

EULOGY – GEORGE HOOKE
given by Graham Hooke at Dad's funeral on Monday, 28th September 2015

An ordinary bloke

Dad was an ordinary bloke. He was not a celebrity, a high flying executive, or even a church minister . He was an engineer and a technical author at BAe, a working man who cycled four miles to work every day for over 30 years. He wasn't wealthy. The seven of us would sit round the meal table and say grace, and Dad would sometimes pray for God to provide when money was tight. He always did.

Great Man?

Yet, since he died, I've heard several people say of my Dad, "He was a great man." I've never heard that before; a good man, a kind man, a humble man... but a great man? Who am I to say? I'm too close. He was my Dad. But I can safely say, on behalf of our family, he was a great father, a great husband, and a great grandfather - in both senses of that word.

India

He was born in India in 1926, with a fine heritage of influential people I've only recently begun to appreciate. His father was an officer in the British Army in India who won the Military Cross for heroism in the first World War. Dad was very proud of that medal. While in hospital , when he knew we were clearing his office for a bed, he was struggling to speak but able to ask me if it was safe. I assured him it was.

Video: 1931 to 2002

I want to begin with a short video of clips of Dad dating back to the 1930s when he was 5 years old, taking us through to Dad & Mum's Golden Wedding Anniversary in 2002. It's a silent movie so Ruth will accompany it with an arrangement of one of Dad's favourite songs (My Jesus, my Saviour) that didn't make it to the final cut for singing today.

A Lad!

Dad, it seems, was a bit of a lad. He enjoyed blowing things up, shooting things and often seemed to get into scrapes. I love remembering the way that he laughed as he talked about some of his escapades. He loved to tell us of when he was learning to drive a tank and how he inadvertently demolished a wall.

Holidays

This sense of fun and laughter was the side of Dad we saw most when we went on family holidays, when he was away from the pressures of home, work and church. Holidays were always camping, and, because we had to travel by bus, Dad would weigh all the gear in the lounge and we all had to carry our own stuff. He was very fond of his lightweight top-notch orange tent, complete with a flysheet.

So it was off up the mountains, with a 1" map from one of his huge archive of OS maps, throwing stones into the tarns, scrambling down scree slopes, drinking from the streams, Can you imagine the shock for Mum...! She'd always enjoyed genteel walks, but on her honeymoon, Dad took her over stiles, across log bridges, over rocks and up mountains – the like of which she had never done before. She got used to it! She had to!

Climbing

Dad always loved climbing; mountains, trees, ladders. Even this summer, when any movement was a huge struggle, I was visiting home and doing a few jobs; I thought dad was safe in his chair and then I popped into the garage for something and there's Dad half way up the ladder to the loft, precariously propped between two crates! As calmly as I could I said, "Dad what are you doing up there?" I could have asked, "How on earth did you get up there?" For some reason he was after his old enlarger from the days when he printed his own photos. Slowly, carefully, I helped him down between the crates and back to the safety of his chair.

Incidentally, talking about that enlarger, Dad passed on to all his children that Hooke trait of keeping things for a rainy day or for posterity, a trait which those of us with creaking loft joints are now desperately trying to unlearn!

But I'm jumping ahead –

Army

Dad just missed serving in the war. He joined the army as a young officer in 1946, travelling around the Med. before returning to England, wondering what to do with his life. He met my mum in the late 40s.

Austin 7

His pride and joy was his Austin Seven. He took it to bits and put it back on the road, minus roof and doors and with the bonnet tied on with rope. While courting Mum and showing off its paces he took a corner a little too fast and Mum fell out! She ended up in hospital, but fortunately lived to laugh about this tale!

Work

She still agreed to marry him! Dad took a job at AVROs in Cheshire. Twins arrived: Kath and I. We lived in a little semi in Cheadle Hulme. Dad used to cycle off to night school to qualify as an electronic engineer. Then came a shock, another set of twins was on the way! I'm told that Mum and Dad just laughed and laughed, not in the least bit phased at the prospect of two more babies!

We needed a bigger house and Dad needed a better job so that was when Dad and Mum made one of those decisions that shape a family's destiny. We all moved to Ansdell as Dad took a job at English Electric Warton, soon to become BAC and later BAe.

26 Rossall Road

Their choice of home was significant too. Somehow, God led them to choose 26 Rossall over a perhaps better house in Fairhaven. So, in 1959, they came to live just 150 yards from where we sit now.

Ansdell Baptist Church

They started attending this Church. It was so convenient for a family with no car. They got to know the minister at the manse just across the road from us. They received a warm welcome at the church. This was a family with four children, for a church with few children! We sat in one of the longer pews, about there (pointing), in the days when the church had pews. Another couple of families with children joined the church at the same time, the Mantles and the Bibbys, they sat over there in the side pews just about where Edwin and Edna (Bibbies) are sitting right now!

Sunday School

So in 1961 Dad was appointed Sunday School Superintendent. I'm not sure this was his most natural gifting, but someone was needed to do it and Dad stepped up. He gently made changes, bringing in new younger people to replace the faithful older ladies who had taught the children for so many years.

I remember sitting in the hall on the front row one Sunday afternoon when Dad introduced a new, dynamic, young guitarist to teach us a song, Dave Lloyd! He taught us "Give me oil in my lamp" for starters! So the whole complexion of Sunday School began to change. Dad served faithfully for 11 years in this role and received a lovely study Bible when he retired.

Squashes

During this time, he and a few friends organised Squashes -gatherings of young people meeting in homes listening to a guest speaker. We hosted some and numbers increased to about 70, all crammed in the lounge, hallway, sitting on wooden benches, half way up the stairs. We were supposed to be in bed but we crept along the landing to watch from behind the banisters... I spotted one of those old benches in the garage last week. My memories were not of sitting on one, listening to a speaker, but of turning it over so it was a long-boat, and sliding all over the house in it.

Becoming a Christian, Billy Graham & Evangelism

Dad had become a Christian and given his heart to Jesus on a train in the late 40s / early 50s. That event totally shaped the rest of his life and the lives of all our family and grandchildren. From then on evangelism was in his blood – some snapshots:

- **Project Evangelism** – a local crusade with a great evangelist preaching at the Ansdell Institute, that 60s sound of an electronic organ playing “Since Jesus came into my heart...” and 16 delegates sleeping on the floor in our home...
- 30 years later, **March for Jesus...** and one of Kendrick’s finest, “We’ll walk the land...”
- Delivering **Challenge**, the Christian newspaper, to anyone who would take it and leaving it in the library. Chris Mantle becoming a Christian and later leading the Boys Brigade. He’s 93 and too infirm to travel but he wrote this:

Dear Val, Yesterday I received your news of the passing of George. I owe my Damascus Road experience to George. On a sunny afternoon when he spoke to me, and quietly challenged me to try the inside of a church instead of just unknowingly criticising. I went, and continued going... making so many loving relationships, enriching my life.

- Evangelism; the influence of a firebrand evangelist named Vic Hammond, General Sec of WCF, a chap with a loud voice who scared the living daylights out of me every time he visited! Dad starting a **WCF** at BAe and inviting visiting speakers every week until he retired...
- Helping organise trips to **Billy Graham** rallies; Live Link, Blackpool; we still have the green and white mugs to prove it...

Dad was unashamedly involved in anything that took the news about Jesus to anyone who would listen.

Books

Mum and Dad loved books. In fact Dad’s final words were about books. Two weeks ago we had cleared Dad’s study of boxes of files and papers, a massive task, so a hospital bed could be located downstairs, with a bed for Mum beside it. It was wonderful to see. My one regret was that I wasn’t there when they wheeled dad in. Wendy and Kath heard him say, “Wow! Wonderful! Where’s my books?” Kath reassured him, his books were safe in boxes, though, in fact, the previous week Dad gave me permission to give them away. We plan to send some as part of a container to the Home of Hope in India to start a library there.

Those were Dad’s last words, though he was mouthing the words of “Great is Thy faithfulness” when some of us sang it at his bedside a few days before he died.

Car and Book Agency

Back in 1972, when I was a student I bought a car for £95, an ancient Singer Gazelle. I think that inspired Dad to buy his own heap of junk too, a Hillman Hunter Estate, the first car he’d owned since that Austin 7!

His car was not just for holidays or work, it was to facilitate ministry! Back to books.... so it was, that he and Mum started a Book Agency For years they picked up books from the Christian Book Shop in Preston run by Jack Hewitson or Miss Stratfull’s in Blackpool. They took them to every major (and a lot of minor) Christian events across the Fylde. It probably cost them a lot more than it made, but it was part of reaching out to others.

Local Ministers

Churches working together was really important to Dad; he was very involved with the local ministers’ group, even though he wasn’t one! When I asked him at one of our last lunches together at 26 Rossall a few

weeks ago, "What things do you still want to do with the rest of your life?" Dad, so frail it was hard for him to stand up, talked about going along to the ministers meetings to encourage them in mission!

Renewal

What mattered to Dad was real faith that worked, that changed lives. So Dad was at the forefront of charismatic renewal. Back in the 60s he'd been interested in discovering more about the Holy Spirit and he and Mum went to Fountain Trust meetings. Dad had a definite experience of being baptised in the Spirit. So he was always encouraging renewal. He loved the Dales Bible Week year, and the Nigel Wright years at Ansdell, through the 80s when the church was one of the first in the UK to host John Wimber.

Nigel and Judy were unable to come today but they came and visited Mum last Thursday.

Adaptability

That was one of the great things about Dad. Adaptability. He had strong convictions but he was willing to change. He used to be very strict about Sundays, we couldn't play with a ball on Sunday walks down to Fairhaven. He softened later. We had lively discussions at the Hooke meal table about this and all kinds of things. Dad did listen, think and adapt.

Ministry

Prayer ministry, at Ansdell and Ellel, became a very important part of his and Mum's life. Not easy, fraught with difficulty, complex issues of the heart, but I know there are many who appreciate the love that shone through this ministry.

Hospitality

Who's coming for tea today? We never knew for sure. Dad and Mum always had an open home, meetings, coffee after church... There were often extra people for lunch on Sundays, At other times, down and outs, unstable people, hurting people, all kinds of people received help and hospitality in our home, as well as more famous people from the Christian scene, like Ishmael, Steve Gaukroger and other church guests.

Welcome

Perhaps one of the things that Dad is best remembered for is welcoming people to church. Nigel described him as the Church Gatekeeper. As a pastor over in Lostock Hall, I regularly had members of our church come and say, "I visited Ansdell, your Dad came and welcomed me." When Rick met with one of the funeral directors just a week ago he said, "I recognise that name! Is that George Hooke, in a wheelchair?" "I visited your church a few weeks ago and your dad wheeled himself over to greet me!" That was the last time Dad was here at church, still doing what he had always done. Dad was a friend to all, year on year, he never stopped allowing his heart to reach out to others

Ready to go home

Just less than three weeks ago, when Mum said that we were doing everything possible to get him home soon, he started to sing, no teeth in, not the most tuneful rendition you'd ever hear: "Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King..." He was desperate to come home to 26 Rossall, and he did, but he was ready to go to his heavenly home.



Years ago I gave Dad a cartoon. He loved it and he's had it on the noticeboard above his desk ever since. It says: "God put me on earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now I am so far behind I will never die."

I looked at that on the day Dad died and I knew, Dad had finally accomplished everything that God gave him to do! And he did it very well.

Graham Hooke, 28th September 2015