds. When we met in the bar later that day, I asked an exhausted looking Peter how he had got on, clearly unimpressed with the state of his shoes from what he had been made to stand in! From now on he declared, I will only be judging headlands and daughters!

PETER THE FRIEND

One thing that I didn't share with Peter was his taste in music. On long car journeys I would leaf through his extensive catalogue of CD's desperately hoping to find some music of common interest without success. His greatest love was the Nolans and he would sing along enthusiastically whilst I shook my head in disbelief, wondering if Val Doonican or Barry Manilow might be a better option after all!

We had so many other common interests and spoke almost daily about farming, family, sport, Suffolk Show, mutual friends and what we had been up to. It was when faced with challenges that our friendship showed its true value and the support we gave each other in such times helped ease whatever issue we were dealing with. Neither of us felt uncomfortable sharing the odd tear, it was as easy to us as laughter and thankfully there were far more happy times than sad. Peter had a saying which he used for people he loved and I would like to borrow it to use for him now;

"If you knew Peter Over, you were lucky, but if you were a friend of Peter Over you were blessed"

You will all have your own stories of course and I hope that we will continue to share them to comfort each other in the days and years ahead. I for one will never forget the man that I knew, the man I loved and the best friend anyone could wish to have. I will miss him hugely, the loyal friend by my side or at the end of the phone, a constant, reliable mate and I will forever be grateful for the precious times spent with him and the memories we created. I just wish that it didn't have to end so soon.

Peter was Best Man at my wedding and the very Best man in my life.

REST IN PEACE DEAR FRIEND.