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Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends and neighbours,

We are gathered to remember Henry Clarke — Harry to most of us — born on 9 July 1953, who left us on 5 February this year, aged 72.

I speak as his neighbour and walking companion of more than twenty years, and as a steadfast friend who came to rely on his calm presence more than I can easily say.

Harry was raised in York, read History at the University of Leeds, and then spent three decades teaching the subject at a comprehensive in Sheffield. Generations of pupils learned dates and dynasties from him, yes, but more importantly they learned how to weigh evidence, ask better questions, and disagree courteously. When he and Margaret moved to Harrogate in retirement, he did not so much stop teaching as change the classroom. He led free walking tours, shepherding us along footpaths and timelines, and he helped curate the village archive so that memory had a proper home.

He was the most thoughtful of men — meticulous, dry-humoured, unfailingly courteous. He never raised his voice to make a point; he sharpened it with a fact, or softened it with a wry aside. If you asked for advice, he would pause, glance down as if consulting an invisible footnote, and then offer something balanced and exact, never showy, always useful.

My favourite hours with Harry were the early winter dawn walks on the Stray. We would share a flask of tea while he pointed out the rooks waking in the trees, identifying each ragged cloud of wings as if greeting familiar colleagues. He noticed things the rest of us miss: a boundary stone half-swallowed by grass, the ghost of an old field line, a lapwing’s call under the wind. He restored old maps for pleasure, and then walked them, confirming that their lines still

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matched the land. He completed his crosswords in pen — a quiet declaration of intent — and he left every stile and gate properly closed.

He loved his family with the same steady devotion he gave his work and his walks. To Margaret, to Daniel and Eleanor, and to the three grandchildren he doted on, he gave time, attention, and that gently teasing humour that made ordinary moments memorable. He believed in learning, in honesty, in neighbourliness, and in leaving places — and people — a little better than he found them.

What we will miss most is his measured counsel, his gentle jokes, and the steady rhythm he brought to our mornings. Yet he leaves us more than absence. He leaves a way of moving through the world: attentive, decent, curious, and kind.

Harry asked that Elgar be played today. It is a fitting choice — lyrical, dignified, and rooted — and I hope it brings a measure of comfort.

After the service, the family invite you to sign the memory book for the village archive. It is exactly the sort of record Harry valued: not a monument, but a collection of true, particular moments.

Thank you, Harry, for the companionship, the patience, and the maps — on paper and in the heart.

We will carry on your path, one careful step at a time.

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