**Ben Houghton Tribute**

What a guy. Our Ben really was everything you would want in a mate. It’s no coincidence so many friends have flown in to Jersey to say farewell, as he had such an impact on so many of us. Whether it be school friends, University, housemates or work friends. Ben seemed to get along with everyone – gentle giant seems pretty apt.

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I was lucky enough to meet Ben on one of my first days in Engineering at Exeter University. Myself Ben, and Sam seemed to strike up an immediate trio of Engineering Pals. Across four years of Engineering, we spent nearly every lecture together – (partly because we were mates, but also partly because our surnames were next each other in the alphabet). Somehow, we always picked the same modules. When we weren’t in lectures, we’d spend our study time playing endless rounds of cards in the small café at the front of the Harrison building. Of course, that was until the work actually started counting – towards our degree. In our 3rd and 4th year, rooms 207 and 208 – computer rooms – became the natural habitat for the elusive engineer. The scene of all-nighters, fuelled by vending machine coffee and Haribo, endless procrastination games, and wheelie chair races – this is where we had some of our best days on that degree. When speaking to Ben’s Mum Fran, she told me “Ben never really seemed to struggle that much – you know – he never seemed to be up against it during his degree” to which Ben responded – “well there were three of us doing it – so I really only did a third of one”.

And looking back Ben – I think claiming you did a third of it was pretty generous!

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But in seriousness, he had an uncanny knack of “doing enough” to do well. I think this was summed up nicely when we handed in our dissertation. With all of our work – we had this mentality that “it’ll be alright… in the end” We may have 5000 words to write and a few hours to do it but… you know “it’ll be fine”.

Well on dissertation deadline day – Sam and I, by some miracle had completed and handed ours in before the deadline. And for the first time – we witnessed Ben starting to panic. Unlike the rest of us, who felt obliged to write to the word limit, or for us “basic engineers” – the page limit (40 pages of pictures and some waffle) – Ben didn’t succumb. As he reached page 24 with hours left, as great friends we sent him encouragement in the form of photos of us handing ours in, waving flags with big smiles on our faces. As he raced to hand his in, got it bound with its nice yellow cover page, we welcomed him at the finish line with a little Joke. “hey Ben, what do you call something that’s yellow and thin??” – “your dissertation” – Despite mercilessly mocking his efforts, we knew that it would be a fine piece of work. Now, Ben told me recently that his is the only poster of ours still hanging up in the engineering building. So I guess he had the last laugh after all!!

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Of course, Uni wasn’t all about the studying, in fact it was barely about studying at all. I was lucky enough to live with Ben for 3 years – and many others in this church also lived with Ben. There were so many memories from each house – too many to count, from the legendary house parties to the group movie nights, to going bowling dressed up in animal onesies.

But one that sticks out is a memory from final year. There were 8 of us living in a house called Shaftesbury Manor.

This is where Ben’s nickname was born.

For some reason, as you do when having some drinks, we were talking nonsense. Someone shouted out Houghton, and turned it into Hooton! Then we started rhyming words with Hooton. Like Fouton! Then Crouton! For some reason – Crouton immediately stuck – resulting in lots of chanting in Ben’s direction – the word crouton – also known as a small chunk of fried bread. I think because it didn’t mean anything at all, and Ben’s overall reluctance to be referred to as such a ridiculous object, meant that we all persisted – much to his annoyance. For days after he rolled his eyes and muttered under his breath when he heard it. But it stuck – and Ben being the guy with a thirst for fun – ended up embracing this new nickname. To the point you would hear someone bellow “Crouton” from one end of the computer room as he walks in. He’d hold both arms aloft and walk in like a returning hero while the most ridiculous name rings out around him. Testament to Ben – Crouton was iconic.

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When Ben wasn’t nerding out on Engineering, you may have found him playing squash, or maybe down the pub playing a board game with a beer – but there was always a pretty good chance you’d find him listening to - or playing music – and this was always clear, that this was his main passion! As most of you will know – Ben was quite the performer – and part of one of Exeter’s biggest bands. He actually started his musical journey as a fantastic Sax player, making an impact across Jersey in the Big Band and many others. But during his University years he became the bassist in a band that started life as Dionysus and later changed its name to Isaac Indiana. These guys – the rest of which are here today – were a huge hit. Isaac Indiana played at national festivals, weddings and even the University graduation ball. And Ben was probably the unsung hero. He wasn’t the exhibitionist like certain other band members – but no set was complete without a 6 foot 5 blue-eyed blonde haired bassist swaying and bopping at the side of the stage. He was even recognised as the best-looking member of the band. Even by the girlfriend and now wife of one of the others!

A rather funny moment from the history of Isaac Indiana was when Ben purchased a new van – from the Band pot! At the time there was much excitement in the group chat –

despite Ben Homer initially saying “don’t get it don’t get it don’t get it”.

Only to receive a response saying … “ Guess what we’ve gooot!”

Ben even kept it as a run-around for a while – despite it being like driving a boat on land with the amount of play in the steering. And upon selling the Van later on, when the prospective buyer turned up and tried to drive it – it wasn’t going anywhere. Head in hand moment as the handbrake was stuck.

Presumably after 30m of tinkering together, Ben and the interested party actually fixed it.

So they tried again – turned out the clutch had seized! He didn’t sell it that day – but it sure served up a few adventures!

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I don’t want to drag this out – there are a thousand stories to tell, but I’d like to list out a few of Bens best traits.

Kind – the gentle Jersey giant had a way with everyone he knew

Funny – whether it was quick wit, terrible puns or just messing about like a child – he’d always make us laugh.

Intelligent – Quietly doing a fantastic job at literally everything, and knowing almost everything about most things. An asset in a pub quiz

Easy going – I don’t think we ever argued, I don’t think he ever argued. Too much like hard work!

Tall – he seemed to collect tall friends, which made me feel very special for making the cut.

Open minded and well-travelled – Since I’ve known him he’s travelled to the mainland. To Romania, Croatia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Belgium, New Zealand, Canada, Denmark, he even came up to the midlands a few times.

And finally, Ben was an infinite fountain of Harry Potter knowledge.

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Benny boy, we love you and we’ll miss you. Every time I have a bowl of soup, with little croutons in it, or watch a Harry Potter film, I’ll be thinking of you.

Every time any of us see a band and a handsome swaying bassist casually owning the stage – we’ll be thinking of you. Rest up old boy.