

**Evensong in Memoriam of Sir Robert Finch held at
St. Paul's Cathedral on 21 September 2016**

Tribute given by His Honour Peter Beaumont CBE QC

We give thanks for the life of Robert Gerard Finch. Knight Bachelor, Deputy Lieutenant of the City of London, Solicitor of the Supreme Court, Honorary Bencher of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, Honorary Colonel of the Inns of Court and City Yeomanry, Past Master Innholder and of the Solicitors of the City of London. Sometime Chairman of the Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospitals NHS Trust, Chairman of the St. Paul's Cathedral Foundation, Church Commissioner, Alderman for the Ward of Coleman Street and the 676th Lord Mayor of the City of London. In short the public face of a man who in every aspect of a life remarkable for its achievements lived up to the motto he chose for his Coat of Arms "Strength in Purpose".

The private face is of a good friend, a delightful companion with an endearing and ever present sense of humour, a kind and thoughtful colleague, a determined and resourceful supporter of the causes he espoused but above all the devoted husband of Patricia, proud father of Alexandra and Isabel, grandfather of Jemima, Clemmie, Phoebe and Beatrice. A happy family man whose energy, drive and enthusiasm that characterised his work and charitable interests split over into his skiing, sailing, gardening and support for music.

Robert was born in Ootacamund the legendary hill station in Southern India in August 1944, the second son of a regular soldier then serving in the Bombay Sappers and Miners. His childhood was typical of peripatetic Army life culminating in schooling at Felsted from his 9th to his 18th Year. His entry in Alumni Felstediensis some years after he left gives merely his years of attendance, the fact that he became a house prefect and, somewhat starkly, Rugby neither foreshadowing or indeed recording what he was to achieve so shortly thereafter.

Robert didn't go to University, instead he followed a more traditional route into the Law. He described himself as a '5 year man'. He was articled to his uncle at Monro Pennefather in Cannon Street, attendance at the College of Law and then on qualifying as a Solicitor joined Linklaters, remarkably becoming a Partner 5 years later. As head of the Firm's property department and many would say the pre-eminent property lawyer of his generation I can do no better than to repeat what was written about this aspect of his life in Robert's Obituary in The Times "for almost three decades he was the key figure in the firm's property department. His astute grasp of the property market, his skill in hard bargaining and his doggedness in getting the deal his clients wanted made him the lawyer of choice... every investor wanted him on their side, few relished finding him leading the opposition. His greatest skill was to pull off a deal with good manners and a smile. Charmingly persuasive and persistent he was an iron fist in a velvet glove. His courteous demeanour was as disarming as it was effective".

Having earned a reputation as glittering as that, it was perhaps inevitable that he was invited to participate in the government of the City of London. Having been elected Alderman for the Ward of Coleman Street, he served on numerous committees of the Corporation with a notably long stint on the Planning Committee. In 1999, he won a contested election to become the Aldermanic Sheriff. I am not sure that he enjoyed the cut and thrust of the Hustings but once at the Old Bailey, Robert and Patricia, with Pauline and Peter Halliday, were the most generous of hosts in what was long remembered as a very happy Shrieval year.

Robert became Lord Mayor in November 2003. During his year, which coincided with a substantial expansion of the European Union, he visited 33 countries to promote the City's range of financial skills and services. A very effective Ambassador not just for the City of London but for the United Kingdom he proved to be, in what was widely regarded as a notably successful Mayoralty. At home he welcomed to the Guildhall the Presidents of Finland, Poland and Latvia, and he and Patricia made the Mansion House into what was described as a "place full of fun and laughter" as they threw themselves – aided and abetted it must be said by their daughters, into making every day of their year in office worthwhile. His Lord Mayor's Appeal 'Music and the Arts for Everyone' coinciding as it did with the centenary of the founding of the London Symphony Orchestra raised a substantial sum toward the endowment of the LSO's musical education centre in what was once St. Luke's Church.

After he left office and in retirement first from Linklaters and then from Liberty International, Robert's skill, determination and drive remained in demand. As a senior Alderman past the Chair his wisdom and experience carried weight within the Court. He became Chairman of the St. Paul's Cathedral Foundation and a Trustee of its endowment fund. He was a Governor of the College of Law at an important time in its expansion. However, what I believe brought him the greatest satisfaction was his Chairmanship of the Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospitals NHS Trust which he steered with great skill through difficult times. Indeed, it has been said that he helped to save the Children's Heart surgical unit from closure and entirely appropriate that a fund has been established in memory of this formidable fundraiser at the Royal Brompton.

It was a terrible shock to lose Robert so suddenly with so much still to offer and so much for him to look forward to enjoying. Great sadness for all of us who were glad to be his friends. How much greater sadness for his family - whom you treasure, we remember. Remember this evening within the context of a service which Robert would have adored, in the Cathedral which he loved and served so well, proud of all he achieved in so many different spheres, but proud above all that so much of that achievement enriched the lives of those it touched.