

Julian Thompson

Good morning My name is Adrian Thompson and Gareth has been kind enough to let me say a few words about my father, Julian Thompson. Father attended this Church for nigh on 40 years. St Bartholomew's and All Saints' Church, Croxley Green – the church he attended in England - were built in the same year – 1871. Father felt both were his spiritual home. The two churches even shared vicars since Alfred Conway of All Saints' was a locum vicar here at St Bartholomew's. Julian and Audrey, his wife, my mother, gave a great deal of their time to this church.

1. Service
2. Duty
3. Honest
4. Difficult
5. An almost puritanical work ethic
6. A doer, not a spectator

Frederic Julian Thompson was born on Wednesday 4 October 1933 to Fred and Hester.

Although born in Blackpool, he spent his early childhood in Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire going to school at Paddock House before moving “down south” to Bushey and attending, with the aid of a scholarship, Watford Grammar School for Boys, and then on to London University – he graduated 2nd in his year.

He was to become a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

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He met Audrey at the Young Conservatives and they were part of a group of friends who went dancing every Saturday night, usually all togged up in white tie and tails. Their engagement followed a charity ball at Blenheim Palace and they were married on 15 September 1956. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary both at Red Hall and in France.

Mother died in February 2007 and up until then they were inseparable. Nothing illustrates this better than their joint work St Bartholomew's Church – both of which they served for over 40 years.

Father was not really sporty but he was always on the go, either outside in the garden – typical “man” tasks – cutting the hedge, cutting the grass, digging the vegetable garden, or doing DIY.

During the course of his professional career he lectured to RAF personnel at Uxbridge; at Akrotiri, Cyprus and at Gutersloh in Germany advising servicemen about to join Civvy Street on how to buy their first house.

Later on he became a Consultant Planning Inspector hearing Appeals on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Remarkably he wrote over 10,000 house survey reports – longhand and in the process wore out a myriad of fountain pens.

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But his real passion was in the restoration of old buildings and he worked on such diverse projects as the refurbishment of an old windmill in Norfolk, and an award winning restoration and conversion of farm buildings, including the longest cow house in Hertfordshire, into a school – Northwood Prep, now part of Merchant Taylor's, Northwood.

While running his business, he also kept himself busy restoring the outbuildings and barns at Red Hall – another award winning development, and in Mégrit just 40 Km south of here, he restored part of a 17th century manor house that was on the historic buildings register.

He helped a lot of people move house, but my parents only ever moved once, from Ashlea Cottage, Croxley Green to Red Hall in Chandlers Cross. Both involved the eviction of livestock - chickens from the lounge at Ashlea Cottage, and calves from Grooms Cottage at Red Hall.

He retired officially on 1st December 2000.

Fellow professionals locally have described him as “A standard bearer for the Profession”, and wondered “How he mastered the many facets of surveying and planning I will never know “.

As a young man he was a member of Round Table, then 41 Club and Rotary International. He became Chairman and President respectively. He was a shy man but the friendships forged then were the friendships he kept for life.

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Long-term Francophiles (Mother read French and Geography at Uni) my parents looked at buying a house in France. In fact, they looked at over 90! After a number of false starts they ended up buying a house in St Briac sur Mer, some 10 kilometres away from here. They named it “Les Optimistes”. Of course, it was old – 250 years old, with granite walls a metre thick and needing an enormous amount of modernisation. The first task was to kill all the Death Watch beetle and, as all his multitude of survey reports seemed to state, *anobium punctatum* - the common furniture beetle. It became a second home rather than a mere “holiday house” and three to four months of the year were spent there with Julian travelling back and forth to continue his business. “Les Optimistes” was pressed into service on many occasions as the venue for lunches and meetings for various church-related committees and visiting dignitaries.

But it was here at St Bartholomew’s Church where his influence was felt the strongest and is his most lasting legacy. He got rid of the Dry Rot. He negotiated the sale of some redundant land to a developer, thereby obtaining both much needed funds for the Church and a flat for the vicar. He commissioned enormous wrought iron lights, which he transported to France on the roof of his Volvo, and also the board on which all the previous vicars are listed. He rostered vicars from all over the world to keep services going during the summer months and over time the congregation grew to such an extent that the Church could open all year round.

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Audrey, too, played her part with the baking of huge quantities of cakes at Christmas and Easter time – these paid for the roses and the landscaping of the garden. As part of her legacy “The Bishops’ Cookbook” was published. This is a collection of recipes (mainly desserts) obtained by writing to every bishop in the UK.

The burgeoning congregation signalled the need to appoint a permanent vicar and after a rigorous selection process one was chosen - Father Gareth Randall. Julian became Church Warden and President of the Association of St Bartholomew’s.

Julian’s massive contribution to St Bartholomew’s was recognised quite properly, and more fully, in 2011 when the Queen presented him with Maundy money at Westminster Abbey. As you will recall Royal Maundy is an ancient ceremony which has its origin in the commandment Christ gave after washing the feet of his disciples on the day before Good Friday. It seems to have been the custom as early as the 13th century for members of the Royal family to take part in Maundy ceremonies, to distribute money and gifts, and to emulate Christ’s simple act of humility. Henry IV began the custom of relating the number of recipients to the sovereign’s age. Modern recipients of Royal Maundy are chosen because of the Christian service they have given to the church and the local community. The red purse contains money in lieu of food and clothing; and the other, white purse, contains silver Maundy coins consisting of the same number of pence as years of the sovereign’s age.

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My sister and I feel that the most appropriate resting place for this Maundy money is here, at St Bartholomew's and so Gareth, I should like to present you, as current custodian of the Church, with these two purses and a DVD of the television programme broadcast at the time showing the presentation.

He cared for Audrey who had cancer for 9 years, ending in 2007 when she died, only to be cruelly diagnosed with Parkinson's the same year and Lewy Body Dementia in 2011. He did not like getting ill one little bit and he avoided hospital like the plague. Until his diagnosis, all he had had to endure was a double hip replacement and a dodgy knee.

Parkinson's – it's a nasty condition. It robs one of the ability to do anything bit by bit – truly a death of a thousand cuts. Initially it results in pouring too much gin into the gin and tonic. I know – who thought that was even possible? But soon it takes hold. It was especially frustrating for him since, as a logical thinker and a problem solver, it robbed him of who he was. His was not the retirement anyone wants.

He had visiting carers for 3 years, live-in carers for 2 years, finally needing 2 people around the clock. A special mention must go to my sister, Sally and my wife, Helen, without whom his suffering would have been considerably greater and his life shorter.

He died at home, as he wanted, in the evening of Friday, 29th July.