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Dear family, dear friends, and all who have come to honour the life of Michael Arthur Bennett—

Thank you for being here today, to remember a man we knew as Michael, as Mick, and to many small hands tugging at his sleeves, as Grandad Mike.

We gather with sorrow, because we have lost him.
And we gather with gratitude, because we had him.

My father was born on 22 September 1950 in Bristol.
He died on 10 January this year, aged seventy-five.
Between those dates was a life lived with care, with purpose, and with a quiet, unwavering loyalty to the people and places he loved.

He was a scholarship boy who studied civil engineering, and he never saw learning as something that ended with a certificate.
For four decades he worked to make roads and bridges across the South West safer and sounder.
You have probably driven over some of his work without knowing it.
He would have liked that:
the satisfaction of a job that holds firm beneath you, but doesn’t need a plaque.

Later, he served as a council transport advisor, the same sober voice brought into public rooms, weighing options, checking assumptions, refusing to be rushed when care was required.
Meticulous, fair-minded, patient, principled—these were not just traits on a list.
They were his habits.
They were the way he held the world steady.

He married my mother, Patricia—Pat—in 1976.

They raised two children, my brother James and me, Olivia.
They made a home that valued conversation over spectacle, usefulness over fuss.
There was a place at the table for ideas, but also for maps, timetables and the occasional half-assembled bit of track.
Dad was a younger brother to Caroline, and he remained proudly so all his life:
never above seeking a sister’s counsel, never unwilling to laugh at how long he took to make up his mind.

If you ask me what kind of father he was, I would say this:
he was my compass and my quiet champion.
Not loud with praise, but steady with belief.
When I wobbled, he did not rush to fix me.
He listened, he asked a question, and somehow the path cleared enough for the next step.

We will each carry a different image of him.
The one I carry most clearly is of rainy Saturdays in the loft, building a model railway together.
He taught me precision—he had a way of holding a ruler that suggested honesty was the first measurement.
And yet, when the track went wonky—which it did, often—he would give me that sideways look and say, “Well, we’ll call that a design feature,” and laugh, the kind of laugh that loosened the knot in your shoulders and let you try again.
That was his version of encouragement:
not grand speeches, just the confidence to keep going, and a readiness to accept that a plan can be both carefully made and gently mended.

He loved maps and railways not as escapes, but as ways of understanding connection.
He saw where lines met, how gradients worked, how a small correction at one point could make a long journey safer.
It’s no surprise that he loved mentoring graduates.
He would hand them a pencil, point to a junction, and say, “Show me what you

think," and only then offer the correction, never as a rebuke, always as an invitation to think a layer deeper.
He did the same as a volunteer community maths tutor.
He believed education was for everyone, not an ornament, but a tool—a lever to prize open a stuck door.

There was also Dartmoor.
He rambled there with an eye for lichen and a pocket for folded OS maps, always folded the same way.
No fuss, just boots that found their pace and a mind that enjoyed the honest work of a hill.
If the weather turned, he would tilt his head toward the wind and say, "Right, then," as if the moor had given him a riddle and he was pleased to solve it.

Music, too—Elgar, especially.
Not just the famous pieces, but the ones that begin almost shyly and then gather courage.
There were Sunday afternoons when the house stilled, the record on, the kettle on, and Dad in that chair by the window, eyes closed, conducting with one finger.
He never pretended to be a musician.
But he understood the dignity of structure, and the lift it gives to feeling.

And there was Somerset cricket.
The season's slow arithmetic suited him.
He liked a tidy scorebook and the modest pleasure of a well-judged single.
He once explained to Thomas that cricket was proof that patience could still be exciting.
Thomas nodded gravely, as if inducted into a secret order.
Dad was pleased for a week.

He was quietly humorous.
Not a performer—no need for a stage—but he could place a line in a conversation like a well-set stone in a wall.

He had that twinkle in his eyes when a plan came together.
You know the one—just a spark, and then the almost imperceptible nod, as if to say, “Good. That will do.”

For all his precision, he was never pedantic for its own sake.
Punctuality mattered to him because respect mattered to him.
Keeping promises mattered because people mattered.
He taught us that public service is not a posture, but a practice.
He said fairness was not an opinion; it was a way you measured your own choices first.

As a husband to Pat, he was steadfast.
Not showy, never theatrical.
He noticed things.
He noticed when the back gate stuck and fixed it before anyone asked.
He noticed when a day had been heavy and put the kettle on without ceremony.
He noticed when a worry had gone unnamed and gave it a shape so it could be shared.
Mum, he loved you with a constancy that made the ordinary feel safe and the hard days survivable.

As a father to James and me, he was a patient tutor in the practicalities of life.
A man who considered a toolbox a form of reassurance.
He had two rules for lending tools:
return them clean,
and tell him if you broke something so he could help you fix not just the item, but the habit that broke it.
We apply those rules in more places than the shed.

As Grandad Mike to Thomas, Eve and Natalie, he was a conspirator in small adventures.
He taught them how to read a map and how to fold it back so the creases lined up.
He taught them that a biscuit is best when shared and that the second best seat

in the house is the lap.

He was never too busy to listen to a nine-year-old’s plan for reinventing the school run.
He took their questions seriously and their jokes even more seriously.

As a brother to Caroline, he kept that bright link alive across decades and miles.
Their phone calls were part catch-up, part exchange of evidence for who had remembered which birthday first this year.
He usually pretended to lose and then produced the card from behind a book as if it had been there all along.

What will we miss?
We will miss his calm advice, offered only after he had really heard the question.
We will miss that little light in his eyes when a plan clicked into place.
And we will miss the feeling that, with Mick in the room, everything was solvable—not magically, not easily, but step by careful step.

There is sadness today.
There should be.
Grief is the invoice love expects.
But there is also a great deal to celebrate.

We celebrate a man who chose to build things that last and to do so without fuss.
We celebrate a life anchored in fairness, in service, in the belief that education opens doors.
We celebrate his patience, which was never passivity, and his humour, which never needed volume.
We celebrate the decades he gave to keeping strangers safe on roads that wind through hills he loved.
And we celebrate the family he shaped—by example more than instruction—into people who try to keep their promises and arrive on time.

To those he mentored, to the students he tutored, to the colleagues who knew

the reliability of his word—thank you for being here.

He would be softly embarrassed by the attention and quietly grateful for your presence.
If he could, he would draw a small diagram of today’s logistics and express relief that everything ran to time.

Many of you have already noticed the touches of green around the room—ties, scarves, a pin, a ribbon.
Green was his favourite colour.
He said it was the colour of commonsense on a traffic light:
proceed, but look.
It suits him today.

As a family, we are grateful for the care he received.
If you are moved to do so, donations in his memory to Macmillan Cancer Support are appreciated.
He would have approved of help that arrives without fanfare and leaves someone stronger than it found them.

How do we honour him from here?
I think he would ask for small, practical acts.
Fold the map properly.
Phone your sister.
Keep the promise you made when it was easy, even when it has become harder.
If a task is worth doing, bring your best pencil and your best patience.
And if the track goes wonky, don’t hide it—laugh, learn, and realign.

Dad, Mick, Grandad Mike—
thank you for the steadiness you gave us.
Thank you for showing us that precision and kindness are not opposites.
Thank you for the example of a life that left things better aligned than it found them.

We will carry you in the routes we choose and in the care we take with each

turning.

We will look for you on a Dartmoor path when the weather changes and someone says, “Right, then.”

We will hear you when Elgar swells and a single finger rises to beat a time only you could hear.

We will find you in the green of a hedgerow, in the slow triumph of a test match, in a child’s map carefully folded.

And when a plan comes together, we will look for that twinkle—in each other’s eyes—and know you taught us how to make it so.

Go well, Dad.

We’ll keep to time.

We’ll keep our promises.

And we’ll get everyone home safely.