

Rev F Barrie Heafford 1934 – 2014



MEMORIES OF BARRIE - Peter Green

(From his Thanksgiving Service on 17th February 2014)

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Barrie's family, Barrie's friends and not least, Barrie himself, are the sources of most of the facts, comments and stories about him that it is now my privilege to share with you. We will look at various strands of Barrie's life in turn and then pull them all together at the end.

Frank Barrie Heafford was 79. He would have been 80 on 18th October and was born in East Bridgeford, Nottinghamshire. This explains his support of Nottingham Forest, until he later switched allegiance during his ministry at Watford to the red and yellow hornets' nest that is Watford FC. We all know that Barrie loved his sport and not just football. He was an accomplished sportsman himself, playing cricket and rugby for the first teams at

school and cricket and soccer for the first teams at college. He was also a boxer. I'd have been more careful what I said to him had I known! He boxed at school and during the first part of his national service with the Enniskillen Fusiliers.

These sporting skills were remarkable as in his early years he had vitamin D deficiency. This involved making frequent visits to the Nottingham Cripples' Guild where he often got plastered. He had callipers fitted and was told he would never be able to run properly. What a lame excuse!

You may have heard rumours that in the past, Barrie was on the fiddle. This proved to be correct. His West Bridgeford Grammar School was the only school in the country at the time to have a full scale, pupils-only symphony orchestra. Barrie was not only a violinist but the leader of that orchestra and he also played in the Nottingham Junior Harmonic Orchestra. Hence his lifelong love of music.

Woodwork was another subject in which Barrie excelled. It is not known whether this was influenced by a carpenter from Nazareth wanting more joiners, or indeed if making his own bread and wine was influenced by Holy Communion. What is known is that if you look around his home there are numerous examples of his excellent craftsmanship in the form of cabinets, tables and even a clock. At school, he insisted on taking woodwork at 'A' level along with his English and German. The school had to completely re-jig (!) their timetable to accommodate him. Indeed, originally, it was Barrie's intention in life to teach woodwork. So where did it all go wrong?

Initially, we can blame his parents Kenneth and Phyllis who were Methodists. His father was part of a family grocers' shop in Bingham where they lived before moving to Radcliffe on Trent. His father continued working in Bingham whilst his mother ran a small general store next to their house. The problem was Radcliffe Methodist Sunday School. His parents were unimpressed so took him instead to the Albert Hall Methodist Mission in Nottingham. In Barrie's words, "this was seminal." There was a strong youth club and a brilliant preacher, Rev Kenneth Waights (known by all as KL). Through KL's ministry and preaching, Barrie felt

the call to preach at 16 and subsequently the call to the ministry. KL's influence continued after Barrie, having been transferred to the Education Corps, was invalided out of national service with a duodenal ulcer. He became KL's general dogsbody before starting a very happy four years at Handsworth Theological College and Birmingham University.

It was during this period and during a Christmas holiday that he met Margaret (née Dawes) at Willersley Castle. Barrie's brother Robin is 15 months Barrie's junior and as such was in pole position for all Barrie's cast offs. Cast off clothes, cast off bikes and cast off girl friends. At the time of the holiday, Robin himself was doing his national service and so arrived at Willersley a day later than the others. On arrival, he was met on the front steps by Barrie who said, "I've just met a girl and she's mine, so hands off!" During that holiday Robin says that Barrie and Margaret were inseparable, as they were during their married life which began just before Barrie's first ministerial appointment in the East Barnsley Circuit.

Together, they had three sons, Adrian, Andrew and Nicholas, aka Nick.

Following Barnsley, the circuits Barrie served in were Colchester for 5 years, Chislehurst for 6 and 7 years each at Watford, Aylesbury, Amersham and Cambridge. In the latter, he was not only minister of Wesley Church but also chaplain to Methodist students at Cambridge University, Homerton College and the Polytechnic University of East Anglia. Claire Potter, who leads our prayers today, was Barrie's assistant minister for a year and said, "Barrie was such a down to earth reliable friend as well as a man who taught me so much about being a minister. He gave me a great deal of advice that I have relied on ever since...all offered with self deprecating humour." Barrie gave what proved to be his last Sunday service at a centenary celebration at the Wesley Church on July 14th last year. Sheila Jackson from Cambridge wrote that Barrie looked frail but preached with his remembered vigour. Despite increasing frailty, Barrie showed determination to fulfil his last service of all on August 10th when he married his granddaughter Claire to James.

In the Colchester circuit Barrie was Peter Mortlock's Local Preachers Tutor and was excellent, being caring, supportive, encouraging and explaining. In fact Peter says he must have been brilliant because he got him through his exams! Peter owes him thanks for the first steps in his own ministry, and for being a lifelong friend to him and his wife Margaret. Margaret herself remembers that in her teens, Barrie came to preach several times at her home church. The quality of the worship he led was recognised by young and old alike and Barrie's return visits were eagerly awaited.

When he was at New Eltham in the Chislehurst circuit, he oversaw the building of a new youth centre. And he said that a secondment for three months to study Community Development at the London Institute of Education influenced the remaining years of his ministry. His innovation and willingness to try new things was typified by, ahead of his time, encouraging children to share communion if they wanted to. Talking of youngsters, he also took a group of them to Oberammergau and whilst minister here, went to Daun on our German youth exchange.

All ministers at this church have brought their own special gifts and graces. With Barrie, his outstanding gift was his preaching. His sermons were well structured, enlightening, broadening, scholarly, based on wide reading, challenging, inspirational, insightful, yet down to earth, practical, helpful and funny and delivered with a command and economy of language that was a joy to hear. (Peter Lemmon joked that if he had heard Barrie preach before he came he wouldn't have come!)

Gordon Bonham said that it was Barrie who helped us to get the planning, church and funding support to remodel the church to how we see it today. Barrie showed his leadership

qualities and resolve in resisting moves by a small group of people to take this church down a less inclusive, happy-clappy road. Many of us here experienced at first hand Barrie's supportive pastoral work, be it sick visiting or practical help and guidance on difficult issues. He was instrumental in setting up the Monday Contact Club for people with dementia and persuading Janet Neville to run it. A Chair of the Aylesbury branch of the World Development Movement, he was also a founder member of the Aylesbury Peace Campaign. Being a good singer and sometime choir member, at his farewell party here, Barrie especially enjoyed a song written for him by Brian Taylor, the chorus of which went: Go tell everyone, That Barrie is going to Amershon. Go tell everyone, He's going on top of the hill.

As well as going to Amershon he went to Guyana as a delegate at the World Methodist Conference. At times Barrie was secretary of both a District and a Connexional committee and also enjoyed two pulpit exchanges In America. Throughout his ministry, he was strongly ecumenical. In addition, Margaret and he were often hosts for Methodist Guild holidays. And it is a little known fact that Barrie was a hair stylist. Ask the boys about his expertise with a pudding basin and scissors!

When Barrie retired, Margaret and he moved into their house in Ash Grove in Aylesbury. Barrie pursued his woodworking, musical and horticultural interests, becoming an allotment man, especially proud of his tomatoes. He also continued to preach as a Supernumerary minister and from Australia, David Purling writes, "Barrie was a great Supernumerary to have around in our time with you. We shared so much in common; theologically, pastorally and so much more. It was a great privilege to have known him and shared a lasting friendship. We trust that he'll get a good send-off."

This last couple of years have of course been especially hard for Barrie. He was poorly with pancreatitis and then a year ago this month Margaret was diagnosed with her terminal brain tumour. He, supported by the boys, did all he could to keep Margaret at home. He was the classic head cook and bottle washer, despite being unwell himself. After Margaret passed away last summer, his health got worse and he was admitted to hospital with kidney failure. He did manage a last family Christmas together before being readmitted to hospital where his kidneys finally gave up the ghost, made worse by a chest infection.

During this last year especially, Barrie expressed his appreciation of the tremendous help and support that he and Margaret received from their three sons and their families. Nick living round the corner, called on him virtually every day and latterly there was a bit of role reversal. We have all said at some time, "Don't tell my dad". Well on one of his frequent visits to Barrie, Peter Farmer asked him, "Have you started driving again Barrie?" to which the reply was, "Yes, but don't tell Nick!"

So pulling all these strands together, we can see that Reverend F. Barrie Heafford was a

Cricketer	Supernumerary	Hairdresser
Rugby player	Tutor	Wine maker
Footballer	Mentor	Horticulturist
Boxer	Preacher	Neighbour
Watford supporter	Ecumenist	Friend
Sports fan	Internationalist	Brother
Musician	Youth organiser	Romantic
Music lover	Leader	Spouse
Chorister	Innovator	Carer

Woodworker
Wide reader
Minister
Colleague
Superintendent

Humorist
Visionary
Encourager
Inspirer
Holiday host

Head cook
Bottle washer
Parent
Dad and
Grandad

He was all these people and more. So let us do three things.

Let us continue to give Barrie that "good send-off".

Let us give thanks for the enriching influence Barrie Heafford had on so many lives.

And let us treasure our own memories of him as we now listen to his choice of music for today.