|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

**Durham Cathedral**

**Sara Pilkington memorial window:**

**A new commission for the North Quire Aisle,**

**The Donors’ Brief**

Sara Pilkington, daughter of Jonathan and Jools Pilkington, died unexpectedly in February 2012, during her final year studying Combined Arts (BA Hons) at Durham University where she was a member of Collingwood College.

**An introduction to Sara by her parents**

Sara was our only child and we had her late in life and she truly was the light of our lives. She brought us so much joy and we always knew how very lucky we were to have her. The last time we saw her alive was on her 21st birthday in Durham on February 8th 2012. Sara was so full of life and so looking forward to the future that lay ahead and all that life had to offer.

Although an only child she was never spoilt but was so greatly loved and she returned that love to us in abundance. We were so very close and we had so much fun together. Sara had a simple and very secure life - a stable home life, two schools and one home. However, her life had been full of wonderful experiences and she lived life to the full which was just as well under the circumstances.

Sara was so beautiful on the inside as well as the outside and her smile lit up the world of those around her. It is just impossible to put into words how much we miss our beautiful girl.

**A tribute from a school friend**

It would be selfish to claim Sara as my best friend, when she made everyone she cared about feel completely unique. Friendship with her was effortless; she was like a sister in her unwavering affection, and you could always count on having so much fun when she was around you.

Sara was the most amazing girl, a true friend and so very loving. I think she had this magical quality that made everyone fall a tiny bit in love with her. I know we all did.

Aged sixteen, surrounded by her friends, she couldn’t contain herself: ‘I love my life!’ And at the time, I distinctly remember thinking, *I don’t think anyone else could say that, and truly mean it, anywhere near as much*. It was true. She was infatuated with life, an infatuation which was endless, inexhaustible and infectious.

Her ability to be constantly full of excitement was undeniably impressive. Founding member of ‘girly rave time’, Sara lived for her friends, and was a catalyst in all that went on around her. Her vocabulary was an endless source of amusement. It was as if she became fixated with a certain word and couldn’t get enough of it. One year it was ‘phenomenal’; she’d take great delight in overly pronouncing every syllable. It’s funny that she used this word so much, when it’s the exact effect she had on everyone she met.

Her time at Stockport Grammar School meant so much to her, to us all. She forged such close friendships with her peers and such strong bonds with her teachers. Sara was fearless in the way she threw herself so completely into everything she cared about, and by that I mean her studies, her endless participation in extra-curricular activities, and, most importantly, her relationships with the people around her.

One of our favourite memories from SGS was the production of *Les Misérables* in our final year. As we sang for the last time on the final night, there was almost a current of electricity between the cast. We knew how special that moment was, and Sara carried that memory with her always, no matter where she went, listening to *One Day More* on her iPod as she travelled across Europe last summer.

We were all so incredibly lucky to play a part in her lifetime, to know her. Sara was just beautiful, in every sense of the word. I know that we were so blessed to have known her, and loved her, and been able to grow up with her. I only hope that she knew just how much she meant to everybody, because it seems to me that every single one of her friends felt truly special, and thought of her with such adoration. That was her effect on people: when she came into a room, it brightened. She was always so pleased to see you and to hear your news, so infectiously happy.

Every message or card I received from Sara was signed ‘Your Saffi’. I suppose that’s the best indicator of how much of herself she gave to all her friends, how much she invested in them, how much she cared. On behalf of all her friends over the years, I feel incredibly proud to have known Sara, and shared so many happy and silly and wonderful memories with her. I know she'll always be a part of our lives, she couldn't not be.

Really, to try and put Sara into words seems like an injustice. She was effervescent in every way. One thing stands out though – I can’t picture her without that beautiful smile. And for me, that’s her legacy.

**The Donors’ hopes for the window**

Our wish has always been to install within the Cathedral a lasting memorial to our beautiful daughter in a place she loved so much. We wish to create a positive, both physically and spiritually, out of such a tragic negative.

‘The arts interpret the beauty and the tragedy of life’. Durham was such a special place for Sara as it is for thousands of students, residents and visitors who are fortunate enough to either live or spend time in this wonderful city. The Cathedral and University are linked in a unique and special way especially as Matriculation and Congregation [students’ admission and graduation] are performed within the Cathedral. It is, therefore, the first and last experience that students have as undergraduates and one that most will never forget. A window that will both honour and celebrate this very special link between the Cathedral and the University is our aim in memory of Sara and the proposed North Quire Aisle window is in the ideal position to link the Cathedral and the University over Palace Green.

We would like to create something specific within the Cathedral that is beautiful, meaningful, uplifting, spiritual and celebratory; a tall order, we know, that all students could relate to and feel was theirs but was also meaningful to all who visit. This would not only be a fitting memorial and legacy to Sara but also for all students and visitors, past, present and future who pass through the Cathedral and University and it would be something that would celebrate that special and unique link between the too.

Teaching, learning and enlightenment are key elements we have discussed at length with the Dean. As we travel through life we are all students and continue to learn each and every day but we are also all teachers in our own way and through learning and teaching, hopefully, comes enlightenment. It is hugely important to us that this window is for everyone and reaches out spiritually in some special way to all entering the Cathedral.