



Morgan Rees-Williams
Lord Ogmore



19 December 1937 – 2 May 2020

4pm Friday 22 May 2020

at

Putney Vale Crematorium
Stag Lane, Wimbledon, London SW15 3DZ

The Address by The Revd Jonathan Aitken

Twenty days ago when I broke the sad but not unexpected news of Morgan's death to Elizabeth, she shed a tear or two. But later she made an unusual sisterly comment:

"Oh I do hope" she said "that when he meets St Peter, Morgan won't start telling him one of his dreadful jokes".

Well Who knows? Humour surely has its place in heaven.

And Morgan could be irreverently humorous in and around churches.

For example, on the day Elizabeth and I were married 17 summers ago I came out of St Matthew's Westminster on cloud nine:

- Uplifted by the magnificent choral music;
- The sacred marriage vows we had made;
- The beauty of my bride;
- and the beauty of holiness all around us.

But Morgan had a rather different approach.

He beckoned me to a corner where he and his brother were standing and said:

"Jonathan, Gwilym and I really want to thank you....." (so far so good!)

And then with a twinkle in his eye Morgan continued as if he were addressing a passing dustman:

"Yes, Gwilym and I would really like to thank you most sincerely: For taking our sister off our hands!"

For all his light hearted and political un-correctness, Morgan had some seriously good qualities and values underpinning his life. He was an exceptionally kind man.

All three of his nephews, Damian, Jared and Jamie tell great stories of Morgan's generous, life enhancing, warm hearted friendship with them during their formative years.

They often stayed for weeks, sometimes for months and in Damian's case for over a year in his Chelsea bachelor flat in Elm Park Gardens. To his nephews and to their contemporaries Morgan seemed almost as if he were a combination of Peter Pan and Puck.

He was amusing, free spirited and mischievous. He effortlessly crossed bridges of age groups and social classes.

He was skillful at using his spontaneous quick witted humour to diffuse conflict.

He loved his dogs all named after Welsh rivers — Yanto, Blodwyn, Taffy and Towhy. They seemed to like his sense of humour too!

Morgan was not an ambitious man. But paradoxically he was a competent and diligent one. At least until Friday afternoons when he changed gear into his freewheeling lifestyle.

He was the life and soul of his neighbourhood Chelsea local The Queen's Elm.

He knew all its colourful regulars like:

- Anthony Hopkins;
- JAK the *Evening Standard* cartoonist;
- and Laurie Lee the author of *Cider with Rosie*.

Often inviting them back to his flat after closing time where the party continued for several more hours.

In his Monday to Friday employment life Morgan could seem like a jack of all trades yet again paradoxically he was a master of some.

His jobs included being a:

- Chef at L'Ecu de France;
- Manager of a wine bar;
- Theatrical agent;
- And for many years a successful sales executive for Banham alarms.

He was a great favourite of 'Ma Banham' as he called the matriarch who co-founded and ran the company.

Perhaps Morgan might have achieved more in his life had it not been for his anarchic tendency to leave and even knock over the card table when he was holding the Aces.

For example, he was so highly regarded as a young Second Lieutenant that towards the end of his National Service his Commanding Officer came to his father, the first Lord Ogmore, and begged him to try and persuade his younger son to apply for a full regular commission.

The CO insisted that Morgan had the qualities of leadership to become Colonel of the Welsh Regiment and perhaps even to go right to the top of the Army.

But Morgan was not interested in a military career.

At Banham, his longest employer, he could have gone higher and lasted longer but his technological skills did not extend beyond the notebook and the pencil era.

As he defiantly refused to learn 21st century IT skills he had to move on.

However, in once sense he did far better than anyone else at Banham: Because he married the prettiest girl in the accounts department Bea, his wife of 30 years and the mother of Tudor and Dylan.

Finally, one underestimated quality in Morgan was his courage.

In his early years his courage shone during his National Service in Cyprus. He was helping to keep the peace on that troubled island when EOKA terrorists were shooting at British soldiers.

Later in his life as an agent to the stars he won the showbiz equivalent of the Victoria Cross by managing the notoriously unmanageable, explosive couple Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor when they were filming in long periods in London.

And finally he upheld with moral courage the values of family loyalty.

Look around you today and to our virtual congregation and you will understand

That Morgan laid up his treasure in the hearts of his family.

In their various ways they helped him through his last few years in which he again showed wintry courage as he coped with the deterioration of his health and memory.

The decline of Morgan's health probably started some 12 years ago when he suffered a massive heart attack which knocked his confidence.

I remember that heart attack well. Because the night before it happened Morgan made another of his rare visits to a church.

With his eyes glazing over he patiently listened to a sermon from me which had the rather pompous title:

The Need to go on a Journey of Change

The morning after this church gathering and sermon Morgan was rushed into the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital with his heart attack.

Elizabeth and I with other members of the family went round to his bedside immediately. He was surrounded by all the technological gadgetry of modern cardiovascular medicine such as:

- Beeping heart monitoring equipment;
- Defibrillators;
- Electrocardiogram screens;
- And he could only breathe with some difficulty by using an oxygen mask.

But as soon as he saw me Morgan evidently felt a joke coming on.

“That was a very interesting sermon last night, Jonathan, about going on a journey of change,” he twinkled as he peeled off his oxygen mask:

“But just look where it has got me!”

Morgan is now about to go on his last journey of change.

Our hearts and our love go with him.

Please would you kneel or sit and bow your head as we pray for him now.