

## **HARRY ALLNUTT            a gentle man**

**DAD'S ENTRANCE MUSIC:**        On the Sunny Side of the Street    (Frank Sinatra)

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### **INTRO & WELCOME:**

We are here to celebrate the life of Harry Allnutt. He was known by many as both an honourable gentleman and a gentle man. He loved people and went out of his way to be friendly to all, greeting strangers as he walked down the street and loving being a part of his large family and the local community. He was a kind, generous man with a sense of humour.

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Harry began his life in very modest beginnings as a cockney brought up at Waterloo on the banks of the River Thames in central London on which site the Festival Hall was built. He was the youngest of 6 children having lost a younger sister at an early age. His large family was always very important to him, with them staying close despite being bombed out several times during the War and some moving further away from their roots. He was cared for by his elder sister Ada after his mother remarried upon the death of his father and they remained extremely close, with Harry supporting her by visiting regularly in Essex and especially during her latter years when she was poorly. He lost his right eye when he was three in an accident with a swing, but it didn't hold him back. In fact, most people never knew.

He was called up and taken willingly into the army until they found out about his eye. He promptly went around the corner and volunteered for the RAF as a Private and ended up as a Corporal, spending time in Rhodesia. He became friends with Ted Temple in Rhodesia who promised to visit his sister Lil when he was demobbed prior to Harry. 'Wouldn't it be funny if I married her?' Ted laughed ... and he did! Harry's later weekly visits to Lil and Ted's happy, noisy home with 5 children were enjoyed by all and both families shared Christmas gatherings together.

With Harry's older brothers Charlie and Stan and sisters Ada, Lil and May there remained a solid bond. Harry always stayed in touch and was interested in all their children as they grew up. Uncle 'Arry was always remembered as a happy addition to their families. In later years, when most of his elder siblings were departed he stayed in touch with Lil by telephone and visiting as much as he was able to share a laugh and many cups of tea. His older brother Stan's and his family were always in contact and since Stan died his widow, Sophie, and he have been good friends to each other.

Harry worked as a Sales Representative for Mikasa, a drapery firm and then for many years for Poppleton Wools covering south east London and latterly including the South Coast. He was the first to have a car in his street, with the Head Office staff queuing for his old company car as it was always so well cared-for and so clean. He loved being the smartly dressed salesman chatting to his ladies in the wool shops and was seen as a 'proper gentleman' with people remembering his name as Mr Allnutt in 'The African Queen'.

Harry met Margaret at a dance in London after the war. They were from opposite ends of the social spectrum. She came from a large house in Mold in North Wales and he was from one of the poorest parts of London. They married on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1950. Their son Peter appeared in September 1953 and their daughter Wendy in October 1956 and they were both proud of their new family. They moved from London 'out to the country' when they purchased a brand new semi-detached house in Southfields Avenue, Ashford, Middlesex in 1959. He was the first of his family to buy a house. Holidays were spent at holiday camps around the south coast with hours spent playing tennis, table-tennis and dancing in the evenings, when not dressing up for fancy dress competitions ... not always as Peter Pan and Wendy.

Both Harry and Margaret took pride in the achievements of their children and were always interested in what they were doing, from Pete's sailing and off-road racing to Wendy's Marathon running feats. When Wendy & Andy started a family they were keen to visit Pippa, Simon and Daniel and hear of their exploits. Pippa remembers Grandad always spinning her into a dance, even though she would tread on his toes. When Simon was born Andy's father, Keith, popped round to tell them as the phone was out of action. 'Come in for a drink to celebrate!' said Harry. To Keith's astonishment he was offered a cup of tea. Harry did like his tea ... 2 sugars! Daniel remembers him saying when his robot knees got better he'd come for a run with him. Harry & Margaret passed on their love of life and caring about others to both their children and grandchildren.

*As Albert Einstein wrote, 'Our death is not an end if we can live on in our children and the younger generation. For they are us, our bodies are only wilted leaves on the tree of life'.*

Both Harry and Margaret were members of Spelthorne Ramblers from its early days with Harry being a member for over 30 years and steering the club as Chairman for over a decade. He spent many happy miles chatting with people along the way. 'A people person', he always went out of his way to be the friendly face, welcoming new members to the club, organizing barn dances and quizzes on the walking holidays and was always ready to offer lifts. He completed the Chiltern Marathon in September 1977. His sense of humour and friendliness was always to the forefront. He was given life membership as an Honorary Member when he stood down in 2000. Those robotic replacement knees couldn't do the miles any more.

*A Rambler's Poem* (Anon)

*It rained and it rained and rained and rained,  
The average rainfall was well maintained,  
And when the tracks were simply bogs,  
... It started raining cats and dogs.  
... After a drought of half an hour,  
We had a most refreshing shower,  
And then the most curious thing of all,  
... A gentle rain began to fall.*

*The afternoon was also fairly dry,  
Save for the deluge from the sky,  
Which wetted all of us to the skin,  
... And after that the rain set in.*

Harry became the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator for his area and took pride in caring for his neighbourhood and co-ordinating with the local Police. He and his close neighbours Alan, Chaz and Roy met up weekly to play Scrabble, where their battles over what was a 'legal' word were legendary! When the Lottery began they bought a weekly ticket between them. Hardly a large syndicate, they never won a fortune, but it was just the fun of taking part.

Harry and Margaret went ballroom dancing regularly in Ashford and then took classes with the Jimmy Denton Dancing School. They loved going to tea dances and making friends with so many people. They also loved the Big Band sound and Harry's favourite singer was always Frankie who sang for Harry when he entered this room earlier. For their 40<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary, Harry romantically planted 40 crocuses in the front lawn in the shape of 4 0 to surprise Margaret. When they came up disorderly Margaret told him off for making a mess of the lawn.

From the 70's they spent holidays abroad, sometimes on walking holidays, with Margaret always keen to learn the language and Harry trying to keep up with her. Sadly Margaret's health faded and she died in May 1998 after they had been married for 48 years.

This piece by Joyce Grenfell, was read at Margaret's funeral, but is also appropriate now:-

*'If I should go before the rest of you    Break not a flower nor inscribe a stone,  
Nor when I'm gone speak in a Sunday voice.  
But be the usual selves that I have known.  
Weep if you must,    Parting is hell,    But life goes on,    So sing as well.'*

MUSIC:      The Happy Wanderer      (Frankie Yankovic)

After Margaret died Harry continued to walk regularly and play table tennis at the Fordbridge Centre every Thursday afternoon. It was the to and fro of banter with other people he enjoyed and just having a good laugh together. Harry swam socially with a local group until his health restricted him. He tried again when visiting Peter & Sue in Cyprus in 2007 but sank like a stone. The aid of a foam float enabled him to enjoy the water again. He joined the U3A for the talks and socializing with others.

In 2003 Harry celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday with a party with family and friends. He was aglow with the appreciation he was shown by people and loved looking at the photos afterwards.

In 2005 Harry was diagnosed with Cardiovascular Disease and unfortunately suffered with memory problem. In 2008 he lived with Peter & Sue and Wendy & Andy for 2/3 months at a time until he required more assistance and in October moved to Brambles, a residential home close to Peter in Redditch where he was cared for in the last 19 months of his life, with support from Peter and Sue and regular visits from Wendy, Andy and the grandchildren. His sense of humour, although not always understood, made him friends there. Of recent years he had a saying of 'So you say!' to say 'I don't believe you, but will go along with it for now'.

His eyes would light up when young children visited him from the local schools, lifted by their innocence and liveliness. Pete's step-grandchildren visited from Ireland last year and he loved referring to the photo of their visit and was looking forward to seeing them again.

He had a Memory Book which was frequently looked through and although he may not have remembered the names, he always knew the faces and it brought back happy memories of holidays or walks and more importantly people he knew. Peter and Wendy appreciated the way friends and family kept in touch with him. He celebrated his 86<sup>th</sup> birthday in October when some of Lil & Ted's children, Les, Jackie and Carol and their families came to surprise him. He loved it. He made it to Dawn's recent wedding where he was so pleased to see Sophie, Cliff & Janet. Peter also managed to get him to the last Christmas meal of the Spelthorne Ramblers and he was astounded at the attention he got, receiving a standing ovation from them all.

I remember Harry, a twinkle in his eye,  
Telling stories, laughing, gesturing to the sky.

He loved to go awandering, he loved to work the crowd.  
He loved to chat to anyone, but in a quiet way, ... not loud.

In later years, his eye was caught, by children happy at play.  
He'd smile and watch contentedly as they whirled their day away.

My memory of Harry, a cup of tea in hand,  
A smile, a nod, a gesture, as he faded from this land.

Harry remained joking and telling tales to his last days. He led a long and happy life so we should celebrate him. Could we all give him a standing ovation as we send him waltzing on his way now ...

#### COMMITTAL:

The Grand Waltz (The Sound of Music)

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#### CLOSING:

Peter and Wendy would like to thank all of you for being a part of Harry's life and for being here for him. He would have been proud to know you came. They'd like you to remember him as a happy, sociable man and a true gentleman.

Please join them at the King's Fairway, Fordbridge Road in his home town, Ashford for a social gathering and buffet ..... and, of course, raise a cup of tea to Harry!

Any donations in lieu of flowers should be made to the Alzheimer's Society, Spelthorne area for the use of the local community. And even if you can't, carry on carrying the torch for Harry - always wear a smile, show kindness to others and make people happy.

#### LEAVING MUSIC:

Bring me Sunshine (Morecambe & Wise theme music)