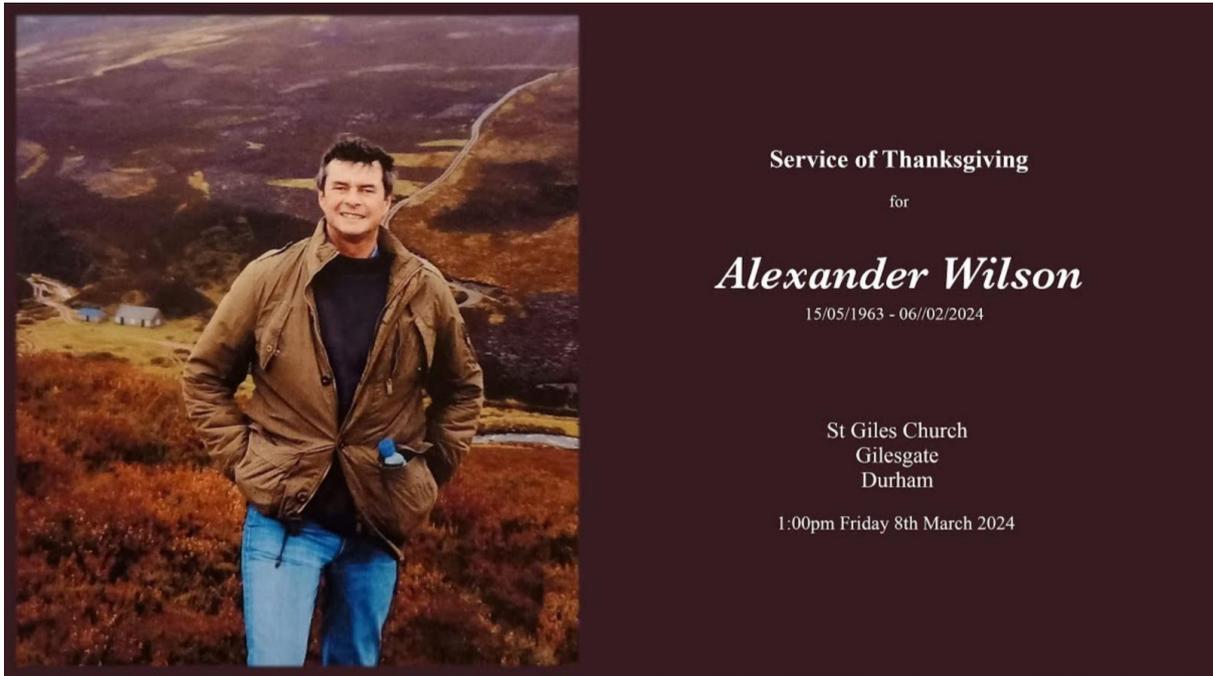


## Alex Wilson 1963-2024



### Eulogy given by Sam Roberts at the Service of Thanksgiving

I first met Alex about twenty-five years ago, at a fives tournament. I liked his sharp sense of humour and modesty.

It was thanks to Alex that I became a teacher and joined him as a colleague at St Paul's.

Alex was by then a popular classics teacher, coaching fives and cricket, the university adviser for law candidates, as well as an extremely hard-working and supportive tutor and soon to be appointed Head of Yr13. With staff he was courteous, helpful and jovial, and with the pupils he was sensitive and compassionate – an excellent judge of character who chose his battles wisely and always aimed to maintain good relations with everyone in the year group – even the most difficult ones - trying to rule by calm persuasion rather than threat.

He was an amusing and accomplished public speaker. I remember an excellent assembly about how to apologise properly and, of course, his annual address to the leavers, comparing them to a Yotam Ottolenghi salad. Whilst pointing out that many of them had not returned ties he had lent them over the year, he managed to compliment them, saying "It is credit to you chaps that the ones I see being worn today are mostly pure silk, at the higher quality end of my collection."

Many tributes have flooded in from Alex's colleagues:

"I was very fond of him ... And I really enjoyed working with him. At work he was low ego, kind, keen to learn and so committed to the school and the pupils."

"He was a brilliant schoolmaster and did so much for the image of Classics with boys and parents alike. No one in the department showed such willingness to help and volunteer to get things done. I really appreciated his 'can do' attitude, and especially all the work he put into school trips abroad."

"I was always glad of his wise counsel ... and his sane view of things. He touched many lives at the school, involved as he was in so much."

“I witnessed his great understanding and care of students and his sharp intelligence. He was infinitely patient and apparently tireless.”

And there have been tributes from former pupils at St Paul’s:

“I ... have many fond memories of him as a teacher, playing Fives or chatting about cricket. I remember him as extremely kind, generous and immensely funny.”

“He always stuck up for me as a tutor and was a true inspiration for all of us. He was one of the most deeply empathetic people I have ever met and had such a wonderful, witty approach to everything - which made me smile.”

“I joined Alex’s tutor set in 2009. It is hard to find the words to describe Alex. He was charismatic, intelligent, passionate, and empathetic. And in a most effortless way.

He was a man who understood how to connect with people. Recognised what was important. Valued fairness above anything. And treated everyone equally and with respect. All served up with a sprinkle of charm on top.”

As a player, coach and board member of the Rugby Fives Association, Fives was a significant part of his life. Alex was a formidable player, ranked in the top ten nationally at his peak, with a devastatingly accurate right hand.

Apart from going on a very occasional run, Alex never engaged in any fitness training, as far as I am aware. His footwear was fairly basic, there were no modern wicking fabrics in his wardrobe, and his fives gloves always looked as though they were about to fall apart. He was just a very talented player – unusually so for someone who had only been introduced to the game at university.

I think the quintessentially old-fashioned, amateur spirit of the game suited him – no big egos, no shouting or fist bumps, and a brief celebration when victorious - only after congratulating one’s opponent. By and large, the friends he made through fives, were, like him, the more understated ones.

Alex loved coaching fives and – just as with cricket – he got enormous satisfaction from helping anyone who had potential and was willing to listen. There is one memorable demonstration of this: Before his time at St Paul’s, while he was working at RGS Guildford, Alex would drive to Christ’s Hospital school to play fives with a teenager called Ben Lovett who was having issues at school – coaching him to victory in the National Schools tournament.

Ben, now in his forties with his own family, wrote to say that “Alex came the closest to being the one man who I felt genuinely cared about me from the bottom of his heart...not in a sappy way, no, he would not allow that, but from a distance, he really cared and saw to it that I kept out of trouble by keeping me busy with Fives.”

Alex had old school values. Only the finest cotton shirts, with cutaway collars (never button down), and he didn’t trust anyone wearing brown shoes.

Face to face rather than email. Test matches rather than the Hundred. Rugby rather than football, and he was a stickler for the correct use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. And, of course, antiques rather than flat pack.

Dave Fox remembers how much Alex enjoyed browsing second hand bookstores – particularly if there was a chance of finding some Victorian reference to the early days of fives, or an obscure work on cricket.

Meeting and marrying Jane brought Alex great happiness – they enjoyed a wholesome life together - cooking and entertaining, walking their two lovely black labs Dilys and Daphne, and holidaying with extended family.

But despite her support, and his many talents and sharp intellect, under the jovial bonhomie, Alex was a worrier.

He was never very good at talking about his feelings, usually trying to deflect the questions, but a few years ago, as he started to contemplate old age and life after retirement, he became more and more anxious – about his health and what would motivate him once he stepped back from school.

He'd never been a good sleeper – often up before the dogs were awake, for a triple espresso – but he entered a vicious cycle of worry and sleeplessness, drinking too much and struggling to cope. Things rapidly started to unravel to the point where it made life very difficult for Jane. He stopped work and came to live here in Durham to look after his mother and try to get his life back together.

A few weeks ago Alex messaged me suggesting we walk a section of Hadrian's Wall together – he wanted to share the fantastic details of Roman life that the wall revealed - once he was a bit fitter and the weather was warmer.

He was a kind, loyal, and supportive friend – always ready to help but never wanting to make demands on others.

Like so many great teachers, I think Alex never realised what an impact he had had on so many lives.

Alex - you will be greatly missed.

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### **Tributes online**

**Dave Hebden:** I met Alex through the game of Fives, and enjoyed many battles on court and much lively socialising off court.

Those close to the game of Fives will know that Alex was a very distinguished player. His achievements include six National Regional Doubles titles, and a win in the Winchester Doubles. Alex played for the 1995 Club KO winning Old Bradfieldians Club and was selected to represent the Rugby Fives Association team to play the University side on seven occasions. Alex was nationally ranked in the top 10 Singles & Doubles during the 1990s and 2000s. In addition, Alex contributed greatly to the game of Fives by serving for many years on the RFA Committee, and also spent many years supporting and coaching Fives at St Paul's School.

But most important of all, Alex was a lovely bloke, always good company and a pleasure to know. Very many fond memories, he will be greatly missed.

**Julie McIntyre:** On behalf of the Rugby Fives Association and the City of Durham Fives Club I'd like to offer my sincere condolences to Alex's family. It's clear from these tributes that Alex has left a big hole in the Fives community and has been a stalwart of the game for many years. What a charming, intelligent and loyal friend he was to those around him, and to the game!

I have not known him long unfortunately. When he "retired" in early 2022 and came back to Durham, the first thing he wanted to do was play with our club. He was always happy to play with anyone of any standard, and gave very generously of his time as a coach. We were delighted to have him around whenever he could make it, so we could get to know him, enjoying his stories and great plans.

His passing was a great shock to us also, especially as he'd been in touch again recently, so full of enthusiasm. I believe the best legacy he could leave would be for us to keep this game alive, together. I'll be at the funeral, and look forward to hearing more about his amazing life.

**Roger Layton:** I met Alex through Fives in 1986 when he was living in Durham while studying law at Newcastle University, and I was at Durham University. Not that many people were playing Fives at Durham at the time

and I was absolutely delighted when Alex came down to the Racecourse and started playing at the University Fives club. We spent hours and hours on the Fives courts playing mainly singles and we became good friends. We played a few doubles tournaments together and a most notable highlight was when Alex played with Mike Tremellen, Phil Last and I in the National Club tournament where we won an epic final against the Manchester YMCA against the odds. Alex had a charming personality, was very easy to get on with, was selfless and he had a great sense of humour. He was always up for having a game of Fives and was full of encouragement. I will cherish many wonderful memories of Alex from that time. I had to stop playing Fives in the late 90's after an operation and had less regular contact with Alex after that. We connected again when my son, Max, played Fives against St Paul's on a school tour. In his last email to me a few years ago he said "we must have a game for old times' sake" but regretfully we didn't manage to play.

**David Fox:** I sit here writing this after running and playing in the North West Rugby Fives Tournament. As William Hazlitt said in 1817 on the death of John Cavanagh "It may be said that there are things of more importance than striking a ball against a wall — there are things indeed which make more noise and do as little good, such as making war and peace, making speeches, and answering them, making verses, and blotting them; making money and throwing it away."

I know me mentioning this on the sad passing of Alex would have brought a bashful smile to his face, but he was touched by the timeless and unfettered simplicity of the game.

I first met Alex in the mid 80's where we met in London. We soon became friend and Rugby and Winchester doubles partners for a number of years travelling up and down the country playing in Fives tournaments.

We shared a period of geeky searching of the second-hand bookshops of Charing Cross Road looking for, and buying, any books that referenced Fives and enthusiastically comparing notes of when said books were published, what state they were in, and whether, and to what extent, more modern sports (e.g. lawn tennis and squash were mentioned). This included having some strange satisfaction where the column inches dedicated to Fives was greater than that of "lesser sports".

To me Alex was an enigmatic mix of intelligence, with a joy in tradition and simplicity, and at times more than a slight confusion of the modern world which did not sit completely comfortably with him. I recall once travelling thought a town on the way to a tournament and Alex enquired "Dave, what do all these people do here". It perplexed him.

After my move to Manchester in the late 1990's Alex was a regular visitor in the school holidays for 2-3 days of Fives, chats, bites to eat and walks in the Howgills and around Edale. Alex was godfather to one of my children and was a close friend for a large part of my life. I regrettably saw much less of Alex in the last few years – the usual excuse of children, work, etc. It was a shame that Alex was also not able to continue to play Fives competitively due to numerous injuries.

The picture posted by Roger Layton of Alex leaning over the back wall of a Fives court. Sweaty black hair, sewn together Fives gloves is how I will best remember him. As William Hazlitt said: "A gentle word, a kind look, a good-natured smile can work wonders and accomplish miracles." Here's to you Alex...

**Richard Baty:** I first met Alex in the 1980s when I was a schoolboy living (literally) in Durham School, where my parents were teachers. Alex was a student at the time and used to come and practise on the School's Fives courts when they weren't otherwise in use, often on his own. I was curious that someone from outside School would choose to come and play on our courts and, tentatively, I went to watch. Alex saw me watching and immediately invited me down onto the court to play with him. He was of course so much better than me and, in real terms, my presence on the court would have hindered rather than helped his own practising; but with Alex, of course, that was not the point.

We practised together on a number of occasions after that and Alex was unfailingly generous with his time and tuition. I learned so much from him; my game improved immeasurably and the experience hugely

increased my passion for a sport which I have since played for many decades. And of course the even more important lesson which Alex, wordlessly, gave me was about attitudes to life; kindness, generosity and freely giving of one's time to others.

I have never forgotten those moments and that generosity of spirit. It left a deep impact upon me at a very impressionable age. At the time, it felt like an absolute honour to have been able to do this, and it still does all these years later. Although our paths have crossed since then on many occasions (mainly on Fives courts), I have not seen Alex for a number of years and I was deeply shocked to hear of his passing. I send my sincerest condolences to his family.

**Ollie Stone-Lee:** All my memories of Alex involve him either playing Fives or laughing - or often both combined. When I moved from the Fives desert of Grimsby to London Alex said we should meet for a game at St Paul's. It became an often twice a week fixture. I still don't quite know how Alex managed to be incredibly competitive and at the same time as intensely relaxed. In anybody less charming and less likeable, this combination would have been unbearably annoying. With Alex it only added to his appeal. Kids and hip replacements on my side ended our Fives meet ups but I am still smiling at his infectious laugh and his utter joy at whatever totally shambolic idiocy I had done that week. So glad I knew him.

**Chris Jones:** I remember Alex from our connections with Durham and my early forays into the open Fives tournaments around the country. He used to visit for the North of England when I was a student and I was always grateful for his engaging conversation with that lovely soft voice he had. Like many other seasoned players, his gloves were more tape and repair stitching than original material, yet he played beautifully regardless of the equipment failures!

He will be missed, my condolences to his family and friends.

**John East:** I first met Alex playing in Fives tournaments (I remember one in Durham where Roger Layton was playing) and we became good friends, playing regularly at St Paul's, followed by a drink and chat, and then we teamed up for the occasional tournament for fun rather than trophy hunting. He was, as has been noted, a strong and stylish player, as well as being a very enthusiastic coach. Subsequently, when I became heavily involved with the Old Paulines, I found him to be an extremely useful and insightful conduit between the Old Boys Club and the School, which perhaps contributed to his move after many years of teaching to the School's Development Office, where he was highly appreciated. He was incredibly devoted to the school, the boys, his tutor pupils, and his sports coaching and seemed to have a wonderful ability to get on with them all. We also had in common a legal background, as a result of which I took part in quite a number of mock interviews for his pupils who wanted to study law at university, which he took very seriously. For my part, I shall remember best his infectious laughter, his keen insight on the issues affecting the school's relationships with the Old Boys, his dedication to and his love of the school and all sports, especially Fives and cricket, and the enjoyment I got from playing Fives and socialising with him in a variety of environments. A lovely man but a sad ending.

**Dick Warner:** I knew Alex best as an excellent Fives player, stylish and with excellent timing of the ball; I also observed him as a lovely, empathetic, inspiring schoolmaster at St Paul's School - the pupils responded to his engaging manner, treating them - so it seemed to me - as equals, as adults, which is a great gift.

It's very sad news that he has died: I will miss him.

**Gareth Quarry:** I first met Alex in the 1980's when he was an undergraduate and I interviewed him for his first job as a lawyer. He was the best candidate I met that milk round and, unsurprisingly, the law firm client fell in love with his intelligence and charm, instantly offering him a role, which he accepted.

Roll forward many years and I waltz into St Paul's, accompanying my oldest son for his pre-interview for Common Entrance, and who should walk in to interview him, but AGW, who greeted us in his inimitably enthusiastic style, reminded me I landed him his first lawyer's job and announced he was now a schoolmaster at SPS and loving it.

The rest is history, with two sons who loved their time at SPS, both avid sportsmen, one of Alex's rugby Fives players and cricketers, and in whom Alex always took a keen interest, even though they were not in his tutor group. As a family, we followed both the boys, with AGW as master i/c, on international sports tours and inter-school matches throughout the UK, and his company was always delightful, witty and his interest and enthusiasm, sincere.

A proud member of the Jesters Club, the club feels his loss deeply. Our family's thoughts and prayers are with Jane, Alex's mum, Rev Dorothy and his extended family.

**John Hayes:** I am very sorry to learn of Alex's untimely passing and my thoughts are with his family and friends. I knew him, through playing Fives, as a gentleman, in the truest sense of the word. He was softly spoken, kind and intelligent. His playing style reflected his personality: stylish, measured, thoughtful and not overly aggressive. Off the court, he had a twinkle in his eye and a dry wit.

He has passed too soon. I hope his family find the smallest modicum of comfort in these very many warm and heartfelt messages.

**Louis Odgers:** I mainly knew Alex through Rugby Fives which he taught me throughout my time at St Paul's. He cared deeply about the boys, had a fantastic sense of humour and a great sense of style. Both his 'Wilson Special', a glorious Fives shot across the diagonal of the court, and the groan of 'Oh Wilsonnnnn!' when he missed a shot were legendary amongst the boys.

Although I had countless enjoyable and memorable chats with Alex during my years at the school, one that sticks out is when, in the Easter Holidays of Year 12, I was late for pre-season cricket training. Having rather desperately run onto the cricket pitch, sweat dripping down my face, Alex (in his capacity as 1XI assistant coach) waved me over for a chat, during which time I desperately prepared my excuses ('Tube wasn't running', 'problems with Hammersmith bridge', etc...). Alex then proceeded to interrogate me in great detail about how the Fives tournament had gone the previous week, ummming and aahing as I told him about my loss in the quarter final. Meanwhile, the rest of the team were made to run warm-up laps, which I was more than happy to avoid!

I'll remember Alex for his brilliant sense of fun, his enthusiasm for Fives and cricket, and for never taking himself too seriously. My thoughts are with his family and friends at this very sad time.

**John Duns:** I first met Alex when we began our secondary education at RGS Newcastle, which we joined from our respective prep schools, aged 13, in 1976. We got on immediately, sharing a love of cricket, history and amusing conversation.

Alex introduced me to Greg ("Tex") Anderson. They were a Durham based duo who were great fun. Alex, myself and Greg used to smoke cigarettes in back lanes all over the Victorian suburb of Jesmond, whilst at school. But not ordinary cigarettes. We used to buy expensive and somewhat exotic brands from a specialist tobacconist, as we endeavoured to demonstrate our maturity.

Alex and I once stole out of school to smoke a cigarette and were chased by a group of prefects in a Morris Minor. It was the winter of '79 and deep snow was everywhere. Alex and I somehow sneaked back into School unrecognised.

However, there was much more to him than youthful escapism. Alex's ability to make deep and meaningful conversation was evidenced when he stayed with me at my family home in Gosforth, and engaged in an intellectual discussion with my father into the early hours, long after I had gone to bed. And he was only 18!

Alex was a tremendous collector of cricket caps, sweaters and sporting memorabilia. I stayed with him in West Sussex in the 1990s, and he gave me a game of Fives at Christ's Hospital school and provided a fantastic

lunch. I left with a new pair of Fives gloves and a couple of old Wisdens, which was typical of his generous nature.

He played cricket with Greg Anderson for South Northumberland CC, playing also with my brother, David.

Alex could be forgetful. The three of them went to play for the Club at a remote rural location called Harbottle, near the Cheviot Hills. Alex forgot his Victorian era cricket kit bag, an item which could easily have been carried by CB Fry. My brother David had to make a 90 mile round trip to retrieve it, but did so happily, as Alex was a vital member of the team.

There are two French words that help to describe Alex. He played sport with 'élan' and dressed in 'dégagé' style.

Alex and I reconnected around 5/ 6 years ago, having not seen each other for 20 years. He stayed with us, bringing his dog, whilst on his return from Scotland, and he took me for a Fives refresher in June 2022, 27 years after our last game. This time at Durham University. We also met up at Newcastle's famous Literary and Philosophical Society, a wonderful private library. He had been a schoolboy member, and I'm sure the place helped foster his love of books.

We talked regularly on the phone, and we were due to meet in the week that he passed away. His loss really shocked me, and it's a dreadful shame.

I have one abiding memory, above all others: Alex was a good and stylish cricketer, who took the game very seriously - I well remember his lengthy appraisal of the condition of a wicket before a match. He was a batsman and a wicket keeper. However, I once played in a school match for RGS v Newcastle University, and I took a catch at deep backward square point off his BOWLING. He didn't usually bowl, so was absolutely delighted, and he ran 50 yards across the field to give me a massive pat on the back, with a beaming smile. That is how I shall remember him.

**Greg Anderson:** It is lovely to read all of these warm memories and appreciations of Alex from those who knew him well in more recent times. Alex and I grew up together in Durham, went to school together at Newcastle Royal Grammar School, played countless cricket and hockey matches together for the school, (Northumberland) county, and various clubs, and had innumerable adventures together of all kinds, some of them very "colourful." We were best friends from 1976, when he moved to RGS from Durham Choristers School, up to the late 1980s, when I left the UK for Japan and later the U.S.

Even back then, Alex had all the qualities that one could ever want in a best friend. He was unswervingly loyal, absolutely reliable, and generous almost to a fault. He was also of course very entertaining company, and never seemed to take anything too seriously, least of all himself. Even back then, he rather stood out from his peers at school, as someone who was rather sublimely indifferent to the whims and "cool" fashions of the moment. His personal "style," a rather relaxed version of a timeless classic Englishness, was already very visible back in the 70s. And it took some courage to maintain that in the face of trendy teenage peer pressures in that famously rugged part of the world.

During the 1981 cricket season, he was probably the first RGS captain since the 1930s who showed up regularly to matches in a stripey blazer, bright-striped cap, and silk shirt, looking every inch a character from one of those late Victorian "Spy" cartoons that he used to collect. With him, this wasn't really affectation. It was who he was, a very different kind of "character" in those times, a true original.

And one must add, he was also a very accomplished player! A pleasingly languid stroke-maker and a consummate stylist behind the stumps--aesthetics mattered a great deal to him, almost more than the results! I played with and against many decent cricketers for school, county, and university, but never saw a more elegant or effortless wicket-keeper than Alex. He made it look so easy.

I remember quite vividly when his first love in life began to shift from cricket to Rugby Fives. He had just returned home for the holidays to Durham from Exeter University and announced that he had taken up this rather exotic sport. Together, we restored an abandoned Fives court at one of the Durham University colleges, and he proceeded to teach me a game he had only just learned himself. I confess I was not as smitten with the game as he was, but he was clearly a "natural" from the start, as he had been at cricket and hockey.

From what I know of Alex's later life, the world of Fives seems to have been a kind of connective tissue that held the story together. That world was certainly very instrumental in his decision to go into teaching after his relatively brief flirtations with accountancy and the law. And I know he greatly valued all the camaraderie and the friendships he made on "the circuit."

Living a continent apart and following different paths, he and I kept in only sporadic contact after the 90s, chatting occasionally on the phone. I only learned the shocking news about his passing a day or so ago, and a small lifetime of memories came gradually flooding back. Our last conversation was just over two weeks ago, and he sounded in good spirits despite all the difficult things he had been dealing with. He was a huge part of my life, and he remained charmingly true to himself to the end.

**Nigel Briers:** The thing that struck me the most about Alex when I first met him at St Paul's School in 2015 was his passion; his passion for the school and his passion for sport and particularly cricket, which he played to a decent level in Northumberland. 'It's the boys that make the school and it's them that make the difference' was what he told me on my first interview visit. This and his eloquent and honest approach struck a chord with me and a close bond and friendship began.

Having shadowed his tutor group in my first year and then shared a large space with both our tutor groups together, I saw first-hand his intuitive nature to understand the needs of the boys and what direction they individually needed; his pastoral care was exemplary. He set high standards but his empathy and compassion were always visible when needed and he proved to be an excellent 'schoolmaster', a term I don't use easily and lightly.

Charming with a touch of sophistication, Alex had a stylish nature illustrated by the number of the expensive Hermes ties he kept in his desk draw! He never thought twice, however, in lending one out to a boy who had forgotten his school one.

Other qualities I remember him for include his high work ethic, his intellectual capacity, his generosity, his unswerving loyalty and his non-negotiable principle for fairness. In the six years that he was my colleague on the 1st XI Cricket Team nothing was too much trouble for him and he would pick up and deal efficiently with those irritable loose ends and never look for appreciation. He loved watching the boys play and he loved winning but never at all costs and fair play was his watchword. Direct and principled when something did not please him he was also clever at diffusing a tricky situation.

I remember him supporting preseason rugby tours, even though he wasn't coaching a team. His guided tours for the boys around Durham and Durham Cathedral are legendary with interesting information and stories which might have made local historians revisit their facts! He was ever present on Saturdays both in school and on the touchline as he believed Saturday to be a normal school work day. He was always on hand to referee a rugby or football match, and at short notice if necessary, and he was also a strong advocate for developing the game of Fives.

His dedication and tireless commitment to St Paul's School is inspiring. A wise councillor for adults as well as boys and a loyal friend to me, he will be sorely missed.

**Gordon Miller:** Very sad news to hear that Alex had died. I worked with him at SPS until I retired in 2013. Having joined the school from a law firm, Alex obviously came with the intention of being the complete

schoolmaster and getting involved well beyond the classroom. As the photos added so far show, he did just that - interesting that all but one of them are taken outside the classroom!

When I was putting together the school expedition to Tibet and China for 2007, we were so oversubscribed that it became 3 overlapping trips. Alex was one of the first to volunteer to lead one of the groups - and this he did with his usual aplomb.

I know that he will be missed by many for a whole variety of reasons, and I feel so sorry that he wasn't given enough time to enjoy a full retirement.

**Peter Gritton:** Alex, you are - were - one of the kindest, most understated colleagues I ever had the pleasure of working with, at St Paul's or indeed anywhere. It was a delight to coach cricket with you - your abundant geniality, relaxed approach and lightness of touch for ever bringing out the best out of the boys. You were so encouraging to me on the Fives court and so tolerant of my ineptitude. I am also a 1963 baby which makes me starkly aware of our mortality. Thank you for your friendship, lovely man, and for your beautiful example.

**Graham Seel:** I was shocked and deeply saddened to learn of Alex' passing. Throughout my nine years at St Paul's he was consistently interested in all that the History Department did, in the classroom and beyond. To my mind he was a right proper schoolmaster – simultaneously an academic, brilliant in his dealings with young people and, as averred by those better equipped to judge than I, an accomplished sportsman. In a world that grows ever more serious, I will forever remember his down-to-earth humour and consistent friendship. Thank you and Goodbye Old Boy.

**Rory Tegner:** Mr Wilson really was a stalwart of the school when I joined in 2014 and he grew to be an integral part of my life there over the following 5 years. Despite never being taught by him in the classroom the values he imparted to me whilst on the sports field are what learning and growing is truly all about. His undying kindness, loyalty and fair-mindedness inspired even the most competitive of Paulines to act with integrity and honour in a sporting battle.

My fondest memories of Mr Wilson are from the tours we shared together. He was a source of local wisdom on a rugby tour to Durham, a father-like figure during a cricket trip to South Africa and a friend to me during my final sporting fixture for the school in Bath. His sensitive and tactful nature was a vital glue during those long afternoons on the 1st XI cricket field and he was the only one able to pacify Mr Briers when I'd given away my wicket playing a rash shot, or when the team had been caught out engaging in late night antics on a tour away.

The lessons he taught and values he shared shall live on through us who knew him well and I feel honoured to have known him.

**Max Breuer:** I was deeply shocked to hear of Alex's passing. Alex was my teacher and mentor at St Paul's. He sparked my love for Ancient History over four years with his combination of great knowledge, his ability to bring the subject to life and make it relevant in this day and age and his very similar sense of humour. I have very happy memories of the Ancient History school trips to both Italy and Greece with him. He helped me get into US College and, even several years later, wrote me a stellar reference to study Classics in the UK. They say you will remember one teacher for the rest of your life - Alex Wilson is that person for me. Max

**Patrick Elder:** I was very sorry to hear of the passing of Alex Wilson, or as I always knew him, Mr Wilson. He taught me Latin when I was in the 5th form and he was the Undermaster when I was in the Upper 8th. He was a wonderful teacher and was extremely popular with the pupils, and not just because he was well known for giving out exeats much more readily than any other teacher. On a personal note, he provided invaluable support to my university applications and also defended me when I got in trouble for (not so) surreptitiously parking my car around the school site! I will never forget his kindness. He will be much missed. With deepest condolences to his family and friends.

**Abdullah Nazir:** Mr Wilson was my mentor throughout my time at St Paul's. From my first day, he was there with a reassuring smile, making a daunting new world feel welcoming. His lessons extended beyond cricket

pitch or classroom, teaching us the importance of respect, dedication, and kindness. Mr. Wilson had a unique way of making every lesson engaging, every practice meaningful, and every moment memorable. He will be dearly missed.

**Anosh Malik:** Mr Wilson always had time for me. He was a staunch supporter of my brother and me without seeking personal gain. Selfless acts are rare, virtuous, and indicative of a man's inner character.

May he rest in peace.

**Shivam Chadha:** It is with profound sadness to learn of the passing of Mr Alex Wilson. Although we (Shivam and Anuj Chadha) did not have the privilege of Alex Wilson teaching us, his presence and influence were unmistakable. His dedication to his profession and his commitment to the students resonated deeply within the school community. Furthermore, my parents (Sanjay and Immi Chadha) also interacted with him due to his kindness and warmth when he assisted with Shivam's US university applications given the short period of time. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Wilson family as they navigate through this difficult time.

**Mary Ann Pashigian:** I also met Alex six years ago when he taught a six-week Latin for Beginners course at St Paul's. That course - which began in January 2018 - began an Ancient Greek course, an Intermediate Latin course, a trip to Hadrian's wall, a second Ancient Greek Masterclass, a trip to Bignor Roman Villa and, during lockdown, Zoom lessons we referred to as *Latin in the Time of Plague*. Of the original cohort of fourteen, a core group of us continued virtual lessons up until the time of Alex's passing. We are now lifelong friends united in part by a shared love of Classics.

Particularly during those early years, far from phoning it in, Alex would volunteer to provide extra revision sessions, which he squeezed in around school functions, alumni dinners, the odd Law Society event, and cricket fixtures. Before the second Greek Masterclass had even started, he emailed us the alphabet and homework exercises. Another time, when one of us asked about some Latin grammar we hadn't yet come upon – the accusative infinitive and the ablative absolute - he shot off sample sentences. Alex invited us to attend Lord McColl's (OP) lecture on the usefulness of Classics in the modern world and then arranged for his presentation to be sent to us. Before our trip to Hadrian's Wall, he offered a pre-trip talk about the site. He emailed us scanned pages of *Latin with Laughter* by Mrs Sydney Frankenburg, published in 1931, which his great uncle had used at nursery. He encouraged us to read the preface at a minimum and see the dictionary at the back, before closing his email with 'If you want to do any of the exercises, I would be delighted to mark them.' That's how I remember him - as someone generous with his time who loved teaching and Classics. He left us a cherished legacy.

**June Yeo:** I first met Alex at the classic classes he ran for adults, 6 years ago. I attended with the question: 'Why Latin?'. Coming from a different culture with no knowledge nor exposure to the European Classical studies, he deftly led the class of varied levels through the complicated points of the Latin language, lightened with the classical play studies. Although always behind and bewildered by the complexity of the classical world, his patience and gentle teasing kept me interested, so much so that I also enrolled twice(!) in the series of introductory classes on the Greek language and plays, followed by continued Latin studies via zoom over the next few years. He exposed me to a rich world of plays, poems, politics and history of the Ancient World, which provided context to some common anecdotes/references in readings, historical monuments or significance of places. He was the teacher who had left his mark on me in pushing the boundaries of my knowledge.

I treasure our excursions to Roman sites, the long walks through beautiful landscapes and the great oak, the picnic spread, the warm camaraderie which he was pivotal in bringing together. Flash images of Alex at the rugby field sideline as he wickedly teased my horrified gasps as the boys shook the ground. Thank you, Alex, for all the lovely memories etched in our minds. Rest in peace.

**Marietta Seddon:** I am part of the group of mothers who Alex has been teaching on Saturday mornings - initially Latin language and then also Greek drama in translation, right up to his taking us through Act One of Aristophanes's 'The Frogs' and an Ovid Latin poem on Zoom on his last Saturday 12 days ago. He became a

friend. Alex was a wonderful teacher, with a mixture of intelligence and humour. We now all have a huge love for classical things. I even do the Times Latin crossword. Our group have become friends - we have been to see 'The Frogs' and 'The Bacchae' last week, both plays that Alex taught us. He was hugely kind and thoughtful, funny and helpful with sharing his knowledge. His recommendation to see Ostia when I took my children to Rome was perfect. I will miss him, but I will be grateful always for the wonderful gift of appreciating classics that he has given me and the great memories.

**Marjorie Bannister:** I knew Alex whilst i was Co-Chair of the Parents Association and he was the School rep on the Association. Alex was always bright, positive, full of good humour and a huge asset to the St Paul's community. Alex found easy compromises whenever there were disagreements amongst the parents. I looked forward to our meetings as Alex made them productive but always fun.

Alex had a way of making his pupils feel 'known' and special. As a parent, I felt like he looked after my son. I am sorry that Alex has passed away so young. It is a shame he did not get to indulge his many interests in his retirement. I will miss Alex but remember him with a smile and a sense of satisfaction that he had a life well lived.

**Brenda Findlay:** I first met Alex just over six years ago when I joined an evening class offered by St Paul's for parents to study Latin. Alex's infectious humour, patience and innate ability to make everyone feel at ease meant that many of us wanted to continue with the classes once the initial period was up. Always so generous with his time, Alex agreed and a core group of us continued with our weekly meetings at St Paul's, before switching to Saturday morning Zoom lessons during lockdown. These Zoom lessons have continued ever since, with our most recent one taking place on the Saturday before Alex passed away. It was a great final lesson, with Alex on 'top form', humorously glossing over the profanities and vulgarity in Aristophanes' 'Frogs' and providing interesting insights, as he always did. In all, we studied 30 Greek and Roman plays with Alex, as well as many challenging Latin translations, where he always showed infinite patience and encouragement.

I will forever be grateful to Alex, as it is through him that I discovered a new genre of literature and gained a lovely group of friends. Not only did we meet 'virtually' for our Saturday lessons with Alex but we regularly visit exhibitions and plays together, travelling as far afield as Oxford and Bath to indulge our passion for Greek tragedies.

Nothing was ever too much trouble for Alex. He was an empathetic, considerate, generous, interesting and extremely kind man, whom I am very proud to call a friend. You will be very much missed, Alex.

**Pawan Malik:** In our lives, there are those rare individuals whose impact is so profound that their absence leaves a tangible void. Yet, their influence continues to resonate within us. Alex was one of those extraordinary souls, seamlessly weaving himself into the fabric of my family's life with a blend of wisdom, empathy, and unwavering support.

Initially meeting him as my son's Latin teacher, he quickly became much more—a mentor to the boys, a confidant, and an invaluable friend to me. His passion for cricket was contagious, igniting lively discussions and shared moments that went far beyond the boundaries of a sport or academic discipline. Alex had a rare gift for celebrating my sons' achievements as if they were his own, his support uplifting and comforting in equal measure, especially during difficult times. His readiness to advocate for them, challenging institutional norms if necessary, highlighted a character of remarkable courage and unwavering loyalty. His consistent encouragement of my sons, attentively following their progress and championing their milestones, epitomised his exceptional character.

Our bond deepened significantly during a cricket tour in South Africa, where our conversations ventured into the realms of family, love, and the deeper purpose of life. In these moments of shared vulnerability and philosophical exploration, I came to understand the breadth of Alex's intellect and the depth of his spirit. He was genuinely curious about different cultures, always seeking to understand the world through a lens of

fairness and empathy. Alex was, without a doubt, one of the fairest men I have known, approaching every person and situation with an open heart and mind.

These discussions laid the groundwork for countless meaningful conversations that followed, each one reinforcing the alignment of our values and the mutual respect that underpinned our friendship.

Even as Alex faced health challenges, his resilience and stoic disposition never faltered. He remained a beacon of encouragement and wisdom, particularly to my son, who is at Durham University. He offered solace and guidance that only someone of his character and experience could provide.

In his decades at St. Paul's School, Alex's dedication was nothing short of extraordinary. Arriving at five in the morning and often leaving well into the night, his commitment to nurturing countless boys' academic and pastoral well-being was incredibly inspiring. His efforts extended beyond the classroom, usually captured in the moments he spent sharing cricket scores and celebrating our victories, small and large. His tireless efforts, often beyond the call of duty, underscored a profound dedication to service, impacting many lives with his guidance, wisdom, and unwavering support.

When Alex called me a few weeks ago, requesting that I speak at his funeral, I was taken aback, and we laughed together. This request, made amidst our ongoing conversations about life, cricket, and the broader issues of the day, speaks volumes about the depth of our connection. Now, I wonder if it was a premonition. Yet, in hindsight, it feels like a natural extension of the trust and bond we shared. Our final exchanges, over an Italian meal in Durham, were rich with cricket and social justice discussions. These now hold a cherished place in my heart, a poignant reminder of the incredible person he was. It underscored Alex's unwavering commitment to fairness and equality, illustrating how he lived his life and inspired others to live theirs.

In reflecting on Alex's legacy, the depth of his character, his unwavering integrity, and his capacity for empathy stand out the most. The warmth of his laughter and the sincerity of his advice during our countless conversations enriched our lives immeasurably. He taught boys about the importance of perseverance, the value of understanding, and the power of genuine connection.

As I honour his memory, I am grateful for the wisdom he imparted to so many, the support he generously offered to my family, and the friendship he shared so freely.

Thank you, Alex. You were a beacon of fairness, a wellspring of wisdom, and a cherished friend. Your presence in our lives was a gift of immeasurable value. Your ability to connect, understand, and guide the boys through life's complexities was a rare gift.

You will be dearly missed, but the lessons you taught, the love you shared, and the example you set will forever guide and inspire.



Alex's trusty Fives gloves



Alex wins the National Winchester Fives Doubles Championship in 1992 with Neil Roberts



7 times Alex represents the Rugby Fives Association in the annual fixture against a British Universities side



Alex the tournament organiser