

## David Church OBE (1943 -2021)



### A life lived well

David was born in London. He grew up in Putney where he attended Huntingfield Road School and Latymer School, maintaining good friendships made at both places throughout his life. During the war, David stayed put and enjoyed playing on the bomb sites despite being told not to! **Whilst being interviewed by one of his grandchildren for a school project he did admit though that the sound of the air-raid siren even now stopped him in his tracks and sent shivers down his spine.** David was the elder of two children and had many family members in the local area – grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

David was an active young man enjoying cricket especially. He was a dedicated Cubmaster for many years and his own children and grandchildren greatly benefitted from this, as he instilled a love of camping and backwards cooking in them – although some enjoy it more than others!

In 1954 David joined the RAF for his National Service. Graham Hill, one of David's oldest friends has recently shared the story that whilst at Bletchley Park David ran regular recorded music sessions for his fellow National Servicemen, highlighting the importance of music in David's life even as a young adult.

On his discharge in 1956 he was remarked on being “a most conscientious and reliable airman who has proved himself a most useful asset to the M.T. Section. He should be very successful at his proposed civilian job with the Civil Service.” As indeed he was. David joined the Civil Service in 1956 and continued in their employment until his retirement in 1995. He started work as an Executive Officer for the Dept of Scientific and Industrial Research, moved on to the Foreign Office, UNESCO and then Overseas Development. Throughout his employment he travelled extensively from Europe to Tonga to Mexico, made many international friends, improved his already excellent French, enjoyed wining and dining whilst conducting Government business and saw many operatic productions and ballets mainly in Paris and Rome. Paris, then Rome became second homes to David. After nearly 40 years of work David retired in the summer of 1995.

He was awarded an OBE for his service as a civil servant and service to the country. He and the family thoroughly enjoyed the trip to Buckingham Palace and the party afterwards. After

retiring David became the chairman of VOICE, a European-wide network of NGO's helping the world's hungry, and so his work continued but this time in Brussels.

Work was a large part of his life but by no means the most important. That was family.

David met Gillian whilst working as civil servants together and they married in September 1964. Although both born in London they wanted to move out of the city so after their marriage they moved to High Wycombe. Nicholas was born in 1966, Penelope in 1970 and Michael in 1974. Shortly after Michael was born the family moved to Naphill and David and Gillian made the house into a warm, loving and welcoming home, open to family, friends and children's friends. David and Gillian worked tirelessly in the garden (a passion they shared) to create a beautiful space for games, flowers and vegetables to thrive. Unfortunately, gooseberries thrived rather too well much to the disgust of the children! They were also very keen walkers and with a love of the outdoors including animals and birds. David could point out a heron at 100 metres and enjoyed adopting animals at the local zoos! When David's beloved Gillian died so unexpectedly in January 2018, David was adamant he wanted to stay in their home – a place filled with love and memories and large enough for children and grandchildren to come and stay. 47 years of a very happy life blessed by lovely neighbours living in the family home in Naphill.

David was a loving, kind, funny, patient, supportive and generous man and never more so than with his children, their husband and wives and grandchildren. For his children their parties were great fun as David would devise scavenger hunts throughout the village using weird and wonderful clues. He would spend time encouraging interests or playing cricket for hours on the beach. As a granddad, David took great interest in his five granddaughters' lives. He loved hearing their news or welcoming them into the house to stay or come for a visit. He was incredibly patient and would make sure the children were entertained from keeping them company out of the sun in Spain watching "Finding Nemo" 8 days in a row to searching out items of interest in his vast collection of bits and pieces at home. He loved to choose and buy them little gifts, including his youngest granddaughters' favourite teddy, the all-important Blue Ted. He embraced technology and was excited to receive emails from his eldest granddaughter Heather as a first-year student or shouting zoom calls on a Saturday morning with the youngest Alice and Eve.

He also took great pleasure sending out email cards and messages – the Sunday morning email with the round-up of the week's Matt cartoons was eagerly anticipated by the children. David and Gillian both loved holidays and they enjoyed nothing more than the annual family summer holiday. Over the years, the family visited Norfolk, the Lakes, Scarborough, Filey, Isle of Wight, Devon, Cornwall and Kent allowing the widespread family time to get together and have fun. This year the holiday is in Norfolk one of David's favourite places – he will be greatly missed. This tradition will continue in David and Gillian's memory.

David had a great passion for life and many interests. His love of music was also a huge part of his life. David was a highly accomplished pianist as well as a skilled accordion player.

Throughout his life David was a keen collector and appreciator of music. His tastes were rich and varied from opera to music hall. He was an avid radio 3 listener and one of the first things he requested for his final stay in hospital was for his radio and headphones. His encyclopaedic knowledge of classical music was incredible and he was often able to produce the required piece immediately. David loved ballet and opera and took his family to many productions over the years to their varied delight. He took great pleasure over his final year in watching the many streamed productions previously unseen and would highlight these to his family so they too could enjoy them. Penelope certainly has a love of ballet and opera instilled in her from David. David's other great passion was history and certainly local history.

After retirement, David became a member of the U3A and a friend of the Aylesbury Museum. For both he became actively involved and made many friends. He led the Local History group for the U3A and thoroughly enjoyed researching and presenting his findings at monthly meetings held at his home or in the last year via email or post. He was also a very keen member of the Bucks Archaeological Society. David's IT skills improved quickly over lockdown and he thoroughly enjoyed zoom talks on art from around the world, the BAS on e.g. the Marlow warlord and a wide and varied programme from the U3A. This love of art and history is certainly felt by all his children as he ensured they visited museums, galleries and other events whilst growing up. Michael's chosen career as an archaeologist was kindled by his parent's enthusiasm and encouragement.

Over the last year David maintained his normal independence and took pride in this. He mastered online shopping and family zoom calls. He had his music, ballets, operas, books (again ordered online as the library was shut), the Daily Telegraph, hot cross buns whatever the season and fresh weekly fish delivered to the door which he cooked to perfection. He had many a freezing conversation through the window with Penelope and her family including Christmas Day. From January Penelope was able to help David at home so precious time was spent together including meals with Penelope's family too.

David will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved him.