

Kathleen Anne Barbour and William Pirie Barbour: a Tribute

I would like to thank my nephews and nieces for kindly asking me to pay a tribute to Anne and Bill, my sister and brother-in-law. I am happy to do so because, although we were all part of the tragedy last Monday, I believe we should honour both Anne's memory and Bill's amazing courage, and pay a fulsome and richly deserved tribute their lives, the way they lived them and in particular what they taught us.

But first I have messages from a number of people to deliver, From Anne's brothers, Frank and Ted, and their spouses, who unfortunately are not in good enough health to be able to get here. And then from Anne and Bill's nephews and nieces: Paul and Stephen, my own sons, and Susan - Ted's daughter - they and their respective families, all send their condolences and love to all of you on this sad occasion.

Now, rather unusually, I am going to do pay tribute by actually talking about myself and my family. Thinking about Anne and Bill, confirmed what I have come to realise over the years - that almost all the things that I value in my life, I owe directly to my sister and later, to both Anne and Bill.

So I shall take you back 70 years to my earliest memories of Anne, who was nine years older than me - and as a small boy to being pushed by Kathy (as she was when young) in a pushchair, and walking what seemed immense distances with her to Chiswick House and Barnes Bridge - yes she was a walker then, as she still was just eight days ago!

However it was when we lived in Bletchley in Buckinghamshire in the Second World War that her impression was really stamped on me. At that time, we were brought up principally by my mother, as my father was away in London as a policeman,. My mother had been a house maid before her marriage and, while having had little education herself, my Mother firmly believed in the advantages that it conferred. She had been delighted when Anne won a scholarship to the grammar school. This took Anne out of our homely but rather limited environment. She expanded her horizons still further when she left school at sixteen and was employed at Bletchley Park, a then secret establishment, but now known as the birth place of the digital computer which used to decipher the German military codes. At the end of the war she moved to the Foreign Office, coming home at weekends with stories of her extensive cultural and intellectual life in London and with alarming confidential information on the conflict between the British and the Israelis in Palestine.

It was at the Wilton Hall at Bletchley Park that she took me to my first classical concert, through the second half of which I slept! So together with her later stories of standing at the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts and being in the

gallery at the Ballet, she initiated my still continuing love of music, and sleeping in concert halls..

Anne took me walking in the Lake District; we went from youth hostel to youth hostel from Windermere to Borrowdale, Scafell Pike and Helvellyn - and so Anne set going a continuing love of hill walking or, in other words, of trudging around in the rain.

Later Anne provided me with my first serious novels, John Steinbeck's *Bridge of San Luis Rey*, and Richard Llewellyn's *How Green was my Valley*, which helped to provoke a life-long love of reading.

And also eating out too which we had never done - oh the sophistication of the salad bowl of the Lyons Corner House in Oxford Street

And what of my science which still occupies most of my time and, after all, has paid for my life? Well it was Anne that helped to ignite my interest with detailed boy's books: the *Triumphs of Engineering*, and *How and Why It Works*. And, while Anne had only a little scientific knowledge from school she, unlike most 70 year olds, scientifically educated or not, still subscribed to the *New Scientist*, and read it.

And together with my mother, Anne gave me a sense of right and wrong, and fairness, and of honesty, which manifested itself for all three of us in righteous indignation at so many of the unfortunate aspects and idiocies of our public life today.

When Bill appeared on the scene and they moved to Enniskillen, he was so tolerant of me - quietly trying to teach me in a way to row on family picnics in a boat all the way round to the Sligo Railway Bridge, and in a friendly way demolishing my efforts at Chess - and always kind and encouraging of what we thought of and what we did.

And on an early visit, to give Anne a bit of break from the family, Bill sent Anne and I off to hitchhike to Donegal, where we stayed at tiny guest houses, had tea in the vast hotel at Bundoran, and - still walking - scrambled up Slieve League.

Of course my girlfriend had to pass muster with Anne and Bill - Patricia, Aunty Pat, and I arrived at Forthill Road, having hitchhiked from Birmingham where we were awaiting our final's results. Within an hour or so, Anne and I went to the shops, leaving Pat to look after the four children. Now Pat was an only child, with no experience of small children at all, let alone Tom who was about a year old, and crawling into everything, and Pauline who was a mischievous three. But help was at hand - James, at eight years old, appeared: *it's alright Aunty Pat, Charlotte and I will help you*. Pat must have made a good impression on Anne - Anne perhaps less so as, for much of the visit, she called Pat by the name of my previous girl friend!

Later, Pat took our three boys to Enniskillen for the first of several wonderful holidays which always focused on Donegal. At one point - Anne packed off Bill and Pat to travel in the then aged car, round Mayo and so give Pat a bit of rest from the family. Anne was a good friend to Pat then and later, clearly showing the skills that were to make her such a successful marriage guidance counselor.

My family learned so much on holiday with Auntie Anne, Uncle Bill and their family: everyone helped and from heard the three year old Michael helping unload the car at Killybegs: *this is a very heavy book Uncle Bill!* - and also near Killybegs, tunneling in the sand with Pauline and Tom - certainly forbidden by Health and Safety regulations today, I'm sure - and digging - oh - we all shifted tons of sand to build castles, barriers against the tide and the diversion of the stream on the Silver Strand, all organised by Bill, and with Anne in practical attendance. What would we have given for a JCB!

And also the discussions - a 1967 lesson from Bill about the Arab - Israeli conflict while striding along the beach in Lettermacaward, an occasion when there were 13 of us in the Old Rectory, and the water (and loo) stopped working - and later an argument with both of them in the car going to a holiday Dartmouth about the rights and wrongs of the Falklands conflict - a holiday on which Bill and I tried a hazardous dinghy sail to Start Point, to be driven back by rough seas.

Much later now - we took up cruising with Anne and Bill and had some wonderful, sunny trips along the Llangollen Canal and the Shannon and Erne. We made a grand crew. On one occasion Auntie Pat was still hampered by a severe skiing injury; so there was me on the bridge enjoying steering (hit and miss) and giving orders (generally unclear!), there was Pat, able to handle the ropes but unable to get back and forth easily to the shore; there was Anne (75) who operated the locks with a credit card arrangement which was muddling at the best of times - and there was Bill (80) our most capable seaman, who had to be restrained from hazarding the boat and himself by leaping like a cat for the shore!

On the occasions we visited Enniskillen; it was difficult to walk through the town with Bill. We seemed to know every second person, whether from school, the Alliance or the British Legion, and be prepared to chat amiably with them. But the chatting was not confined to friends alone - in Spain we recall Bill talking to very old lady whose Spanish dialect was voluble and very fast - they got on very well. And also on a very remote Spanish railway station, where Bill and I were trying to determine the rail gauge, he ran into an acquaintance from Enniskillen.

And what of our last visit - we saw Anne and Bill over two successive weekends in September. The weather was very Irish. Of the first, my picture is of a walk at Florence Court, the four of us sitting in the summerhouse there, looking out at the rain before going in for lunch at the cafe; on the second, a wonderful sunny

Sunday on a boat on the lower Lough travelling to White Island; my picture here is of Anne sitting contentedly in the stern holding Pat's hand, while Bill steered.

Our final contact was a lovely letter we received from Bill just a few days before he died. Replying to a postcard from Egypt, he was reminiscing about his and Anne's visits and also his eighteen months there in the intelligence corps. And his comments about the shameful approach of the British there, encouraging none of their personnel to learn the language, but expecting the "natives" to speak English; they epitomized him - perceptive and aware, kindly and loving, but still prepared to express his honest well thought out views of how people and nations should behave.

His approach literally made Bill, for me, the nicest man whom I shall ever have the privilege to know. And he was a wonderful consort to my irreplaceable sister, Anne.

So these are the images and memories that I bring - and together with my images and memories of you all, that I shall take away from this occasion - the wonderful cohesive Barbour family, the support of Anne and Bill for me and for my family, the amazingly sunny, happy holidays together and, essentially, a total education in the way to live.

So my memories, despite the sadness and the manner of the this event, will be **happy** ones.

And I fervently hope that you will go home with happy memories too - of two truly wonderful people, who taught those of us, privileged to be close, the way to live and the way to love. I myself, will certainly try to be true to Anne's humanity and Bill's courage, and to live out their worthwhile lessons for the rest of my own days.

Thank You.

Peter Borrell

Newcastle-under-Lyme & Belfast, 30th November 2009