

## **Tribute for Archive**

# **David Michael Morris**

**06/05/1941 – 24/04/2018**

**Written by**

**Steve Parry**

**Humanists UK**

**Accredited Funeral Celebrant**

Mike was born in 78 James St, Trethomas on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1941 and was the eldest child of David Pryce Morris, who was always known as Prycey, and Lily May. He was the only child for nine years until his sister Wendy was born and didn't tell his family much about his earlier years. Though his mother did tell Ros that when the first bananas were available after the war she queued for ages to get some and gave one to Mike when she came home. He spat it straight out but we don't know if he'd peeled it first.

Wendy's early memories of her big brother are typical sibling memories and not positive. He used to take great delight in teasing her, pinching her and poking her when their Mum wasn't looking and using the angelic look he had learnt as a choirboy to deny any allegations that Wendy made.

The family went away each miners' fortnight, usually to Barry Island where they would see many of their friends and neighbours and before Wendy was born they visited Ilfracombe.

They also used to take the train to visit their uncle, aunt and cousins who lived on a small holding in mid Wales. Both Mike and Wendy really enjoyed their times collecting fresh eggs and living in the country.

Wendy remembers that the only time Mike let up on his teasing was when she was ill in hospital aged about fourteen. Whenever he visited he couldn't do enough for her, checking she was OK and getting her what she wanted. Once she recovered, usual service resumed.

Mike attended Bedwellty Secondary Modern, where he enjoyed the more practical subjects and sport. He played rugby for the school and won certificates for running.

At fifteen he left school and started two relationships that were to shape the rest of his life. He started playing rugby for Machen and a five-year apprenticeship as a fitter and turner at Black Clawson.

Mike made many friends at the Rugby Club and Black Clawson and his social life was full. One night when he was twenty, he attended the Machen Rugby Club dance in the Majestic in Newport and met a Newport girl, Ros, who's cousin was going out with another Machen Player. It wasn't an immediate hit and they didn't see each other again for a while after that, until Ros attended a house party with her cousin and they met again.

This time it took, and they started going out with each other. A couple of years later Mike went abroad to work for the first time so that he could earn enough money to buy an engagement ring. They got engaged and were married a couple of years later on 26<sup>th</sup> of March 1966 in Holy Trinity Church, Christchurch, Newport.

They lived with Mike's Mum and Dad for a few months until August that year when they moved into 11 Danygraig; which has been their home ever since.

They enjoyed their child free life for nine years. They travelled widely on holiday, to places such as Yugoslavia, Italy, Spain, Tunisia, Ibiza and Newquay where they bought a caravan in the same site as many of their friends from the Rugby Club. This was to become their second home.

The rugby club and the Black Clawson Social Club gave them a wide circle of friends and an active sporting and social life. Mike enjoyed working at Black Clawson and he and Ros spent weekends away and went on trips abroad with their many good friends.

In the early years before the Machen RFC club house was built they went straight to the Fwrrwm Ishta after the games, but when the club house was

built the players could shower downstairs, before going upstairs for a drink and food that Ros and her friends would have been making in the kitchen.

The club was a huge part of their lives and those of their children when they came along. When Sarah was a toddler she was once asked where she lived and answered Machen Rugby Club.

Mike's friend from the club, Roger Blenkirion told Simon that Mike was a stalwart member of the rugby club, playing as hooker and penalty kicker through the sixties and seventies until he was in his mid-thirties, earning the nick name Mike the Strike. He captained the second team on many occasions and was very reliable, always involved in club life whether playing or at the social events.

When he stopped playing he joined the club committee, coached mini rugby, ran the line and occasionally refereed games, always insisting that Simon didn't call him dad when he was reffing one of his games.

Mike also became the fixture secretary, greatly assisted by Ros. He only gave up this role when his work took him to the Far East for long periods but even then, he remained heavily involved in the club and continued to support it. He was paid the great honour of being invited to be a life member, in recognition of his service to the club.

Mike's job took him away from home for several months at a time fitting machinery made at Black Clawson in factories all over the UK and Europe. Ros gave up working when Sarah was born and on one occasion Ros and a very young Sarah went and lived in Holland for three months while Mike was working there. Simon came along two years later and taking two children was not practical.

I asked Sarah and Simon what he was like as a father and they told me he was very loving and encouraging. He wanted them to take risks and to learn things. Ros would be protective and try to stop them taking risks, particularly Simon, and Mike would persuade her to let him do it. With Mike away from home Ros was in charge of discipline in the house, but on the rare occasion that he raised his voice and told the kids off, they knew it was serious and he had their complete attention.

The family spent many weekends and holidays at the caravan in Newquay where Mike would take them swimming and play tennis with them. He spent as much time with them as possible when he was not working away, and he was a very attentive father, though he always insisted that no matter what they were watching, he had the control for the TV at six for the news.

He once returned home after three months away with a beard and the children wouldn't go near him, saying they were scared of him. They nagged him so much that he shaved it off and he was annoyed to find that they didn't notice that it had gone.

Mike remained fit when he gave up Rugby and used to run with many of his colleagues from Black Clawson raising money each year for a different charity and he continued running at least once a week. This run usually taking place just before he went out for a drink with his friends from Black Clawson on a Friday. Four of the Friday Club were his bearers today.

Later in his career Mike travelled all over the world with work, most often to the Far East working in Taiwan, South Korea, China and Indonesia, often for three months at a time. On one occasion when the children were in their late teens Ros went with him on a job in Virginia and they had a holiday afterwards.

After around forty years at Black Clawson he left when the factory finally closed. After a spell at MD Fabrications in Newport he ended his working life at Premier Trade making PVC windows and doors, staying there until he retired aged sixty-five.

Having got the travel bug early with work, Mike and Ros travelled extensively together. For their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary they toured the West Coast of the USA and for their thirtieth anniversary they toured the Far East visiting Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand. They had holidays in China, the Canadian Rockies and a trip to India via Jordan and holidays in Spain with Simon and his family.

In the last ten years they started cruising, visiting Alaska in their first cruise and since then in the last ten years they have done many cruises including visiting Panama, the Caribbean and then back across the Atlantic. And it seemed to the family that wherever they went in the world Mike would always bump into someone he knew.

For a long time, he stayed clear of any new technology until he was bought a tablet for Christmas and discovered the internet and particularly enjoyed shopping for their next holiday. Wherever they went Mike wanted to eat the local food and he was an adventurous eater. On one occasion when working in Morocco, before they were married even drinking pigs blood.

Apart from time to travel, his retirement gave him lots of time to spend with his grandchildren; Lily, Finley, Verity and Leander. He was their main taxi driver taking them to and from school as well as their out of school activities. He often watched Lily playing rugby, very proudly taking her to buy her first pair of boots and using his years of experience to offer advice to her.

Because while his playing days were well in the past he was still passionate and vocal in his support of rugby, whether it was watching Wales on the TV and shouting at the set or in person, at the Millennium Stadium or when watching Machen play.

When he retired from work he took up golf and played at the Virginia Park Golf Club. He quickly got into the game, and despite being right handed always played with his left hand, but never improved on his initial handicap of twenty-eight. But it was social aspect of golf that got him hooked; Christmas dances with Ros, taking the grandkids to the children's Christmas party and of course the daily chats with the boys on the course.

When Virginia Park closed as a golf club, Mike decided along with over a dozen fellow golfers to join Castell Heights, located on the top of Caerphilly Mountain with outstanding mountain views. Here he made some new friends, and for the last year really enjoyed his weekday routine dropping the grand-children off at school, meeting the boys to play the nine holes, and the cup of coffee and chat at the clubhouse.

He'll always be remembered for his cha cha cha-style little dance before taking his shot and disappearing off into the rough in search of golf balls.

Sarah is going to come up now and pay tribute to her father,

Dad spoke for me at my wedding 7 years ago. It wasn't easy for him as he wasn't at all used to public speaking, his hands were shaking as he held his paper. But he did a great job so I wanted to repay the favour.

I have so much I could say, want to say. I'm lucky, and grateful to have so many lovely memories that I can call on and share, as well as thinking about the numerous ways dad has influenced my life. I can picture him now, with his year-round tan, and in shorts no matter what the weather.

He was laid back and easy going, sometimes annoyingly so. Whenever you'd ask him what he wanted he'd always answer with 'whatever's easiest'. And now people comment on how easy going my children are, and they suggest it's because I am. But I think we all got it from him.

He was also very generous with his time and his energy. Nothing was too much trouble. "No problem" - he'd say it just like that. Always looking for really practical ways he could help. Sometimes even things you hadn't thought about.

Like if Simon or I needed a lift home, even at midnight on a rainy winter's night, he'd happily jump in the car. Getting a taxi was never an option. The numerous times he drove to London and back at Christmas because I couldn't manage all the presents on the train. I remember him coming and mowing the grass that had grown to waist-height and replacing a cracked conservatory window in my student house share. Not just because it meant we would get our deposit back but because he simply wanted to help.

Talking of moving, dad helped me move house about 18 times - ferrying my things back and forth across the country. A lot of those times were in my student days. The full-to-the-brim maroon Sierra, trundling along the M4 at the beginning and end of every college year - and sometimes at points in-between. And then most recently with our last move only 3 months ago,

when Richard and I finally left London for Portishead, just over the bridge. The head guy from the removals crew suggesting Dad should put on a company shirt so he could join their team - because he was such a hard worker.

Mum and dad often came to visit us in London. Dad would jump on the megabus website at a moment's notice to book their £1 tickets. We always had quality time as we made an effort to go see the sights and have lovely family meals. And when they had gone I was always left with such a nice sparkly clean kitchen courtesy of dad - much to mum's consternation, as I don't think he ever cleaned their kitchen quite so thoroughly.

We've heard about the travel. Dad Loved it, and so do I. Work took him deep into far-away countries - way off the tourist trail. He would come back full of exotic stories and experiences.

But one thing in particular that I always looked forward to on his return was receiving the British Airways Highlife magazine, that he would pinch for me off the plane. I'd spend hours cutting out the amazing photos of different people and places, sticking them in my sketchbook and poring over them. I'm so grateful for that small gesture as I really think it helped foster a curiosity about the world that is really important to me and who I am today.

We had some lovely holidays over the years, the most recent being in October when mum and dad went to Madeira with us. When I told him we were going, Dad did his usual and jumped on the internet to look for a deal. It was all booked up within about half an hour of our conversation. I'm really glad he did - it was such a lovely trip, one that my daughter still talks about at least once a week and one she tells everyone about.

Dad absolutely doted on his grandchildren. Lily, Finley, Verity and Leander. His job after retirement became grampa taxi - he happily ferried Lily and Fin back and forth to school every single day.

I remember, before I had children, getting slightly bored because when I saw mum and dad, it seemed like all dad could talk about was the kids. Lily did this, Finley said that. On and on, over and over again... Then of course I had children, and I'd love to think that he went on about Verity and Leander in that very same way. I'm pretty sure he did. It was so obvious to all, the pleasure he took from being around his grandkids. Only the night before he died, he was remarking on how Leander cracked him up.

It goes without saying that we think dad was taken too soon - I posted a photo of him on Facebook 2 days before he died and thought to myself how well he looked. But in some poignant way, I think we can take comfort from the fact that at the end he was in such a beautiful place, playing a round of his beloved golf.

Dad. We all desperately miss you and we will always love you. You will forever be in our hearts and in our minds.

Goodbye dad. You were my hero.