

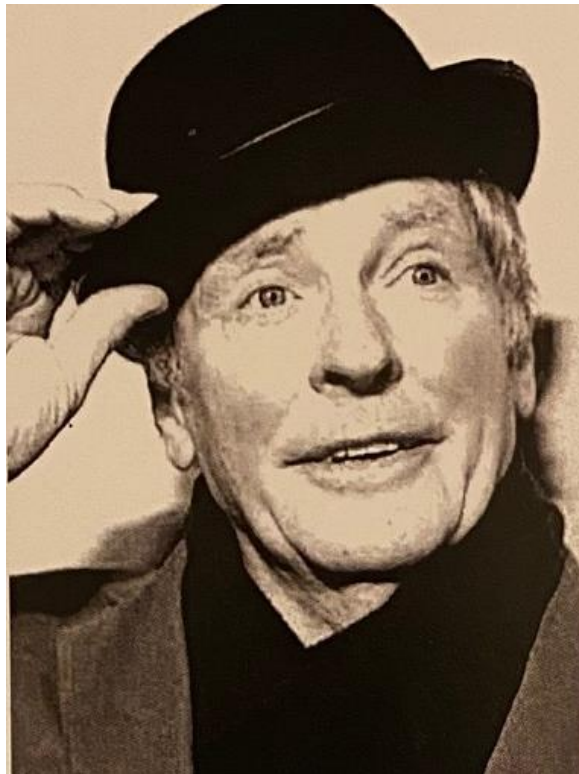
A Celebration of the Life of

Martin Edward Bates

28 March 1939 – 9 March 2025

20 March 2025, Dewsbury Moor Crematorium

Celebrant: Hannah McKerchar



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Martin created much of the shape of this ceremony, choosing music (more music than we could fit in!) and poetry that mattered to him. The result is a combination of his suggestions, and the thoughts of those who love him, family and friends, who are missing this sensitive, thoughtful, talented and loving man.

One of those friends, who knew Martin for over fifty years, was Steve Simpson, and though Steve couldn't be here today he sent his memories of Martin to share:

Tribute by Steve Simpson

I first met Martin in 1973 when I came to teach at Wakefield School of Art where Martin was already a member of staff. He was born in Derby, the middle son of the three boys that were born to his parents, Florence and Harold Bates. They were keen musicians, Harold was an accomplished cellist and Florence a pianist. I became close to Martin and his family; as a single man in a strange city they often offered me hospitality and friendship.

Martin had trained at Derby College of Art and was an accomplished painter. His canvases at this period depicted the backs of lorries, coaches and French delivery vans. He showed his work in a gallery in the outskirts of Leeds run by a milkman as a sideline. This was so unusual that the Sunday Times did an article about the gallery owner. Some eagle eyed tax man picked up on this and subsequently Martin received a tax demand on the sales he had made.

There was always a sense of humour in his work which over the years led him into assemblages and to spoken monologues, again full of humour. My wife bought me one of his assemblage pieces and it holds a special place in our collection. We had great fun reversing our names; he became Nitram Setab, whilst I became Nehpets Nospmis – this often led to us falling about hysterical with laughter.

The thing I appreciated most about him was his calmness at all times. He could be critical of students but he was never angry or disparaging to them. It is hard to put into words the affection that people who knew him had for him.

Martin, you will be greatly missed but remembered fondly by those who knew you.

Rest in peace my friend.

Another friend, Phil, wrote to Martin's children to say:

Memories of your dad are many and various – but here are some which bring a smile to my face based upon teaching together and going out on many runs and long hill walks in the Lake District, Dark Peak, Yorkshire Dales and not too far from his home.

His past fell running race achievements – especially 'The 3 Peaks Race' and 'Ben Nevis Fell Race', were ones he was particularly proud of. In later years he did road races completing 10km and half-marathons as well as going back and trying another fell

race 'The Mickledon Circular' in his 70's. I was lucky enough to do a test run with him of that so he would be best able to complete it.

On one foul November day we took him up to the summit of Gt Gable in the Lakes; sadly the weather got worse – snow, wind and sideways hail. We were not happy souls; he said to me, "What am I doing here – THANKS PHIL....!" – then followed it with a wicked laugh.

Whilst teaching together on The Combined Arts Course at Wakefield College we liked to talk together to students on some days. One day we tackled one student about her work whilst she was sat at her workspace. She looked 'well hung over' and sleepy. However, your dad tried the intellectual approach, asking her about her plans for the work she was engaged upon. She looked long and hard at him and balefully replied, "What's up chuck?" Martin reeled with laughter at this response, finding it both cheeky and highly amusing....!

On another occasion we had to talk reproachfully to a Chinese student who sported a fine dragon on his arm (named Eddie), whose attendance was diabolical and who was in trouble with the police. After a long history of misdemeanours he looked at us, and with a profound expression asked, "Can you do embroidery at this college...?" Needless to say Martin howled with laughter and nearly fell off his chair.

Recently we have exchanged topical things we would like to do to Vladimir Putin – mostly unprintable but very imaginative tortures – we decided we ought to stop as we were enjoying it too much.

That's what I will remember most about your dad – he always saw the funny side of life and was a great 'pick me up'.

He is greatly missed already.....

As well as planning the music and poetry for today, Martin also wrote a few words looking back on his life, which he titled 'Reflections', and which his son Karl is going to read.

Martin was born in 1939 in Derby. In the early 60s he studied painting for, and achieved, the National Diploma of Design at the Derby College of Art (1962). Later he gained his Art Teacher's Diploma at Cardiff College of Art (1964). Teaching posts followed in secondary schools in Southampton and West Yorkshire – notably at Castleford Grammar School (1966-69) and Hemsworth High School (Head of Art 1969 – 1972) and then the Wakefield School of Art (1972-1994).

Martin commented: I was lucky to have come from a fun-loving family – one interested in music, painting and theatre. It wasn't surprising that when I expressed an interest in art my parents encouraged me.

I've had two wonderful children, Karl (born 1964) and Lauren (born 1987). They have been fascinating company and great fun! Their career achievements in challenging

circumstances have made me very proud. Proud also of their mums, Christine and Lesley respectively, both of whom gave total commitment, love, and devotion.

My two bright and lovely grandkids, Ollie and Ned, brought me much pleasure, and my daughter-in-law Peta and family were so warm-hearted and welcoming.

Regarding artwork, I have over the years been lucky to have had opportunities to exhibit – I particularly enjoyed my solo shows at Leeds Playhouse Gallery in 1975, Derby City Art Gallery in 1978, and Wakefield Artsmill (2000). In 2006 I was proud to put on a major exhibition at Derby Gallery in tribute to my elder brother Alan's distinguished acting career. I shared very happy times with him, as I did with my younger brother John – lucky to have been close to both!

The combination of rich family life, special friends, and creative work has been something really special. I say, 'Appreciate your family and friends; reflect on, and indulge in, the wonder and humour of this world – its beauty, its madness, and its power; the shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades. These I saw – you look also, while life lasts!'

Wise words, I would say, and carefully chosen, as Martin's words tended to be. Karl and Lauren described him as a great conversationalist, and recalled their dad sharing his knowledge of art, both history and technique, with them on many a trip round art galleries. Martin's passion for the creative arts was wholehearted. Karl remembers him being immersed in creating these big paintings, absorbed for hours, and only later realising that he had built a canvas too big to get out the door! Some of Lauren's fondest memories from her childhood are of Saturdays acting out plays with her dad. Some of these were scripted, like with Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator, but often they were improvised scenarios, which she would make Martin go over again and again, instruction he always accepted with great patience. Martin always had time for the arts, especially when he could share them with those he loved; he and Ollie formed a powerful connection through an appreciation of art at The Lowry, Martin thrilled to hear the new perspectives his grandson brought to pieces Martin had seen and explored so many times already. Ollie and Ned caught up with their grandpa frequently over Facetime, and Martin flew out to see them in Australia more than once.

His nephew, Ben, also spoke of Martin's artistic passion in his:

Tribute to Uncle Martin:

Artist, Mentor, and of course one of The Legendary Mary's Beloved "Bates Boys"

In the tapestry of life, few threads shine as brightly as those woven by my Uncle Martin. As I reflect on his remarkable journey, I'm struck not only by his extraordinary talent as an artist but by the profound impact he had on all who knew him.

Growing up, my father, Sir Alan, took immense pride in adorning our home with his brother's artwork. What a privilege it was to witness the evolution of Uncle Martin's artistic vision firsthand. I remember being captivated by his early works – massive,

bold paintings of industrial machines rendered with unwavering precision and confident lines. These pieces were both technically fascinating and emotionally stirring.

As I entered adulthood, Uncle Martin's artistic journey continued to unfold in unexpected ways. His work became an adventure through different perspectives and mediums – each phase revealing new dimensions of his boundless creativity. He mastered a distinctive style that rivalled the great Modern Artists, creating works of incredible power and emotional depth.

Then came his installations—unapologetically hysterical, challenging conventional boundaries with the same fearlessness that defined his character. Yet it was his later paintings that affected me most profoundly. His style softened, revealing a rare gift for capturing the essence of solitude.

Uncle Martin could freeze moments in time—an empty automobile, a person's turned back, a lone ferry crossing still waters, the silhouette of a solitary figure at dusk, or a man on a train departing a deserted station. Standing before these works, you felt time slow to a standstill as the quiet power of loneliness washed over you. He painted not just scenes but emotions that resonated in the depths of the human experience.

I'm honored that Uncle Martin thought enough of me to create several pieces specifically for me. What began as a relationship between a "privileged, spoilt young tyke" (as Karl can surely attest) and his accomplished uncle transformed into something much deeper after my father's passing.

When Sir Alan died, Uncle Martin and I found ourselves joint executors of my father's will. Without his steadfast presence during that challenging time, I simply wouldn't have made it through. What started as a solemn duty evolved into countless moments of shared laughter and genuine connection. Together, we navigated grief and discovered joy, often finding ourselves in fits of uncontrollable laughter amidst the most unexpected circumstances.

Uncle Martin's genius extended far beyond his canvases. His warmth, wisdom, and wicked sense of humor made him not just a brilliant artist but a cherished confidant and friend. The memories we created together are masterpieces I will forever hold in my heart.

As we bid farewell to this remarkable soul, I take comfort in knowing that just as his art will continue to move and inspire generations to come, the impact of his spirit will live on in all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Thank you, Uncle Martin, for showing us not only how to see the world differently but how to live in it more fully.

Martin loved to explore the world with his family, though when his children were young it would have been day trips to the east coast or the historic sites of Yorkshire, or holidays around the UK – walking on the beach past the seals on Berneray in the Outer Hebrides, or discovering the dusty games room of an English farmhouse. Martin always found a way to have fun, even on the coldest and mistiest of days. And he was there for the hard stuff too; Karl spoke of the incredible support his dad gave him when his mum died in tragic circumstances.

Martin's appreciation for his children, apparent in his own reflections, is also obvious from the way he enjoyed the time they spent together as they grew up, not only because he was their father, but on its own merits. Karl said his dad was just good company, whether Martin was visiting him down in Dorset when he took up farming, or they were sharing their big road trip up the east coast of Australia, or just going for a run together (Martin's tip: relax your jaw and let your lips flop!). He was a keen runner, out in all weathers (after his dose of apple cider vinegar and a bowl of All Bran!), and particularly enjoyed fell running. He completed the Yorkshire Three Peaks several times, including achieving the first class veteran's time, and was an active member of Wakefield Harriers and Denby Dale Athletics Club.

Martin thrived on finding community through shared interests. I knew him as a long-standing attendee of the Denby Dale Folk Club, where it was always a treat to hear his latest thoughtful and often humorous musings. Martin was interested in poetry all his life – Lauren knew a poetry book would go down well for birthdays – but it was in the last fifteen years or so he found his own voice, supported by the writing and spoken word groups he joined. Lauren commented how much she admired, and hopes to emulate, the passion her dad had for the things that inspired him.

Martin had a way of building connections with people easily, because he had such a genuine interest in those he met; talking to Martin, you really felt heard, and considered. He may have been frustratingly indecisive at times, but his kindness, and his sometimes slightly offbeat sense of humour, created a warmth that drew people in, be they colleagues, neighbours, friends or family.