A Tribute to Richard Carlyle-Clarke
Delivered by Charles Price

Good afternoon everybody, and on behalf of Jackie and Richard’s family I want to welcome you all here and to thank you for coming to show your love for them and of course for the most extraordinary and wonderful man, whose life we celebrate today.

It is certainly no secret that Richard loved his friends and so loved a party, and it seems to me that we are having one of his biggest parties of all, today. Jackie, and Richard’s children, Caroline, Giles, John and James have asked me to speak about Richard. As Jackie said, “I need somebody to talk about my lovely man!”

It is a daunting task to sum up, as briefly as he would expect, a man like Richard, who was not only so full of vitality and energy, but also such a great character and wonderful human being.

As someone said to me, “Richard shone his light on so many people”. Indeed people were everything to Richard and he touched the lives and hearts of people in all walks of life.

You can see this in the enormous number of kind letters and telephone calls from people who knew and loved Richard. It is significant that people Richard had not seen or spoken to for many years, and who moved away, have written to express their sadness.

Indeed there has been a huge outpouring of shock and sadness; a sense of losing someone really special and irreplaceable. A common theme expressed is that Richard was simply one of the very best of men.

Jackie and the family have told me how touched and appreciative they are of the many letters that everyone has sent. Some funny and whimsical, but mostly just full of love for Richard and also for Jackie, Richard’s children, and grandchildren, in their loss and sadness.
Today, however, it is not sadness I want to share with you all – ‘all you lovely people’, as Richard would have said. I want to talk about Richard himself: to talk about the man and his qualities, and what he gave to so many friends and colleagues, family, and all those he loved.

The first people to enjoy Richard’s great capacity for love and also for great good fun were of course his lovely sisters, Cherry and Tiggy. Growing up in Somerset the three siblings stuck together, and if pushed were really inseparable, as they were to remain. Tiggy has confessed that she and Richard would tease and rag Cherry as the eldest, and has described Richard’s funny and mischievous nature.

As he grew up Richard started out on his road in life. He was not to have just one career – that would never have been enough for a man of his restless energy and drive. His working life started in the Army in wartime, first in the Somerset Home Guard, and he then volunteered for the King’s Royal Rifle Corps, initially as an ordinary rifleman. Very soon Richard’s obvious leadership qualities saw him headed to officer training at Alton Towers. Many years later, his C/O, George Spooner, became one of his clients. For me it is a great example of Richard’s ability to uncover an old friend or acquaintance, often when in need, or when needed. He was helped out by many friends in his life, but as Humphrey Mead said, he never forgot it, and very often was able to repay the kindness.

Thinking of Richard finding a friend when really needed, I remember taking him up to London to discuss business with some of my old advertising friends. We spent quite a while in a rather good riverside pub enjoying a few pints. As we marched off through the residential back streets of Fulham, Richard said

“Charlie, you’ve made me drink so much beer I am going to need a pee very soon!”

“Well then Richard,” said a voice from over a garden fence, “you had better come in here then.”

It was our old friend Joe Newton and his lovely wife Beverley, who planted a big kiss on Richard’s cheek on his way into the house and relief!
So as a very young army officer Richard re-joined the regiment in Italy, and although the war was over, Richard did his bit in securing the peace helping to prevent Tito’s partisans seizing Trieste. For the rest of his life the regiment was a source of continuing pride for Richard; he kept in contact with his friends and regularly lunched at the regimental club in Mayfair.

Once demobbed, Richard went to work in an established firm of timber merchants in the city, starting pretty much right at the bottom. He spent many hours filling in tedious ledgers and confessed to falling asleep from boredom often. Despite this, the firm packed him off down to the docks in Cardiff to learn the job in its most basic aspect. He was very proud of having worked with the tough, no-nonsense Welsh Dockers, and I have every reason to believe he was popular and accepted, thanks to his experience of leading riflemen, and because he joined in and wasn’t stuck up or pompous. All through his life Richard disliked pomposity and self-importance, and took pains to get on with everybody.

In London, Richard married June, and they set up a happy home. Soon Richard became a very proud father with the arrival of Caroline, and later, after moving down to Dorset, Giles. It was however a very busy and hectic life, with a great deal of partying and mixing with friends, something of a continuing theme in Richard’s life!

In Dorset, Richard decided once again to apply his energy and capacity for hard physical work, to start a bulldozing and farm contracting business. He cleared land for farmers and estate owners, and there are many funny stories from this period, several of which involved the use of dynamite when sheer brute mechanical force could not prevail.

My favourite was told by Richard’s great friend Humphrey Mead, who asked Richard to help clear a stump a bulldozer couldn’t shift. “Of course,” said Richard, “I can fix that,” and so he came over and packed the stump full of dynamite. Unfortunately he had forgotten the electric fuse wire.

“Never mind,” he said, “we’ll use this wire and back your Land Rover up close, and make a connection to the battery. Don’t worry, it will go up into the air, and then fall away from us.”
The connection made – a terrible rumbling was followed by a mass of rubble, tree stump, and earth which did indeed shoot up into the air, but as they watched, stupefied, Richard realised that all the debris he had so successfully launched up into the air was coming straight down again – onto the pair of them!

“Quick, under the Land Rover!” he shouted and as they dived underneath, the vehicle was showered with Richard’s handiwork.

Richard’s absolute determination not to be thwarted by any task and to see any job through reminds me that John and James have observed that there was nothing Richard felt he couldn’t fix with a lump hammer and a screwdriver, with a good bit of swearing.

Sometimes, as we all know, Richard could be extremely impetuous, and quite literally his drive could land him in deep water. One day at Tollard, a new ride-on lawn mower was brought out for him to test drive. Richard hopped on and set off at his customary breakneck pace tracing his usual pattern across the lawn. Suddenly, as he careered towards the swimming pool gate, he hit what he thought was the clutch, but turned out to be the accelerator. The engine screamed as it burst through the iron gates and hit the paving at the edge of the pool. Man and machine were both catapulted, cart-wheeling into the air, with Richard unseated, and both landed in the pool!! Richard swam away unscathed, but the mower was not so fortunate. I wonder if that’s why he chose a black lined swimming pool, to cover up the oil?

There are many tales about Richard’s unique approach to driving, largely similar to his approach to life. Richard drove fast, often very fast, and once was stopped in Pimperne by a policeman who had chased him – with difficulty – down the hill as he was on his way to a fancy dress party.

“Didn’t you notice how fast you were going”? said the policeman.

“No, I’m terribly sorry, officer, I didn’t,” said Richard, stepping out of the car in his pith helmet and great white explorer outfit, “I was on the phone.”

“Neither did I,” said the policeman, “as you were going so fast I couldn’t keep up with you long enough to get a reading on your speed!” And so, typically lucky, Richard was allowed to go on his way with a stern warning.
Richard must also hold a record for being the only person – alive – that has successfully performed a U-turn in the middle of the Champs Elysees in Paris – and he was towing a caravan at the time! Richard even managed to scare the living daylights out of the manically determined Parisian drivers. I think he really loved doing that to the ‘frogs’!

Moving on from extreme speed and explosives, Richard took up farming – one of his great passions. He and June invested in and built up a really efficient, well run, and modern farm at Clenston. Everyone could sense the urgency and energy that drove Richard’s farming business – not just at Clenston but at La Lee, and of course in Jamaica.

After leaving Clenston with nothing much to his name – which was his choice and decision – Richard went to Ireland to run a farm for an old city friend. Once again his good-humoured charm and willingness to do hard physical work won over some initially hostile Irish farm workers.

They soon discovered that Richard was no ‘Manor House’ English farm boss, but a down-to-earth, friendly bloke, who put his back into any job he might ask them to do. Moreover he enjoyed the craic and a pint of Guinness too.

Jackie and Richard have kept in touch with friends in Sligo, and many remember him still. Of course, soon after arriving there, Richard came back to England and married Jackie at a very joyful ceremony in Chiswick. Thus began a long and very happy marriage.

Returning to Dorset once again, Richard was, in his own words, pretty broke, and was only saved by a maturing life policy. Perhaps it was this lifeline that persuaded Richard to embark on a new and enormously successful career with Hambro Life and Allied Dunbar – which was to lead eventually to him founding his own independent firm: Clarke and Partners.

Richard quickly became a legend and a huge success, His branch in Salisbury was one of the most flourishing and happy places, affectionately called ‘The Officer’s Mess’.

It is a testament to his hard work and fantastic way with people that he built one of Hambro’s most thriving and respected practices. At the heart of his success was the fact he cared about and liked the people he dealt with – clients, introducers and colleagues.
Typically, Richard did it very much his way, creating a very wide range of connections with professionals – solicitors, accountants and land agents, most of whom he knew personally as friends. When told by his bosses that he had to limit the number of such contacts, Richard drove straight up to Head Office (at high speed no doubt) and argued his case – of course – he won! Richard took pride in bending the rules, never read the instructions, and filled in forms in his own unique way.

As the consummate ‘people person’ Richard instilled in all those he worked with a belief that the clients’ best interest had to come first, and that advisors were there to help. He really believed in the importance of proper planning and saving. Many of his clients tell me how Richard, with his persuasive charm, helped them to create real financial security for themselves and their families.

He was the best example of his own good advice, and it grieved him that the culture of responsible saving was undermined by the Press, the Regulators and by successive governments. He sent letters to all and sundry – to the Prime Minister, Ministers, the FSA and his MP, and only the latter has been kind enough to say that he will miss them.

One of his most passionate tenets, although one not shared by everyone around him, was his view of the EU, which was driven by a truly sincere defence of British national sovereignty and hard won democratic freedoms.

We all knew Richard for his great kindness and generosity. Once he learned how to make money stick to him, he remembered others who were less well off and less fortunate than himself. At the height of his success he set up his own small charity and used it to help many people overlooked by the system or by other charities. He saw it as his Christian duty, but I think it also came from his strong natural instinct to help anyone in trouble or in need. Often he gave personal financial help free of charge to those, not just friends and family, who had fallen on hard times.

He would regularly jump in his car and dash off to see his ‘oldies’, as he affectionately called them, although many were considerably younger than himself. He gave help and advice where he could, or sometimes just his wonderful, smiley presence to cheer them up a bit.
As well as his own charity, Richard increasingly gave his time and boundless enthusiasm to several other charities, including Leonard Cheshire, RUKBA, the MacDougall Trust, and of course Pramacare.

He was no half-hearted Samaritan, rather he was really committed, and in his charity work he showed us all what a really decent and kind hearted man he was.

For Richard, friends were everything, as so many of you have said. He built many things, including 3 houses, farms, businesses, and he even restored a small castle; he has left much by which he will be remembered, but it was, I think, the many friendships he built that he valued above all, and for which he will be best remembered. An extraordinary number of people have said what a great friend he was, how he was always there for them, to share a laugh and a drink. He was great fun, and hugely entertaining. On the other hand he was there too if you were having a tough time or difficulties.

It says a great deal that people who had only met Richard a few times felt that they knew him, and felt close to him. Judging by the letters many people felt his warmth & kindness. He placed great importance on maintaining his friendships, and so many loved him for that, and his constancy. Somebody commented that when you met him in the street you always felt you were the person he wanted to see.

If Richard valued his friends, it was his family for whom he cared deeply and who were so important to him. He loved all four of you, his children; from the start of family life with Caroline & Giles, to the arrival of John and James. He wasn’t, by his own admission, a perfect dad, and he proudly boasted that he never learned how to change a nappy, but he was a genius at burping a baby.

Of course he worried about you children, and you have acknowledged that often he had good reason to, but even though he unwittingly set high standards, he gave his unstinting support whenever it was needed and did his best to help. I know Giles has added more about that personally, but many of us, not just family, could see how much he wanted to be there for his children, whom he loved equally.
As with his children, so he was with his grandchildren, an adoring grandfather who took so much pleasure in having Jessica, Max, Isaac, Jacob, and Imogen around him and to visit. He was great fun building bonfires and giving rides on tractors – a natural, really. However it was when Max came to live at Tollard that he and Jackie came into their own. They gave Max a home, and love, and security as well. Richard worried a bit that he was too old, but everyone saw what a wonderful job they both did for Max. Remember Grandfather, he was a wonderful example.

Obviously the great love of Richard’s life and the most important person to him was Jackie, his lovely girl, his ‘Predjous’, as he called her. Richard loved you so passionately, Jackie, and you were the centre of his world, and he yours. You shared so much together, your love of family, and of travelling to the house in Spain and farther afield – you both loved to see friends and had a seemingly non-stop social whirl of drinks and dinners, and of course all the friends you saw at shooting. Richard adored his shooting, but apparently felt that he got double the value from it because you enjoyed shooting too, always right there with your dogs.

You were rarely apart, and I could see that when you were, Richard was always eager to get back home to be with you. Jackie, you and Richard shared something really precious, and that was your great love and devotion for each other, so I know you will miss him greatly. However, in sharing that love with him, you have been greatly blessed to cherish and be cherished by such a great man for nearly 45 years. You made him so very happy, and I want to thank Richard for making you so happy too.

In conclusion, we all know Richard was a true Christian, not in an ostentatious or preaching sort of way, but just as a straightforward believer in his God and Maker, following as best he could the path his faith provided him. He was honest in confessing his mistakes, and was confident in God’s love and forgiveness.
We will all miss you terribly, Richard, and are stunned by the suddenness of your leaving us. It seems that for once in your life you weren’t late but instead left the party much sooner than any of us expected. Perhaps you always knew when it was the right time to go.

We will remember you always in our thoughts and in our hearts. We send up to you our very happiest memories of one of the brightest and most positive men any of us are likely to ever know.

God bless you Richard, and thank-you for everything you were and everything you did.