

Mina only

My first introduction to my brother was just after I was born, and Elias was two. He promptly came and sat on me, and thus our relationship was forged.

One of my earliest memories of us together is of us swinging endlessly on our grandmother Boobie's hammock after one of her gigantic meals, singing 'I'm flying' over and over again. We never tired of it. A little later came a rather less pleasant phase of spiders in my bed and terrifying me with worms he found in the garden, and I learned to tough it out when he pulled my hair.

We spent magical summers at Fuchsia Cottage in Port Isaac. We'd all pile into Dad's VW camper at 4am with Cleo the greyhound and sick buckets and Elias and I would lie in the back identifying imaginary constellations through the back window. We would run back and forth around the winding streets and through Squeezybelly Alley and clamber over the slippery seaweed rocks to climb up the breakwater, or over Roscarrock to Port Quin. It was a time of great happiness for us all, with Dad contentedly painting his wild seascapes on the patio, and Mum making cheese rolls and greengage picnics to eat at Daymer Bay.

Another vivid memory I have was when Elias had a big science fiction birthday party at our house on the Terrace. Dad had covered all the walls in tinfoil. Ever amicable, Elias told all his friends to come, and to bring all their friends. In the end the whole of Maidenhead must have shown up, including the local Hells Angels, and it turned into a party with a capital P – up until the point when our parents came home from the fancy dress party they had been to, Mum dressed as a triffid.

Growing up, we had very different ideas about fun. I would play Truth Dare Double Dare with my friends while he played Dungeons and Dragons with his. I'd often come home from teenage misdemeanours to find him sword in hand in his pikeman's outfit, bathing in the muddy afterglow of an English Civil War battle reenactment.

If Elias had been 'woke' he would have identified as a Royal. His adored godmother was in fact Lady Audrey Lawrence, former Duchess of Leeds, who would take him to the Royal Enclosure at Ascot, and with his passion for Windsor's history, he was well known at the Castle. Always a gourmand and bon viveur, he loved nothing better than to extend largesse to Mum and me, and later his wife Ewa, spoiling us with

extravagant lunches, wonderful presents, and nights at the ballet and opera. Mozart's Magic Flute, the art of Jacques-Louis David and the Pearl Fishers' duet by Bizet – these were his favourite things, and even when he was very ill, he would excitedly send us links to performances at the Royal Opera House.

His heart was romantic, his soul soared with the sublime, but his hands were in the earth. As early as I can remember, Elias was digging things up. The Victorian bottles he unearthed from our garden still adorn every window ledge in Mum's house, the light filtering through the coloured glass. Elias dug wherever his instinct took him, including later in Israel, whose ancient Jewish history held great meaning for him.

He had a kind of sixth sense that led him to some extraordinary finds – he discovered, for example, a Roman villa on Castle Hill, the road where we grew up. He came to visit me once when I lived in Crete, and as we were driving from the airport he looked up at a very ordinary-looking hill and pronounced: 'there's something up there'. There was – hidden behind the brow of the hill was the ancient Minoan palace of Phaistos.

But it was his beloved Mum who, a student of archaeology herself, introduced Elias to his first love, when she took him, aged five, to the British Museum. Feeling very much at home, he apparently made a beeline for the Rosetta Stone, achieving instant fame among the keepers. He was soon taken under the wing of Mum's tutor and great friend the late Peter Ucko, the world's foremost expert on prehistoric cave art. Filled with wonder at the British Museum's famed Tutankhamun exhibition in 1972, Elias fell in love with ancient Egyptian history – so much so that Mum created an enamel-painted Tutankhamun costume for him, which won hands down at the school fancy dress competition.

In his beloved home area of Windsor and Maidenhead, Elias was legendary – he was simply known as the 'local historian'. Starting his historical research aged nine, when he visited Maidenhead town library to look at Victorian editions of the local newspaper, he was a trustee of Slough Museum and a senior member of and contributor to all the local historical societies, treating members to engaging talks with fascinating old maps and photos he would find. He would often post mysterious photos of buildings and monuments on the local Facebook group pages and ask people what they were. Of course, he knew what they were – he just wanted to make sure everyone else did too.

Anyone lucky enough to hear one of his lectures or go on one of his tours at Taplow Court, the local manor house with its 1000-year-old history, would find themselves transported to the past in a charismatic offering of fascinating detail. After successfully helping Slough Council to win a Heritage Lottery grant, Elias also chaired the spectacular restoration of the Grade II-listed Victorian Herschel Park in Slough. It happened to be at the back of the flat where he was living at the time and would have lain waste had Elias not recognised its underlying beauty and importance.

Blessed with a kind of supernatural energy, Elias never rested in his quest to uncover the past and bring his offering to the world. After gaining three degrees – most recently an MPhil at the University of Leicester – in all things historical, he was in high demand for his lectures on his academic work, specialising in the role of Windsor Castle and town during and between the English Civil Wars. He somehow also found time to write two well-received books: Maidenhead Through Time and Vanished Windsor, as well as several articles. Only last week, he was due to meet with his tutor Dr Gabor Thomas to embark on a PhD at Reading University, on the archaeology of river crossings of the Middle Thames Valley – a hugely ambitious undertaking.

Always with several projects on the go, Elias built up an impressive client base ranging from the BBC to government departments, town councils and museums in London, the Home Counties and in France. He was Curator of the Horlicks archive and a number of private family archives, working regularly with his great friend and mentor Geoffrey Try. He contributed to television programmes such as Who do You Think You Are? and Michael Portillo's 'Great British Railway Journeys', and was very proud to be filmed at the Paddock excavations in Cookham with Alice Roberts on the BBC's Digging up Britain, which is due to air in January 2023.

I could go on, but it's impossible to do justice to Elias' extraordinary work and achievements.

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry? ...

On Elias' bedroom wall was his favourite poem by Blake. Anyone can see how very clever and gifted he was. But what many do not realise is

how brightly his Tyger burned; against what fearful symmetry he had to strive, and how much strength of character he had to overcome it. Seen reflected in the Tyger's shadow, his triumphs are not just impressive – they are magnificent. Upon hearing how proud I was of him recently, he replied in his gruff way: 'I'm doing OK aren't I? I don't complain.' And he never did, and even now I can hear him telling me off – he would not want to be remembered for his struggles, but for his many accomplishments.

Driven by the most stubborn character I have ever known, Elias went about his life with boundless enthusiasm. He always knew what he wanted and when he wanted something, absolutely no-one, not even his almost equally stubborn sister, could tell him what to do. When he came out of a long spell in hospital earlier this year, he went straight to work as a supervisor on the Cookham dig, navigating the site on his mobility scooter, and even taking his 6-year-old daughter Amber with him one day. This dogged determination, and dedication to his values, was typical of him. After an earlier bout of illness, upon discharging himself from hospital he came directly to Parliament Square to stand with me at a protest against antisemitism.

Elias believed in G-d. Taking after our maternal grandfather Zeide, he felt his Hassidic Jewish roots deeply, singing the traditional songs with gusto at family gatherings. He took our legacy very seriously and was a commanding leader on Shabbats and at Passover seder meals. As the son of a Holocaust refugee with very few remaining relatives on our father's side, he stood strongly against antisemitism, and amassed a vast amount of research on our family history that might otherwise have vanished.

*Named after
our paternal
grandfather
Elias, who
was murdered
in the Holocaust
and*

And, always aware of our past, Elias continued our family into the future, filling us all with joy. In November 2016, along came something beautiful: the new generation in our family story. Nothing gave Elias more happiness than when he and Ewa's little girl Amber was born. With her huge blue eyes and sunny temperament, they were peas in a pod. Amber quite simply adored her Daddy, and he adored her back. They had the same sense of humour and she was always playing pranks on him and stealing his phone, giggling wildly. His little accomplice, she would sit by his side while he was working. He was so proud when she recently won a prize for reading at school, and I know he will be bursting with pride with every step she takes in life.

Elias was kind. He loved with his whole heart and forgave the flaws of others with an understated empathy. Perhaps it was his sense of humour, expressed with a raising of eyebrows, a shrug and a look, that gave him such strength. He took a rather wry view on life, but at heart he trusted in the goodness of others, and his affability, affectionate nature and innocence endeared him to all around him.

This, and so much more, was my brother Elias. I am heartbroken for Mum, Ewa and little Amber, for his friends, for all who loved him and for myself. He was taken from us too early, and there was so much more he wanted to do with his life. But in the time he had, Elias gave his all, and did himself, his father and all of us so very, very proud.