

Felix Byam Shaw

by his mother, Jane

Felix was born at the Portland Hospital in London on Good Friday, 21st April 2000. He was our miracle baby, appearing after years of disappointment and when we had all but given up hope of a sibling for Dan. We named him Felix, *'happy, blessed, lucky, fortunate'*, combining an expression of our joy to have him, an inkling of his character and a link to Southwold, where my family spent holidays and where we were married – St Felix is patron saint of East Anglia. We brought him back to Westbourne Park Road, Bayswater, and to his beloved brother Dan. With Justin, the boys converted our narrow kitchen into a haven for ball games – the made-up game 'flob' was the favourite. Felix would climb into the fridge and the dishwasher with balls whistling past him. He was a bit accident-prone, breaking his leg before he could walk, but the cast didn't slow him down; he just carried on tapping, peg-leg behind his brick trolley.

For my frame, Felix was huge at birth, almost 10lb. Despite becoming a tall, lean teenager, he was positively chubby as a small child. Never one to turn down a sausage or a chunk of chocolate cake, he gladdened the hearts of friends' mothers by asking for seconds and was a

regular winner of 'clean plate stickers' at school. Up on stage mid-nativity play aged 3, he spotted the tea at the back of the hall. Clambering down in his angel's wings, he abandoned the play, pottered to the table and got stuck in.



In 2002, we made a wonderful move to Oxford, which instantly expanded

his world. In and out of friends' gardens, he was Batman, Thunderbirds pilot Virgil, Spiderman and Buzz Lightyear. We would wake to the sound of a ball against the garden wall and often we could still hear him playing with friends at dusk. Our Northmoor Road house became a social, sports and video game hub for Felix and large gatherings.

Felix discovered rugby at Harlequins, then football at Summertown Stars and later the camaraderie of the Oxfordshire cricket team. He had been a Dragon by proxy long before he joined the school, watching Dan intently and collecting him from school accompanied by our terrier, Grizzle. From his first day at Lynams, the Dragon pre-prep, this was a place where he felt at home and it suited him perfectly. He loved the fun and easy, relaxed atmosphere.

Dan meant the world to Felix and was the most devoted and exciting brother. He was hero, tease, joker, wicket-keeper, goal-keeper, tutor, coach and supporter. To Dan, Felix was pet, mascot, figure of fun, treasured sibling. Never a rival, rarely an irritation. More recently, with Felix approaching him in height, Dan started to see a peer emerging, albeit with different skills and priorities. Both of course towered handsomely over me.

Felix had a balanced attitude to school work; more important not to exceed the 'recommended time' on prep, than to strive excessively for top marks. Homework was done promptly and quickly, so he could get out in the garden and kick a ball or onto the sofa for a FIFA session. At Eton his beaks seemed to agree he had 'more in the tank'. Nonetheless, he got a great report at the end of his first year at Eton, with excellent results in French, Latin and Maths.

He was a boy of grand passions. When small, his enthusiasms were for train sets and superheroes, then hedgehogs, badgers and rabbits. In 2006 football



struck home with the World Cup, and Steven Gerrard his introduction to Liverpool FC. Justin and Granny and Grandpa Scott took him to sit in the Kop at Anfield on his seventh birthday and my turn came last December. The hairs stood up on the back of my neck during *'You'll Never Walk Alone'* and I cheered, too, as Suarez scored right in front of us.

I spent many summer and winter afternoons on sidelines and boundaries watching Felix play rugby, cricket and football. I was there for most fixtures with a camera and zoom, capturing (or just missing by a fraction, if chatting) goals, penalty kicks, wickets and his fifties, living and re-living triumph and disaster in the car on the way home.

Felix loved family, which was just as well because he was born into such a large one: 12 first cousins, 19 step-cousins, 4 grandparents, a step-grandmother and a clutch of uncles and aunts by birth and marriage, as well as five godparents, nannies, au pairs and Beng, the housekeeper and companion he loved deeply. Family traditions were sacred to him: helping my parents prepare for Christmas at Piercing Hill, Christmas Eve at Kensington Park Gardens with his Byam Shaw grandfather and a couple of dozen others, and dinner at Xian in Summertown at the end of every school holiday. We spent family summers in Vermont and Southwold with our families, often the best weeks of his year.

After much agonising about boarding for a home-loving boy, Felix went to Eton in 2013. It proved a good choice; he thrived, made friends and was happy right from the start, even though his texts would say he couldn't wait to come home. He scored goals and runs and had enormous pride in wearing A-team shirts for football and cricket. He was thrilled to be selected for the Dubai cricket tour next Easter.



Our final family weeks with Felix home at last from school were perfect and we all relished those busy days when Dan was also around. We had a big Oxford garden party; a major Byam Shaw gathering in London; a 20:20 cricket tournament at Magdalen College School; Granny, Grandpa and Granny Jo all came to stay; and there were trips to Dorset, Leamington Spa and the dentist. Increasingly independent, Felix had time to catch up with North Oxford friends from other schools and we sprawled on the sofa watching comedy shows.



By 14, Felix had embarked on the transition to a more private teenage life, where parties featured and girls, too. He was so discreet that little information trickled back to us but we knew he was enjoying himself. My maternal duties began to include sorting out smart black tie and late-night party pick-ups.

The years Justin and I spent longing for Dan and then for Felix brought us the gift of knowing how lucky and blessed we are to be their father and mother. Felix knew how happy and proud we were to have him in our lives. I loved every day, every hour and every minute of being Felix's mother.