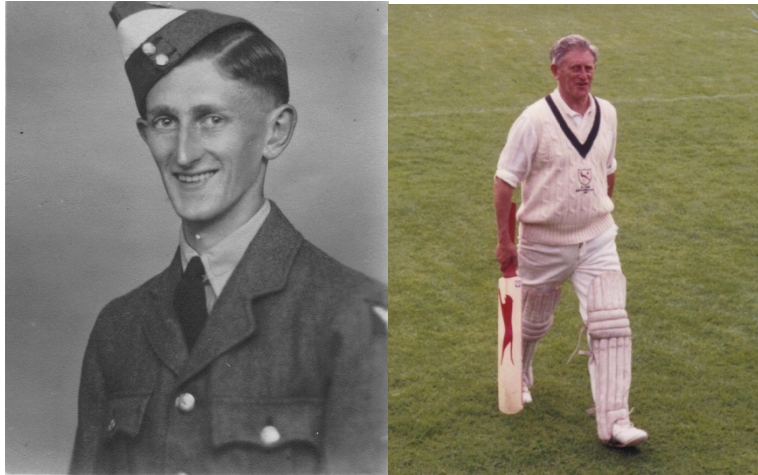


William Edwin (Bill) Reader - 3 December 1924 to 11 August 2013



Bill's father Edwin was a local man whilst his mother Agnes' roots were in Kent. Together they had a smallholding which occupied the site of Leghorn House and previously extended all the way to Skipwith Road. Elder sister Mary died at the age of just 7. Bill attended Escrick School when the village comprised just the main street, Skipwith Road would have run through open fields when he was growing up.

Between 1936 and 1941 he attended Archbishop Holgate's Grammar School, then located on Lord Mayor's Walk, in York and was active in village life from an early stage being a member of the Youth Club and Young Farmers where amateur dramatics were one of their pastimes. There he developed many life long friends including Malcolm Wilson, John Steele, Frank Atkinson and John Skilbeck.

He worked briefly for NFU before volunteering for National Service (1943- xxxx) during the Second World War. He joined the RAF, was learning to fly, and trained as a navigator, but was stood down as demand for aircrew reduced towards the end of the war. His sea survival training included being dropped into Scarborough harbour from which he progressed despite never having been able to swim! He was immensely proud of serving his country and the Veterans Medal that he discovered he was entitled to wear many years later.

Typically, Bill's favourite aeroplane was the workmanlike Hurricane rather than its more glamorous counterpart the Spitfire, although he did admit to being rather impressed by the

new generation of jet fighters that he saw being introduced towards the end of his RAF service.

On his return from the RAF he resumed his job in the Estate Office under Claude Thompson, a fearsome and respected character, where he learnt the business, working initially for Timothy Forbes Adam (Mr Timmy), then from 1960 for Nigel Forbes Adam, taking on the manager's role, and finally for Charles Forbes Adam. He retired in 1989 after a total of 48 years service during which he knew all estate workers, tenants and tenant farmers many of whom became good friends as indeed did "Mr Nigel", his wife Malise and the rest of the Forbes Adam family.

His regard was such that we were regularly in receipt of a brace of pheasants or some other treat from the local game keepers, left by the front door, that Bill was more than capable of dressing for the oven.

His 'retirement' was just a transition to being even busier with unpaid work.

Over the years he was involved in many other aspects of village life including the running of the Escrick and Deighton Club and the market gardens (now part of Escrick Park Gardens). He saw the village develop significantly over his lifetime and took an interest in everything that was going on. He knew everything that was worth knowing and was a most useful reference point to anyone seeking information about the village and particularly the Parish Council. More than once he was referred to as 'Mr Escrick'.

He served on the Parish Council for 57 years (1955 to 2013) and even stood for re-election earlier this year even though he had just returned from serious illness that resulted in 3 weeks in hospital.

The Church was always close to his heart and he served on the Parochial Church Council and as a Church Warden for over 50 years as well as acting as Treasurer. He was a regular feature at fund raising events taking over the Tombola from Roy Skilbeck and used his local knowledge to find the people who could supply the prizes that would attract most interest - usually alcoholic in nature.

Bill was an accomplished sportsman and best known for his cricket, but he also excelled at hockey when he took that up. He also played for the village football team. He enjoyed Badminton

and Snooker and was also a keen marksman and remembered when the 'Club' had its own shooting gallery. As might be expected his talent meant that he also captained RAF teams at cricket and football. He followed Manchester United from the days before the Busby Babes and at least once in recent years attended the Theatre of Dreams to watch his team in action.

As a cricketer Bill was well known and there was barely a cricket ground or event you could attend without someone asking after him. He was an accomplished all rounder, naming his house 'The Covers' after his favourite fielding position. He opened the batting and bowling for the village side, was an excellent fielder and when circumstances dictated he was also proficient with the 'keepers' gloves'. At his funeral we also learned how his cricket ability and lifestyle of moderation was such an asset to York Wanderers.

In later years he was introduced to the Forty Club by John Temple where he again excelled (XL'd), playing with, and sometimes outperforming, some of his heroes such as Reg Simpson, Fred Trueman, Don Brennan and Jonny Wardle. With the Forty Club he played on a number of county grounds and toured overseas to New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, Singapore and Barbados.

He made good friends at the regular triangular tournament between England, Holland and Denmark, particularly so in Holland where he was made an honorary member of the SGS (Still Going Strong) Club when at the time there were just 12 other honorary members, among them Peter May and Clive Lloyd. Letters received since his death show that he is still remembered fondly by his friends at SGS.

He played for the village cricket team man and boy (1938 to 1995) and was its secretary for many years and was made president a couple of years before the club sadly folded about ten years ago. In his late sixties he suffered a fractured eye socket top edging a ball that should have been despatched to complete yet another half century. Despite the double vision this caused he played on into his seventies before father time and the injury took its toll.

In 2000 he was rewarded by being presented with the trophy for Club Secretary of the Year by Selby Town mayor Keith Franks on completing 48 years as club secretary (and 57 years as a player).

He also played cricket for South Bank and for one season with York CC in 1948.

Bill was a founder member and chairman of the Canon Hedley Village Cricket competition some 49 years ago. This evening cup is unique as it is competed for between villages within the deanery. To be eligible a player must live within the parish boundary of the village they represent. This competition has raised many thousands of pounds for charities over the years and next year will see the first presentation of the Bill Reader Memorial Trophy. This competition was won by Escrick four years running, three of them with Bill as captain, who once took a hat trick in the final.

Bill was introduced to freemasonry by a close cricketing pal Phil Dalby and joined Mitre Lodge of York (a school lodge derived from Archbishop Holgate old boys) in 1978. He progressed to Master in 1987 during which year he initiated his son, Neil, to the craft. John also joined some years later. Bill served as secretary, charity steward and finally as preceptor until ill health intervened shortly before his death.

In 1998 he joined the St Saviours Lodge of Installed Masters progressing to Master of that lodge in 2006. He was exalted into Agricola chapter in 1991 and was a founding member of Mitre Chapter in 1993 becoming First Principal in 1999 and was a founding member of the St Saviours Lodge of Installed Principals, becoming First Principal of that chapter in 2009.

Typically, in each of these lodges and chapters he progressed to the highest level. Always a proficient and knowledgeable member of lodge or chapter, his distinguished service and dedication to masonry was recognised by Provincial Honours, ultimately attaining the position of Provincial Junior Grand Warden, one of the highest positions one can attain within the Province. He also received the Provincial Grand Chapter honour of Past Provincial Scribe N.

For good measure, Bill was also a founding member and secretary of the local Probus club and in his retirement also took on book keeping for Mrs Malise Forbes Adam as well as helping Pat with flower arranging duties. Despite his advancing years Bill took to spreadsheets, computing and email and was always keen to learn more. He learnt internet banking and was able to indulge his enjoyment of a flutter on the horses when he was introduced

to online betting, although his wagers were typically modest.

As founder member of the Tuesday Singers, Bill sang as a tenor and was delighted to attend one final concert at The Parsonage a few weeks before his death. He clearly enjoyed this because despite tiring easily he stayed wide awake for the entire concert. He would have been delighted at the Tuesday Singers' tribute at his funeral.

To the very end the Church was at his heart. Despite being in his late eighties it was impossible to stop him going onto the Church roof, several times, to inspect the damage when lead was stolen. Bill worked tirelessly to raise funds and was very pleased to see the roof repaired before his death. His fundraising including the Tombola at village fetes and donations of his fees for mole catching activities around the village will be missed.

He was recognised for his service to agriculture with two long service awards which were presented by the Duchess of Kent at the Yorkshire Show in Harrogate and by Princess Anne at the Royal Show in Stoneleigh. In 2012 he proudly attended York Minster to be presented with Maundy money by the Queen in her Diamond Jubilee year. He was also twice invited to garden parties at Buckingham Palace.

On his death, the central flag outside The Parsonage was flown at half mast as a mark of respect as was the flag on the church tower. One of the bells in the church tower was named after Bill to commemorate years service as a churchwarden and, fittingly, on the first Sunday in December, a tribute will be paid by the church bell ringers to mark what would have been Bill's 89th birthday on 3rd December.

Somehow Bill also found the time to be a family man and for many years worked tirelessly on Land drainage schemes, usually to the early hours and on freezing and wet Saturday mornings, to provide well for his wife of 56 years Pat and three children, Neil, Gillian and John. Somehow we never went short though I'm sure that coping was never easy and we are all eternally grateful.

He also left behind his adoring grandchildren Thomas and Jemimah, both now living in America, and Abigail for whom he was the most reliable and loving babysitter. He was delighted to know that baby Beth was on her way but sadly he missed her birth by a few weeks.

Bill came from a fast disappearing generation that valued public

service above self promotion, a generation who did not hesitate to volunteer for King and Country. He enriched our lives by what he did for others and what he put in to the community and in particular the Church. He was always strongly guided by his principles and his faith.

His whole lifestyle was unassuming and about making the most of what he had and most of all doing something useful. He did not seek preferment but believed that hard work and endeavour would bring its own rewards. He was a principled man of strong moral values and the many tributes paid testify to the high regard in which he was held by so many of all age groups.

When he was diagnosed with cancer he took it in typically practical fashion stating that "life carries on as usual" He had to face some particularly painful and undignified procedures especially in the last couple of years but didn't ask "why me?", he just got on with life and carried on doing as much as he was able to. He didn't waste emotion, least of all on himself.

Even to the end his main concern was to keep on fulfilling all his duties as best he could, but as his health worsened the thing that troubled him most was that he could not do anything useful. It's only a year or so ago John and I had to stop him mowing our lawns and helping in our gardens, which typically he did wearing a jacket and tie! My most cherished memory was of Abigail snuggling up to her Grandad on the sofa, both so content, but of course Dad was also being useful as a babysitter!

Overseas on 'holiday' at Gillian's house he was equally busy, known as the 'Escrick Mole Catcher' by Thomas and Jemimah he was often found gardening and planted the gift of a plum tree on his last visit. Fortunately Gillian was able to spend a few days with him a couple of weeks before his death,

He travelled light in life. He did not build a collection of ornaments or trinkets. His possessions were tools and the things he needed to do things. His few treasured and valuable possessions fitted in a small wooden box and included two long service awards presented to him by Princess Anne and the Duchess of Kent, his RAF veterans' badge which he wore with pride, and the Maundy Money he received from the Queen at York Minster in her Jubilee year and proudly displayed to Abigail's classmates at Escrick Primary School.

In finally facing the inevitable he put his affairs in order and

spared a few words about himself. Whilst planning his funeral he confided in John "I've had a fantastic life, done everything I wanted to do and have no regrets". He then told John he was "ready to go". A man of great faith, he was ready to meet his Maker.

Even to the end, his concern was to do what was best for those around him rather than thinking of himself and it was his insistence that his funeral should be a celebration and "not a snivelling affair".

Hopefully that is exactly what it was. He planned the funeral with John and Pat but felt that if anybody wanted to say a few words then that would be fine. In fact, volunteers were plentiful and the tributes paid to Bill came from far and wide and across many generations and facets of his life. Incredibly Nigel Forbes Adam (Escrick Park Estate), Tony Hodgson (masonry and school), Mark Hepworth (cricket and hockey), Ian Reynolds (village life, parish council and village cricket) and Timothy Forbes Adam managed to somehow cover the majority of aspects of his life and all spoke with great warmth, humour and personal knowledge of Bill.

The church service was attended by nearly 300 friends, relatives and individuals wanting to be part of his send off. Mitre Lodge formed a guard of honour as he entered the church. Thanks to the generosity of those present the collection raised over £1,600 in aid of St Helen's Church Escrick, a total which will ultimately exceed £2,000. Gift Aid will also be added to the tally (Bill would have approved of that!).

It hurts me that I was not with him when he passed over but he was ready to meet his Maker, in his own words he just wanted to "go up".

He travelled light but enriched so many through his deeds. He will be sadly missed by many and has left gap in the family we will never be able to fill.

Thanks for everything Dad – God Bless

Written by Neil Reader

