

PETER MOLD 1924-2013

We are all tremendously proud of our Dad, who managed to be a loving husband, father, uncle and grandfather whilst simultaneously enriching the lives of generations of Bakewell children and their families. I think it is no exaggeration to say that he virtually single-handedly put Bakewell on the musical map from the late 1950s onwards, and his legacy endures today here, and far and wide. What is more amazing is that music was actually only one of his skills, and there isn't time today to give more than a sketch of these. Likewise, there are a thousand and more names involved in Dad's story; I'd like also to say that the progress and performances of his many pupils gave Dad enormous pleasure, so this musical journey was very much a two-way process.

Dad was born in 1924 in Huddersfield, where his father William was a Methodist Minister. Dad was the younger of two surviving sons. The family moved about quite extensively in Yorkshire and Lancashire from manse to manse, latterly living in Hull next door to the English cricket captain, Norman Yardley, then Sheffield and finally Chesterfield. Dad was secretly quite proud that his mother Mabel had shares in a thriving family tailoring business in Peterborough, made hats for the Queen, ran a car and employed a succession of live-in maids, whom she always called Annie whatever their real names happened to be; so something of a miniature Downton Abbey. Dad was thus able to go to the then fee-paying King Edward's school in Sheffield, which he left a year or two into the War. He became an apprentice draughtsman at an engineering works near Chesterfield, and worked amongst other things on something fairly secret to do with submarines. His brother Jack meanwhile was in the army, and was caught up in the Dunkirk evacuation: Dad said that his mother would lay a place for Jack every meal time, in the hope that he would manage to make it back home; and one day, amazingly, he did! The family also took in German-Jewish kindertransport children, which probably helped foster Dad's lifelong altruistic tendencies. He once gave one of these boys a birthday present, and didn't know the German for this, so used the English word "gift" – Dad says he was most surprised when the boy became very anxious and turned deathly pale, and he only later realised that Gift meant "poison" in German! When Dad was called up late in the war he opted for the navy, and was quickly promoted to Petty Officer. A particular thing he was always quite proud of was that he used to play the organ on HMS Victory in Portsmouth for Sunday services. He was fitting out ships in Newcastle when the war ended, returning thence to Chesterfield.

After the war Dad decided to become a teacher, and went to training college in Sheffield where he met Mum, who was from Manchester. They both started working as teachers, and eventually married in Alcrington, Manchester on the first Thursday in August, 1952 – Bakewell Show day, so clearly a significant portent. Dad also spent some time studying at the Birmingham Conservatoire and the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. Before too long Mum and Dad were living in Buxton and always kept happy memories of their time at The Glen. Dad was teaching at Kents Bank boys' school and conducted the Wesley Church choir, and achieved first prizes with both groups in the Buxton Festival of 1956. Shortly afterwards Dad was asked by the Education committee to come and teach at Bakewell Methodist Junior School, which he did from 1957 when they moved to Haddon Road, where Dad was to live for the next 56 years.

From then on family and professional lives became inextricably mixed; so to keep things plain I'll speak of the latter for a while, then come back to talk about Dad as a family man. In October 1957, only a few months into his Bakewell job, he took the Methodist school choir and recorder group to the Blackpool Festival, and swept the board. This was so astonishing an achievement for the then sleepy market town that, to quote the Matlock Mercury, "Bakewell Silver Band, led by Len "Penny" Birds, was waiting at Bakewell Station to welcome home the winners and played "See the conquering hero

comes” as the train pulled into the station. The choir walked down into Bakewell town centre and stood on the old pig market, off Buxton Road by Rutland Terrace, and sang all the songs again...to the crowd.” What the paper forgets to say was that the band actually played their piece twice, because the first time, to the bemusement of the alighting passengers, they had serenaded the wrong train! No matter – an unstoppable juggernaut was now in motion that took Dad and the choir and instrumentalists far and wide, as Bakewell’s musical ambassadors. The list is too long to give completely, but includes never-ending successes at music festivals at Blackpool, Buxton, Derby, Alderley Edge, Hazel Grove and Matlock Bath, as well as countless concerts locally and far afield. Such achievements were constantly being reported in the county newspapers, and you can see some of these reports in the Wesley Hall afterwards. Particularly special occasions for us gathered here today were the carol services here in the Methodist Church. As well as teaching all the young musicians, Dad was for many years their piano accompanist too, which makes his tremendous work even more remarkable. From very early on Dad and his young musicians recorded for the BBC, initially on radio and then for TV. Highlights included a Christmas Day performance for the Third Programme of Rutland Boughton’s “Bethlehem” from Manchester under Stanford Robinson, Benjamin Britten’s Noyes Fludde in the parish church in 1969, and taking part in a Peter Maxwell Davis opera in London. There was also a TV appearance on Wake Up Sunday with the Irish singer Dana, and a TV programme recorded in Leeds with Geoffrey Wheeler, whom you may remember from series like Top of the Form. It turned out that Geoffrey and Dad attended the same Sheffield school, and it was nice that when the BBC’s Songs of Praise came from Bakewell parish church in 1981 Geoffrey Wheeler introduced the programme. On that occasion the junior school choir sang the song they’d sung with Dana, Caedmon’s Hymn, and we hope you will enjoy hearing and seeing that now; we hope it will bring back some happy memories of 30 years ago:

SONGS OF PRAISE EXCERPT

When Dad retired from full-time teaching in 1983 (which was naturally a major news story in the Derbyshire Times) he moved seamlessly down the road to St Elphin’s girls’ school, Darley Dale, where he spent about another 15 years teaching music to individual girls or small groups, achieving the usual successes in Associated Board exams and engendering much affection and respect. There is a folder full of thank-you letters, cards and appreciative notes from the Headmaster, Peter Pollard, and others; and indeed many of his former pupils kept in touch. Dad was pleased to be visited in June by one such, Shalini Nair, who had come over from Africa for a reunion and made an especial detour to see Dad. I’m sure that the way past pupils kept in touch contributed much pleasure to his years of retirement, particularly when he was caring for Mum.

At the same time as all this was going on Dad spent many hours teaching private pupils at home, which I think he did for about 40 years in all – the numbers must run into many hundreds, and even included at one stage the young African Prince Mulondo of Buganda. For years and years he would quietly boast that none of his pupils failed an exam, a record that was maintained for a remarkable stretch. I think one day somebody did fail to pass by perhaps one mark, but I seem to fancy I was away at boarding school at the time, so fortunately wasn’t around to witness Dad’s reaction! As is well known, many of Dad’s pupils went on to succeed musically at high levels and, indeed, the highest levels – you know who you are, and continued congratulations go to you all.

Dad also had a spell running the chapel choir at Stancliffe Hall boys’ prep school at Darley Dale, which was well received. He was also a committee member of the Buxton Festival for many years, and had a hand in choosing the test pieces for various classes. And every Sunday, the day of rest, many remember that he conducted the choir in this church, and quite frequently played the organ. He

was choirmaster for 25 years from 1964 to 1989, and was presented on his retirement with a unique silver memento in the shape of an open music book, that became a treasured possession. At the time, Derek Price kindly said that it was “one talent recognising another”. We thought this gift beautifully summed up Dad’s musical contribution to this church, and we have placed it upon his coffin today as a sign and token.

At this point you might expect me to mention how Dad played centre-forward for Manchester United every Saturday afternoon, before rushing down to London to conduct the BBC Symphony Orchestra in the evening. Well, not quite! But it is worth underlining that most of the musical activity I’ve mentioned was in actual fact extracurricular, because his “real” job, as it were, was to teach the top class at the junior school and get as many pupils as possible through the 11+ and on to Lady Manners. This of course he managed with great skill, dedication and aplomb, along with all the attendant preparation and marking. My brothers and I know this first-hand, because we were there and in due course in Dad’s class. The school at the time had managed to keep a traditional academic approach – I use both adjectives entirely as compliments – and it was sometimes a challenge to call Dad “Sir” during the day and “Dad” at home; and I think he found the double-life difficult too at times. But as Jeremy reminds me, the school motto was “Only the best is good enough for me”, and if that meant being scrupulous in treating us boys no differently from the other pupils, then that was how it had to be. How Dad undertook all those musical activities and still managed to satisfy the Board of Education’s statisticians time after time still seems little short of a miracle.

At home in the evenings Dad was often closeted in the back room teaching, but he was otherwise around at weekends and in the school holidays. He loved Mum to bits and was a lovely Dad to us children, being especially proud that we all went off to the same choir school. When we were young he did all the things a nice Dad should do, and was perfectly fun on days out and on family holidays, of which there were many. We were quite a formal household in some ways to start with, and I don’t think Dad quite got to grips with the swinging sixties, but he did move with the times as the world started to change. The only alcohol in the house used to be sherry, but wine suddenly started appearing in the early 70s and he got quite a taste for it. He liked traditional food, and had a distrust for anything foreign for many years, although again latterly he did begin to relent. His tea had no milk, but he liked a slice of lemon in it. Yorkshire pudding apparently had to be served with sugar. Onions were absolutely taboo, and he claimed to be able to detect them a mile off. In fact Mum used onions discreetly from time to time but never told Dad, and he never noticed. In earlier days Dad didn’t watch a lot of television, but later grew fond of series like Dad’s Army, Allo Allo, and Keeping up Appearances. He got surprisingly hooked on Coronation Street in middle age, which was quite a turnaround as he used to denounce ITV as “the rubbish channel”! He liked a competitive game of Scrabble, and won sufficiently often to keep his dignity intact. He liked keeping up with the cricket, and watched a lot on television over the years; we also went to one or two test matches together. He was also a boxing fan, which I still find surprising for a sensitive musician. And I’ve never met a more formidable organiser of jumble sales than my Dad.

I said that Dad’s talents weren’t confined to music. In fact he was rather good at drawing, and I think he could have made more of that but for the limit of 24 hours in a day. His written and spoken English were accurate and precise, a model for his children. He was no mean mathematician, either, a talent that my son Alex has inherited to good effect. Dad was also, unlike me, a very practical man and a talented DIY-er, and although he used to complain that the relatively poor pay for teachers meant that he had to do a lot of the mending round the house himself, I think he secretly enjoyed it. He made and installed cupboards and shelves that looked tasteful in their day; he re-pointed the stonework; he constructed the usual go-karts for us boys; and was very good at maintaining every aspect of the

house. The nerve centre was the shed in the back garden, which is even now stocked with a formidable array of tools. He won third prize for his chrysanthums at Bakewell Show one year; he also kept the front and back lawns in tiptop condition; in fact, everything that might be witnessed by someone else he liked to be as perfect as possible. One performance that was anything but perfect was Dad's portrayal of a Scottish singer at an Olde Tyme Music Hall event at the town hall, which was dreadful in every possible way but brought the house down. What he actually had under his kilt was a fetching pair of Grandma's red bloomers.

Dad liked his cars, although he had to wait quite a few years before he had a really modern one. Eventually he became Volvo Man in a big way, which was actually quite trendy for a little while in the 70s. Dad drove confidently around Great Britain in his own special style, and it wasn't until I was about 8 or 9 that he revealed that he'd never actually had to take a driving test, because he'd learnt to drive during the war. That explained the sudden lurches that we sometimes experienced as passengers, and his habit of driving with one hand and eating an ice-cream with the other whilst looking at the scenery out of the side windows. In his early eighties he was visited by a kindly policeman one evening, who mentioned a few things that other motorists had noticed, and suggested that Dad's driving days needed to come to a fairly abrupt end. As many of you will know, this heralded his graduation to his two mobility scooters, one for wet weather, one for dry, which, looking very like pope-mobiles, became quite well-known local attractions.

In his fifties and sixties he and Mum had some lovely holidays in Europe together, with Switzerland becoming a favourite. Then many of you will know that Mum became ill in her early seventies, and that Dad gave up many of his interests to care for her at home pretty well full-time, which he did with a high degree of devotion for a number of years, until she finally went into Gurnon Manor just over the way. Dad was determined to remain at home and be as independent as possible, and that he largely achieved this was due in no small way to the kind offices of his neighbours, for instance Anne, Norman and Lorna, Mick and June, and in a particularly close way his carer Andrea, and Bob and Carol at number 5, of whom Dad grew especially fond and to whom is acknowledged an especially singular debt. In earlier days Dad had particular support from a number of prominent Derbyshire individuals; people I know about include the broadcaster and Director of Education Jack Longland, Jack Dunsford, then Headmaster of Bakewell Methodist Junior School, Richard Cockerton of Burre House, Dad's accompanist Herbert Pilkington, and successive ministers of this church. I'm sure there were many more over a long lifetime - please forgive me for not getting round to everyone by name.

Dad died quietly in hospital after a short illness on November 22nd last, which is incidentally the day dedicated to St Cecilia, patron saint of music. In connection with recent events we'd like to thank the staff at Chesterfield Royal, the staff at Mettam's, David Briggs and the church officials here, Beryl Jeffreys for the lovely flowers around the church, Ian Green and the choir, and Natalie from Brook Bottom Catering for the refreshments in the Wesley Hall after the service, to which you are all of course invited.

We are looking at the possibility of putting on a concert in this church next year sometime in Dad's memory, maybe featuring some of his former pupils: this is only an idea at the moment, but any offers of support would be most welcome should this prove to be something that people would like.

It's difficult to encapsulate Dad's achievements in a few choice words, so I'm not going to try. A flavour of what he meant to us and the community can, however, be gleaned from what has been said and written at various times over the years. Here are just a few examples:

A most musically enjoyable evening...worthwhile from the enjoyment, spiritual refreshment and educational points of view.

The children really are an absolute credit to you and the school

You've given joy to so many others through your music

Thank you for the interest in music which you have encouraged in so many Bakewell children

Dear Mr Mold – we are sorry you are leaving. Although you said we would be glad to leave your class we are not.

To Mr Mold who is the nicest man in the world.

- and so it goes on, and on.

John Dryden once wrote, concerning music:

It charms the soul, delights the ear,
To it all passions bow,
It gives us hope, it conquers fear,
And rules we know not how.

It's wonderful to know that Dad seems to have managed to do all these things through the medium of music. Our family is proud to have known and loved him.

Dad's integrity and search for perfection remind me of some words of John Bunyan in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, with which I'll end:

After this it was noised abroad that Mr Valiant-for-Truth was taken with a summons;... and when he understood it he called for his friends, and told them of it. Then said he, "I am going to my Father's; and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who now will be my rewarder."

When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the river side, into which as he went he said, 'Death, where is thy sting?' And as he went down deeper, he said, 'Grave, where is thy victory?' So, he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

29th November 2013