

Of all of us in church this afternoon, I suspect that I am the one who knew Bill the least. Yet, although I only met him twice I do remember being quite struck by this great gentleman to whom we pay tribute today. Still being quite new around here, I was briefed almost on day one about Bill's illness, about what a long standing member of St Andrew's he had been, and about the great contribution he had made to the life of the church here. It was as if I was going into the presence of an elder statesman, the object of deep respect from all who knew him.

Not that Bill would have wanted such an accolade. I hazard a guess that he would simply have described himself as an ordinary man from an ordinary part of town who had been blessed in so many ways that we wanted to share that blessing with others. And that is exactly what he did. His niece, Ruth, in her notes to me, sums up her Uncle's life as one of service to church, education, sport and business.

In a moment we shall here from Bill's sporting world from in the tributes by John Beer and Alan Parsons. But before that, a brief summary of the whole man.

Bill was born in 1924 in Greenway House, son of the Ironmonger whose shop once stood opposite the church, next door to his uncle's garage business, all now swept away for the inevitable block of flats.

Bill attended Taunton School and retained his involvement there all his life, holding a governorship of the school for 31 years and until recently membership of the School Council and a life Vice-President. Beyond that he was also a governor of Bishop Fox's School and a Trustee of the Bishop Fox's Educational Foundation from its inception until only last month.

He was a lifelong member of this Parish Church, serving as sidesman, churchwarden, treasurer and PCC member. He was heavily involved with the late Mike Hole in the Phoenix project – the scheme to rebuild the church hall after the fire.

In his professional life, Bill was a Chartered Accountant working with Goodland & Bull, later part of Robson Rhodes, Apsleys and now A.C.Mole & Son. Ultimately he became a member of the profession's livery company in the City of London. He was the Founder President of the South West Society of Chartered Accountants.

In the wider community Bill was a member of the Court Leet, holding a number of offices including Recorder, for many years.

The beginning of his leadership in the sporting world in fact grew out of his church membership. After the War he persuaded the then Vicar to allow him to resurrect the St Andrew's Cricket Club, and after an initial interview had to report to the Vicarage to collect what kit remained and the modest funds belonging to the club. We shall hear more of this and of his involvement with the Somerset County Cricket Club from Alan Parsons in a moment.

Rugby was the other love of his life. Closely involved with Taunton Rugby Club, including the Lisieux Link, he also held office in the government of the sport at local, county and national level as we shall similarly hear in a bit from friend, John Beer.

Although a lifelong bachelor, family was important to him and his friends. He appreciated the support given to him by nephew and niece John and Ruth, especially as his health declined. Bill was a regular at the Vivary Arms, where no doubt many happy hours of friendship were played out over good food and drink. The family – and indeed the community so ably represented here

today – will remember him for his kindness and generosity and his interest in encouraging all those who shared his passions, especially the young.

This is the man, the towering figure, which we commend to God this day. A man who did not forget his need of God and who walked with him in all that he did, who knew his Son Jesus Christ was the way, the truth and the life. As we leave him today among the many dwelling places of our Heavenly Father's house, we may well recall the words of Jesus himself in the parable of the servant who had made the most of his talents, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in a few things; I will put you in charge of many. Enter the joy of your Master."

Well, the time for Bill to take charge may have passed, but his is a rest that is nevertheless well earned and an example to many. He leaves the world the better for his having been a part of it, and there is no better tribute to a man than that.

May he rest in peace and rise with Christ in glory.

Amen.

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