

A CELEBRATION OF THE MEMORY OF
HUBERT PRESTON BEAUMONT

11th June 1935 - 12th May 2018

held at
Merriscourt
on 26th July 2018



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OPENING WORDS

Good afternoon everyone. We're here to celebrate the life of Hubert Preston Beaumont who died on 12th May aged 82.

INTRODUCTION

I should introduce myself. My name is Ian Willox. I'm a celebrant for Humanists UK. Hubert had no religious faith and Yvonne has asked for a non-religious memorial. That doesn't mean anti-religious. This is a ceremony for everyone – including those with a religious faith.

THOUGHTS ON LIFE AND DEATH

Hubert was buried at Fairspear Natural Burial Ground near Charlbury back in May in a field full of buttercups with wonderful far-reaching views over the countryside he so loved, with just immediate family and a close friend present. Each mourner placed a posy of cream roses and herbs on Hubert's coffin. A few words were said. It was a quiet, brief, intimate ceremony. A ceremony that talked about him – not his life.

Today, here at Merriscourt, will be a much more expansive affair. A chance to talk about the many facets of Hubert's life. Starting with his wife Yvonne...

TRIBUTE

YVONNE BEAUMONT:

« As you can imagine, this is a particularly emotional occasion for me, so I've asked Ian to read my contribution for me. »

read by IAN

In some respects I suppose we all knew a different Hubert but his intrinsic qualities showed up in everything he did. I have had so many wonderful letters of condolence but the same word - « gentleman » - kept coming up. Hubert was modest, did good by stealth, set his own benchmarks for behaviour, was competitive only with himself, a man of kindness and honour.

How lucky I was in my 50s to meet and marry a man who embodied the aspirations of the marriage ceremony: he did indeed provide me with 'mutual society, help and comfort'. If sentimentality involves emotions in excess of the facts, Hubert hadn't a sentimental bone in his body, whereas his true feeling was unstinting for what was genuinely important. He was always the first to step forward to help.

He soon came to be much loved too by my daughter Anna and stepdaughter Tassy for his unfailing interest and engagement in their lives, his outstanding thoughtfulness as well as his exceptionally deep cultural intelligence.

When he proposed to me (which he did after 6 weeks, amusing me by saying 'he knew when he was on to a good thing'), we established the rules - I said his beloved ski-ing and beagling were beyond me physically, but this didn't matter a scrap because we had so many other interests in common - modern art, classical music, opera and litera-

ture. Our discussions were a true meeting of minds and to my delight it also turned out that he was the always-willing and perfect partner for realising my house and garden design ideas.

Hubert's 6 foot 4 frame didn't fit my lovingly restored house on Burford Hill nor the usual Oxfordshire cottage, so over several years we rescued a very neglected Georgian farmhouse with outbuildings and land near Faringdon. Then we spent a year putting our stamp on Taston Barn. Hubert's technical drawing and practical problem-solving skills meant he could instruct builders with authority.

I well remember a builder insisting that a large oil tank was too heavy to be lifted over a high wall. He was amazed next morning to find that overnight Hubert had, on his own, with the aid of leverage and logs, rolled it along a long path, through a narrow gate, round the corner to the other side of the wall.

Strenuous physical activity was absolutely crucial for Hubert's wellbeing. His love of landscape, birds, flora and fauna, the challenge of the steep hill or ski slope were largely witnessed by other companions. For the 25 years we were together he would leave the house to go beagling or basseting in all weathers but - amazingly in retrospect - it's only now that I realise just how rich those human relationships were and I am delighted for him.

I have lost the physical presence of my soulmate but my gratitude for having had the joy of sharing his life knows no bounds.

Here ends Yvonne's tribute.

Hubert's sister Margaret is going to follow her:

MARGARET LUDOVICI:

Now it the turn of John Barker – probably Hubert's oldest friend:

JOHN BARKER:

It was not many weeks before Hubert left us when he emailed me to ask if I would give him a reference. Yvonne and he were aspiring to join a club in Bloomsbury and required a referee. In giving my name in their application he stated, and I quote, "I have known Mr.Barker for 69 and a half years."

This was correct. Hubert and I both went to St.Edwards, known to many of you here, I'm sure, as Teddies. It chanced that we were both in the same house, Tillys. I joined the school in September 1948,by which time Hubert had already been there for two terms.

At that point I was in considerable awe of him. Not only did he appear to be twice my size, but he had reached the dizzy heights of promotion to vice-president of the Junior Dayroom. Our personal space in the Dayroom was a small cupboardlike area known as a "horsebox" and I well recall Hubert with gimlet eye peering round the edge of his somewhat superior "horsebox" to see what misdemeanors the young sprogs in his charge were getting up to.

But, as we moved up the school, we got on more equal terms and developed what became a lifelong friendship. We left school at the same time, did two years of National Service, and then went up to Teddy Hall in Oxford.

On arrival we found that rooms, which were shared, had been allocated on a completely "ad hoc" basis.

I had been given a room with someone whom, when we met, I knew immediately I was unlikely to get on with. Hubert, however, had been allocated a rather elegant room overlooking the main quad. Somehow or other I managed to persuade his potential roommate to swop with me, so that I was able to move in with him.

Before doing so Hubert pointed out that our accommodation boasted only one bedroom, which he made clear he would be having, the other rather Spartan bedroom - mine - being on the other side of the quad, with even more Spartan bathroom facilities in yet another place.

But it was a good first year in Hall.

When we were not engaged in living the high life in Oxford, I read English and Hubert Engineering. But Hubert was at least as well qualified as I was to read English. With his eclectic and somewhat esoteric taste in books, starting with his beloved Proust, he was in fact a very literary person. If I wanted to wind him up, I would refer to him as an educated engineer.

After Oxford we saw less of each other for many years, whilst we embarked on marriage and making a living.

Speaking of marriage. One abiding memory is of Hubert coming to mine to be my best man. He was the proud owner of a very small car, I think an Austin Seven, and he drove with Rosie from High Wycombe to Banchory on Deeside, the then home of my intended, Sally. We never forgot the look on my future mother-in-law's face, as Hubert, whom she had not met before, after an interminable drive, with his head touching the roof, extracted himself from the very small space he was occupying, gradually unwound himself and finally stood up.

We began to see more of each other again after retirement and in the time before Hubert had the good fortune to meet Yvonne. Thereafter our visits south involved trips to

the opera at Garsington, to the theatre in Stratford, to the Ashmolean to look at pictures, occasional beagling and parties to mark significant birthdays and so on.

Trips north to our home in the Lakes, an area which Hubert loved, also involved landmark celebrations, hill walking and hunting - I won't say a superior form of hunting in this company! - with the Coniston Foxhounds.

Many, many happy memories over those 69 and a half years.

A final memory is of Hubert earlier this year, at the age of 82, at the suggestion of Harriet, going to Italy to ski and thoroughly enjoying it, despite having given up skiing a couple of years previously, because of a shoulder problem.

An inspired move by Harriet and a wonderful memory for her.

I will end by saying what I said at his graveside.

"I shall remember Hubert as the most tolerant, the most patient and the kindest of men - and I miss him."

Hubert's daughter Harriet is going to be the next person to speak...

HARRIET BEAUMONT:

Geoffrey Somerset, friend of Hubert and Yvonne, is next:

GEOFFREY SOMERSET:

Like Geoffrey, Peter Collins is a friend. Peter...

PETER COLLINS:

Anthony Whinney is another friend. Unfortunately due to illness he's unable to attend today so I'm going to read his tribute:

ANTHONY WHINNEY:

Hubert was a great walker, most days 4 miles round Taston. Because he set such a brisk pace, I usually had to ask him to slow down as we started out on one of our walking expeditions. It was typical of Hubert that he suggested these expeditions, I think as therapy, after my wife Jane died.

At Taston there were no dogs to be exercised but, far and wide, beagles and bassets to be hunted twice a week through the winter. At the end of the season he would often be out not twice but three times, making up for the days spent skiing - another of his

passions. Whilst the Four Shires Bassets and the Dummer were his packs, he would also go out with the RAC, Palmer Marlborough, Radley and Christchurch beagles.

Typically, meets are relatively gregarious. He had been out hunting for many, many years and followers' names to be recalled were legion. People were always delighted to see him.

Out on the Marlborough Downs, whilst trying to keep up with Hubert, conversation was far-reaching, sometimes turning not to politics but the market, particularly AIM shares. His own experience in various businesses informed his researches. On one occasion the CEO of a company we visited said our questions were more understanding of the business and its finances than those of those of most professional analysts. We had given them much to think about. Invariably this was all down to Hubert.

I have been very lucky to have enjoyed Hubert's company in the last few years including on the Brecon Beacons just two days before he died. In many ways it was difficult to keep up with him but I have much to be very thankful for and to always remember.

For more detail on the investment side of Hubert's life – Chris Boxall:

CHRIS BOXALL:

I am a founder of an investment fund and spoke to Hubert frequently. We enjoyed comparing notes on the various AIM companies in which we had investments in or were researching.

AIM is the junior stock market of the London stock exchange, where you will find many of the UK's small, rapidly growing companies, many of which come with valuable tax breaks.

Hubert shared my passion for undertaking in-depth research of AIM companies, the reward for which was often tremendous investment returns and of course the odd failure. However, Hubert wasn't one for blithely remarking how a share price had moved from x pence to y pence, as I often come across in the City, rather he really enjoyed understanding the working parts of a business; how it functioned, how it made money and how it might lose money. Hubert appreciated the value of things, not simply the price.

Where we did differ here was our attitude to risk. Hubert liked to really get behind his favoured AIM stocks, whereas I am happier adopting a more diversified approach, having seen plenty of failures as well as success stories and with the disadvantage of needing to manage the heightened expectations of my clients.

Bizarrely (on my part at least) our attitude to risk did not extend to the escalator at Marylebone Station, where remarkably Hubert and I seemed to adopt a similar gung-ho attitude.

For those of you that aren't familiar with this relic of the Edwardian era it is one of the longer escalators on the London Underground network, linking the Bakerloo Line station to Marylebone main line. Unfortunately, despite several major overhauls over the past few years, the escalators are often broken. Furthermore, this situation often seems to present itself to me (and Hubert too, it turned out) when one is late for a train. Hubert adopted the same reckless attitude as me in this situation. Like me, no doubt relishing the challenge of this vertiginous sprint (because that's what both our walks ultimately evolved into), through the hot dusty air, in an effort to catch a train, which runs every 30 minutes.

Hubert and I compared notes during our last lunch and both of us questioned our bizarre actions, which left us gasping for breath at the top and staggering onto the train a physical wreck.

Like me, I think Hubert relished the challenge, very similar to picking the perfect investment.

Moving from the thrills of investment to the thrills of the hunt. Master of the Dummer, Nicholas Mason:

NICHOLAS MASON:

We have heard about many different, and interesting, facets of Hubert's life. I have been asked to talk about Hubert's hunting life – an important and considerable part of his life. The Dummer Beagles were one part of this. But only a quite small part; Hubert hunted with various packs of hounds during his life, notably the Shrivenham, Four Shires and Dummer. So I will talk not only about Hubert's hunting with the Dummer but also the Four Shires Basset Hounds (he was a very active member of both for some years and we have amongst us many members of both hunts), also about his time with the Shrivenham Beagles - and, indeed, his hunting life as a whole. Above all about Hubert the hunting gentleman. We will also be hearing after me from the Four Shires in the form of a very charming poem written by Jane Pegram.

And what a privilege it is to talk about Hubert the gentleman - such a lovely man who was universally popular, and loved by everyone whom he met in the course of his hunting activities.

It seems from what Yvonne has said to me that hunting was a compartment of Hubert's life that, to an extent, he kept to himself; she has said that he would typically return from hunting late in the day, sometimes muddy, and sometimes wet. She would ask if he had had a good day, the answer was always yes and, apart from mention of mutual friends, that would be that. So whilst this will be an aspect of his life which will be known to many, perhaps not to everyone present here today.

Whilst Hubert may have kept his hunting activities largely to himself, for him hunting was undoubtedly a great passion. He was a keen and knowledgeable hunting man. As Jane refers in her poem, how fitting it was, as his life turned out, that he should have been christened Hubert – St Hubert being the patron saint of hunting (who lived in the 7th & 8th centuries - and was also, interestingly the patron saint for mathematicians, opticians, and metalworkers).

Hubert's hunting focused on foot packs – beagles and basset hounds, also mink-hounds. For those of you who are not acquainted with hunting these are all traditionally foot packs, where one follows on foot, in contrast to foxhounds where sport is, of course, conducted on horse - with a few exceptions on steep terrain, such as the Lake District. Many become followers with a foot pack once their days on a horse following foxhounds are spent. So far as I have been able to ascertain that was not the route for Hubert; he was a foot follower through and through. A thought in passing; he would have cut a very elegant figure on a horse.

Hubert hunted for a number of years with the Shrivenham Beagles when he & Yvonne lived at Stanford in the Vale (near Faringdon). I am indebted to Clare Goodrick-Clarke (who is with us today) for information about the Shrivenham and Hubert's hunting with them; she and her husband, Nicholas, hunted with the Shrivenham at the same time as Hubert.

I have limited information about Hubert's earlier hunting exploits but I understand that Hubert was already hunting with the Shrivenham, and also the Four Shires, and probably with other packs too, before he & Yvonne married and moved to Stanford in the Vale in 1995. At that time he was living at Boars Hill (near Oxford). Travelling a distance for good sport, and a day in the country, was no impediment for Hubert.

As the name suggests, the Shrivenham were the pack of the Royal Military College of Science at Shrivenham. The origins of the College date back to 1772 and it became the Military College of Science in 1927 and then the Royal Military College of Science in 1953. It is believed that it was the late Colonel John Speller who started the beagle pack, partly for the joy of hunting over the Berkshire Downs and partly as an opportunity to give the military and local people a shared interest.

The Beagles were kennelled at Shrivenham and were looked after by Les Cheesley who was allowed to kennel his own Four Shire Mink Hounds on the same site. Hubert followed both packs, beagling in winter and mink hunting on the Thames, and its tributaries, over the summer months.

Downland meets in particular called for a high degree of fitness to keep the hounds in view. Exercise and fitness were important to Hubert (right to the end) and Hubert seemed to relish the opportunity to traverse the wide open expanses of downland. I am sure that we can all picture him, a tall figure high on the Berkshire Downs in the country that he loved so much. Hubert also supported all the social events of the pack

and he and Yvonne held supporters' fundraising events at their home in Stanford in the Vale. I believe that Hubert also served on the RMCS Beagles Committee.

Sadly, both packs were disbanded due to the expansion of the College in the early 2000's; it seems that Les's retirement and the difficulty of finding a successor may also have been a factor.

This was, of course, before the Hunting Act 2004 which altered the nature of hunting to how it is today.

After the disbanding of the Shrivenham, Hubert became an active member of both the Four Shires and the Dummer, initially from Stanford in the Vale (again distance to meets was no object), and subsequently after Hubert & Yvonne moved to Taston in 2010. This continued for the rest of his life. He generally hunted with the Four Shires, principally in Oxfordshire, on a Saturday and across the Cotswolds in Gloucestershire (putting his downland experience with the Shrivenham to good effect), and also in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, with the Dummer on a Wednesday. He rarely missed a day – unless on his annual skiing holiday (another passion). He also rarely left much before the end of the day.

But that was not enough for Hubert; he also continued to go out regularly with other beagle packs – the Radley College, the Christ Church & Farley Hill, the Royal Agricultural College and the Palmer Marlborough amongst others. He had a great knowledge of hunting and, for some Dummer Members, he was a constant source of information about what other packs were up to.

Hubert was passionate not only about his hunting but also country life. And how appropriate that we should be gathered here today at Merriscourt for this Celebration of Hubert's life – where he will have spent many happy hours in the footsteps of the Dummer. And in the depths of the beautiful Oxfordshire countryside which Hubert so loved.

Hunting is also a wonderful social activity. Many of our Members have spoken about lovely and interesting, and varied, conversations with Hubert in the hunting field. These extended from aspects of hunting, country life, current affairs and life in general to more cerebral matters including, I am told, Proust. But the social side of the hunting day was never allowed to deflect from his keen interest in what the hounds were doing.

He has enriched the life of many Dummer Members, and I am sure Four Shires Members too – and before that, no doubt, also Shrivenham followers.

Hubert, your passing was such a shock to so many, it is a privilege to have known you - a lovely man, a proper hunting man, a giant of a man in stature, but also gentle, wise

and unfailingly courteous. A true gentleman, also a gentle man. A very special chap. You will be much missed by us all.

At the start I mentioned Hubert's burial at Fairspear back in May. Hubert's son Oliver read an Aaron Freeman excerpt over the grave. As we move towards the end of today's Memorial I'm going to ask him to read it again. Oliver....

OLIVER BEAUMONT:

You want a physicist to speak at your funeral.

You want the physicist to talk to your grieving family and friends about the conservation of energy, so they will understand that your energy has not died.

You want the physicist to remind your children and step-children about the first law of thermodynamics; that no energy gets created in the universe, and none is destroyed.

You want them to know that all your energy, every vibration, every bit of heat, every wave of every particle that was their beloved father remains with them in this world.

You want the physicist to tell your weeping family and friends that amid the energies of the cosmos, you gave as good as you got.

And at one point you'd hope that the physicist would turn to your broken hearted spouse and tell her that all the photons that ever bounced off your face, all the particles whose paths were interrupted by your smile, by the touch of your hair, hundreds of trillions of particles, have raced off like children, their ways forever changed by you.

And as your widow rocks in the arms of a loving family, may the physicist let her know that all the photons that bounced from you were gathered in the particle detectors that are her eyes, that those photons created within her constellations of electromagnetically charged neurons whose energy will go on forever.

And the physicist will remind those gathered of how much of all our energy is given off as heat.

And he will tell them that the warmth that flowed through you in life is still here, still part of all that we are, even as we who mourn continue the heat of our own lives.

And you'll want the physicist to explain to those who loved you that they need not have faith; indeed, they should not have faith.

Let them know that they can measure, that scientists have measured precisely the conservation of energy and found it accurate, verifiable and consistent across space and time.

You can hope your family and friends will examine the evidence and satisfy themselves that the science is sound and that they'll be comforted to know your energy's still around.

According to the law of the conservation of energy, not a bit of you is gone; you're just less orderly.

Jane Pegram, from the Four Shires Bassets, sent a poem she had written about Hubert to Yvonne. Yvonne asked me to read today:

JANE PEGRAM: (read by Ian)

Dear Hubert

You took off so unexpectedly for 'the happy hunting ground in the sky' leaving behind sad family and friends.

So aptly were you named
Hubert - the Patron Saint of hunting
Beaumont - handsome and tall

I shall miss our first greeting on Meet Days, a gentlemanly kiss on the cheek, then boots on and off up the lane or over the gate. You strode away on your long, long legs, eyes fixed on the hounds. Sometimes we would catch up for a friendly chat on skiing, keeping well or current matters, then you were off again, like the hare, and fields away.

No keener or knowledgeable hunting man was there amongst us, no gentler, wiser or good friend to have known.

As the huntsman blows his horn for 'Gone Away/Going For Home' we shall remember you with great affection.

Fare Thee Well, dear Hubert, and thank you for your comradeship.

And Tally-ho from
Handsome, Harmony, Hebe, Hecuba, Hero, Hesperus, Honesty and Hotspur

- and from me, Jane.

RUPERT BURCHETT (horn): Gone Away

CLOSING WORDS

Rupert Burchett, Master of the Four Shires Bassets, playing “Gone Away” brings Hubert’s memorial to a close.

And what a memorial. Hubert as a husband. Hubert as a maker of homes and gardens. Hubert at Teddies and Oxford. Hubert the lover of Proust. Hubert the father. Hubert the friend. Hubert the supporter of the Conservatives and the Campaign to Protect Rural England. Hubert the generous host. Hubert the hunter. Hubert the skier. Hubert the investor. Hubert – not gone – just less orderly.

We have many memories of Hubert. And the rest of our lives to remember.

If you want to share your memories – or just some refreshment – I suggest you make your way next door for some restoring food and drink.

Thank you for coming.

EXIT