

Mr. Brian Earnshaw

Friday 23rd January 2009

St. Bartholomew's Colne & Skipton

Brian was that rare breed of man who very easily gained your respect and admiration, genuine, gentle, gracious a lovely manner warm humorous, a humour that was loving and kind rather than cutting or cruel. Brian approached life with such a positive manner, and his interests were many and were embraced by a strong Christian faith that was lived out in a very gentle and caring manner. We cannot remember Brian without thinking of his great love of music, and that wonderful bass singing voice.

Throughout his life there have been many opportunities to enjoy this passion by singing with different choir and societies. I understand that Brian's mother had been a great influence in his love of singing, she herself had been a founder member of Colne Operatic Society, and indeed they performed together in a production of 'In Merry England' when Brian was just 17. In those early years Brian had also been a member of Christ Church Choir. Not only has Brian been a member of Colne Operatic Society but also St. John's Operatic and Dramatic Society and the Free Lance Dramatic Society and the Gilbert and Sullivan Society in Barnoldswick. Brian had a brief spell with the Linden Singers and a number of other singing groups directed by Peter Young. And of course Brian has been an active member of the Nelson Arion and sharing with their success in winning awards at the world famous Eisteddfod festival. To be able to sing in such esteemed company was a great delight but equally special were the friends that he made and the social contact that belonging to choirs and other groups provided. Other groups that Brian has belonged to included the Round Table with all their community involvement. He was also a former member and past chairman of the 41

club which amongst other things facilitated a number of very enjoyable weekends to the Lake District which on one or two occasions provided somewhat hazardous expeditions. Brian has also been a past chairman of Probus. Other community projects included being part of that group which oversaw the refurbishment of the Hippodrome Theatre Colne and Brian had been the first editor of the Floodlights Forum. Brian's involvement with the Colne Dramatic Society included taking his turn as chairman and president. There are a number of other areas in which Brian has contributed to the community; he and Brenda have been stewards at Gawthorpe for over ten years, and they have also played their part as volunteers for Pendleside Hospice. One of Brian's other great interests was local history and I would not be surprised if part of this interest is down to the fact that the Earnshaw family are a well-established Colne family that can be traced back to Peggy Earnshaw in the 1700's. I understand that one of the reasons why after they were married Brenda and Brian decided to worship at Colne Parish Church is because one of his ancestors, Hartley Earnshaw, was a printer and bookseller and who's Aunt Mary Earnshaw owned land adjacent to the church. You know you can't help thinking that Brian, who had such a love of local history, has himself been part of the history of this town and surrounding area. Brian was educated at Colne Grammar School and on leaving school worked for the family business Smith and Wilde wholesale grocers and provisions merchants. One of those other interesting facts is that Brian's father had bought the business from Francis Duckworth who of course wrote the tune Rimington; the music for the hymn 'Jesus shall reign'. Another part of history, which Brian has lived through, during national service he served on HMS Vanguard, Britain's last battleship and leader of the Mediterranean fleet. Returning after National Service Brian Continued to work for the family business, but then with the advance of

supermarkets he moved on to be manager of Lake View Nursery until retirement. Of course this was a great job for Brian for another of his great interests was gardening. Their home in Manor Road had been bought from new and so Brian was able to start from scratch and design his own garden front and back, the back garden of course having great views looking over the reservoir towards Noyna. One of the attractions at Brenda's and Brian's new home at Sycamore Gardens was the small but manageable garden, which has continued to be a great joy for Brian. Brian had many other interests as well including, watercolour painting, sketching, drawing cartoons, writing poetry something he was still doing in the last days of life, and reflected his warm gentle humour. But we must remember that although Brian has had many interests in life and will have come into many contacts with people in Colne and across Pendle, Brian was first and foremost a family man, devoted to Brenda and to his family, he was father to Anthony, Hilary and David, much loved grandfather to Gareth, Mark and Daniel and most recently to Ellie as well. Brian was also brother to Jane and we also remember in our prayers today Ania, the other Brenda in Australia and Robin. And although today brings much sadness we thank God that we can celebrate that Brenda and Brian enjoyed nearly fifty-five years of marriage, and many happy memories together. We all join with Brenda and her family in our sorrow at losing Brian not least the church family here at St. Bartholomew's Brian and Brenda have been members of this church for many years pretty much all their married life, and Brian has served the church in many different ways, serving on many committees and on the church council, and of course it will come as no surprise that he has been an active member of the choir for many years. One of Brian's last contributions to the church was editing the latest edition of the church history of Colne Parish Church, although obviously very ill by this time

he with the help of Norman Lowe and David and Karen Hawthorne have done an excellent job, and it is pleasing that Brian could see this through to publication and indeed to date over four hundred copies have been sold. Somehow I would like to think that when it comes to writing the next edition, whenever that is needed, that somewhere perhaps in the preface, Brian will be mentioned for his bravery and his commitment to this project. Brian is going to be sadly missed by all who knew him. He has faced these last couple of years in the same way that he lived his whole life with courage and dignity. Brian was a true gentleman, with that infectious sense of humour he was simply an easy going fun loving guy. Although these last couple of years have been difficult for Brenda and Brian they have been made that much easier by the dedicated help and support of the medical profession in particular the district nurses, and the Macmillan nurses, and through Hospice Care. The family have also been greatly helped by the love and support of the church family and from friends through the Arion and other groups which they have been involved with. And at this time and in the months to come I know we will continue to support Brenda and her family as they grieve. The loss of a loved one is never easy to deal with, and it hurts so much because of the love you have received and the love you have given and continue to give, but I hope in time the tears will get less and the smiles become more as we continue to remember with the same love, the very happy memories of Brian knowing he had a very full and rewarding life, a very special man who has touched the lives of many. One of the biggest strengths that Brenda and family have will be their Christian faith, and with it a sure knowledge of God's love and grace revealed through Christ. Just a couple of days before Christmas I had the great privilege of sharing with Brian and Brenda in a service of Holy Communion in their home, and in that simple meal of bread and wine, is the symbol of the great Christian hope,

a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. It is a moment when heaven and earth become united as we remember the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and here lies our hope for eternity. God is a god of life not death, and just as Brian embraced life here on earth, so I am sure he will embrace an even greater life in God's heavenly kingdom