



John Ormesher Murray-Clarke

1933-2023



A Service of Thanksgiving for John

on Friday 2 February 2024

St Mary's Church, Bampton, Oxfordshire

Revd. Miles Wellborn

Order of Service

Entry music *Highland Cathedral*

*Written for the Highland Games in Germany 1982:
Composers Ulrich Roever and Michael Korb*

Welcome and opening prayer

The Reverend Miles Wellborn

Hymn

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
To his feet your tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like me his praise should sing?
Alleluia, alleluia!

Praise the everlasting King!

Praise him for his grace and favour
To our fathers in distress.

Praise him, still the same for ever,
Slow to chide and swift to bless.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Glorious in his faithfulness!

Father like he tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame he knows.

In his hand he gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Widely yet his mercy flows.

Angels, help us to adore him;
Ye behold him face to face

Sun and Moon, bow down before him
Dwellers all in time and space.

Alleluia, alleluia!

Praise with us the God of grace.

Fisherman's prayer

Read by Paul Murray-Clarke

God grant me strength to catch a fish,
so big, that even I,
when telling of it afterwards,
may never need to lie. *Amen.*

Reading

By Bobby Murray-Clarke Hebrews 4:9-16

Eulogy

Read by Miles on behalf of the 3 sons

Hymn

Love Divine, all love excelling,
Joy of heav'n to earth come down;
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, Thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise Thee, without ceasing,
glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish then Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Reading

By Billy Murray-Clarke Matthew 25:31-40

Memories of John

Read by Liz Rose

Sleep my Saviour sleep

St Mary's Church Choir, Bampton, Oxfordshire

Music by Walter Hedgcock (Lizann's Great Uncle)

Reading

By Duncan Murray-Clarke 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Short address

By Miles

Prayers concluding with the Lord's Prayer

Hymn

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fiery cloud pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs and praises
I will ever give to thee.

Final Blessing



The Celtic Blessing

May the road rise to meet you
May the wind be always at your back
May the sun shine warm upon your face
The rains fall soft upon your fields
And until we meet again
May God hold you in the palm of his hand

Exit music Trumpets shall sound from Handel's Messiah



*Back Row left to right: Iain, Isobel, Harris, Billy, Emma and Paul
Front row left to right: Duncan, Becky, Lizann, John, Louise,
Bobby, Chloe, Russell, Iain (Craigie)*

Taken at John's 90th birthday this summer

The wake will follow immediately after this service and is a short walk away in Bampton Village Hall, so there is no need to move your car. The family would love to see as many of you there as possible.

Donations to be made to Macmillan or St Mary's Church. Monies raised will be split between the two. There is a cash collection and card facilities will also be available.

Funeral Direction: Co-op Carterton



“Not too sombre please” – was a note from John on his wish list regarding the service.

To be read by Miles on behalf of John’s 3 sons.

Dad had anything but an ordinary upbringing. Born in Ceylon in 1933 to Tea Planter William Ormesher Murray-Clarke and Mother Maryon Munday, this colonial life triggered his first passion – fishing. The family were evacuated to South Africa during the war taking the perilous route by sea which at the time was full of U boats. They landed in South Africa, where Dad went to school in Pietermaritzburg until 1946, when they moved to England.

Sadly his parents separated (extremely rare in those days) and he, Liz and Peter lived in England with their mother. Dad went to Bedford School and this created some stability and purpose for him. This was where his love for sport began. His father had been a great oarsman, but in Dad’s words he personally was “far too scrawny to take up the oars”. He excelled at other sports, playing both cricket and rugby, progressing to county level for Hertfordshire.

Joining the army to do national service in 1952, Dad was commissioned as a 2nd Left tenant. This was where he met his life-long friend Peter Duxbury. As part of his service Dad served with Middle East Land Forces in Egypt. It was returning from this tour that Dad became a shipwreck survivor when the SS Windrush sank after an explosion in the engine room. That night Dad had been at a fancy dress party onboard. He went as a ship wreck survivor dressed in army issue underpants, a ship’s blanket and life jacket. They were rescued and when Dad finally returned to barracks in England, he was put on a charge for incorrect dress.

In 1954 Dad left the army and started working. In 1960 he joined Gillette as an export marketing executive which started his many trips to Africa including Nigeria, Ghana, Congo, Angola, Mozambique and East Africa. His stories were fascinating about touring the bush in a Land Rover, sleeping under it, and eating baked beans out of a tin every morning for breakfast. He introduced rural Africa to shaving with volunteers and live audience demonstrations.

Dad quickly progressed at Gillette making new friends along the way like his boss Mike O’Flynn and of course, another very close friend Mike Hedgecoe, incidentally another fanatical fisherman!

In 1959 Dad met Mum at a New Year’s Eve dance. Within an hour and after a few beers, John proposed on the dance floor while trying to pull off the Gay Gordons. They became engaged in the Summer and on Dad’s insistence (that he couldn’t bear more than 6 months of being showcased and carted round to the relatives),

they married on a misty, cold, rainy January 2nd. Duxbury, his best man, at Dad's side.

And of course that marriage started the amazing partnership that was to last for 64 years. The saying "behind every great man..." was very true in Mum and Dad's case. Qualifying as a teacher, Mum juggled raising a family with teaching. Family has always been her priority and she supported Dad in his many quests, sitting patiently through many an African story and huddled in the bottom of many cold wet fishing boats in the rain, with small boys and 4-legged friends.

In 1968 Dad started his own business. He co-founded Murray-Clarke and Jones with Alan Jones and another adventure began. They started exporting for British manufacturers like Cross & Blackwell and F C Lowe but quickly developed their own brands, selling to the middle East, Far East and Africa.

As sons, our memories of Dad will mostly be sports orientated. Cricket was a big part of the Summer with Dad opening the bowling for Little Marlow, Knotty Green and Marsh Baldon – terrifying the opponents' opening batsmen. All very happy memories for us, especially when the "Crocs" annual match weekend came round – something Dad created and organised and it was lovely seeing so many friends in one place. And of course so much beer.

If Dad wasn't playing cricket in the Summer it usually meant he was fishing. In November 1975 he received a message from our great friend Derek Wilkie who said a piece of land was for sale on Loch Tay with permission for a log cabin.

Dad was on a trip to Nigeria at the time and came back with a nasty case of Lagos Flu but jumped on another flight to Scotland where Derek then tried to cure his flu by administering single malt medicine. Dad returned home next day, having put an offer in on the land, with terrible flu and now a monumental hangover. Mum took the call from the land agent to inform us we were the proud owners of an acre of land at Ardeonaig, and the deal was done. We all helped build the cabin in 1976 which (church aside), undoubtedly became Dad's spiritual home and of course within a short distance from Blair Athol – home of Clan Murray. Holidays then very much revolved around the cabin and many holidays with family and friends are etched in our memories.

Dad and Mum did everything they could to give us the best start in life. They had to be careful with money at times, but life was far from boring. They traded down houses to keep us in school and if we needed their help, they were always there.

Now the Murray-Clarke family has of course grown and Dad has 3 daughter-in-laws who very much loved and respected him and of course his 5 grandchildren.

His life was far from average, but he was never boastful. He was fun, honest, kind, very caring and incredibly principled. Dad leaves the family in a positive space with his 3 sons, closer than they have ever been – all determined to keep an eye on Mum which he very much wanted.

He led by example and was a role model to us all and a very loving husband to Mum.

He was so understated.

He was so loved.

END

Suzy Mc Pherson

When I think of John, it is in the setting of this beautiful church of St Mary's. John gave great service to this church and to those who worship here.

My late husband was a Church Warden when, sadly, he died suddenly at a relatively young age. You may know that Church Wardens are not always easy to find and I was therefore approached a couple of years later and asked if I would consider taking on the post. I was still working full-time and was hesitant to accept, knowing I would not be available during the day. This is necessary to meet and supervise the plumber coming to fix the boiler or, perhaps more importantly, to empty the buckets collecting the rainwater coming through the roof, at regular intervals during the day! John came to me immediately and offered to support me if I accepted the post. He explained that he was free during the day to cover those tasks. I believe he knew that I wanted very much to say yes, for my late husband's sake, and he made it possible for me to do so.

We effectively shared the job from then on and John did far more than simply support me as Church Warden. I can see his smile as I write, and it makes me smile. The strength of his faith, his service to God, not just spiritually but practically, together with his kindness, friendship, understanding and support, helped me through a very difficult time. I will always be grateful to him and also to Lizann.

Since being asked to write something about my friendship with John, the words of a 16th Century prayer (also a hymn) have been swimming around in my head. To me, it describes John perfectly – his faith was so much a part of him and how he lived. The biggest joy is that their faith was something which he and Lizann shared and which clearly cemented their relationship.

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at mine end, and at my departing.

The next memory of John is from good friend Mike Hedgecoe

A day or two after joining Gillette I was walking down one of the long corridors when a door opened at the far end. A chap came out and within a few steps went through the action of a fast bowler delivering a ball. It was John of course limbering up for the local cricket match. "Now there's a fine bowler", I thought and of course he was. We met and he became a dear friend who later advised me to leave what I was doing at Gillette and do something else – which I did.

Peter Duxbury, John's best man and friend for 70 years told us:

On a cricket tour of the Isle Of Wight (we lost), we went to a pub for several large consoling beers and found ourselves much later, in a very posh street with big houses up for sale. John's sadly not with us now, so I can safely tell you, it wasn't my idea to change all the for sale noticeboards round - it was 'im !! John was a very good fast bowler and I was only included in the team as suicide short LEG.

Final memory is from Iain Murray-Clarke (son no.2)

John was talking with Iain about the Windrush episode a couple a days before he died. As we just heard in the Eulogy, one of John's adventures was to be onboard the SS Windrush the night it sank.

Before he left Egypt, Dad had been asked to buy some cricket balls, before he came home..." too bloody expensive in UK" he said. Dad bought a box before departing. When the ship started to go down, the box of balls was all he grabbed, refusing to let them go in the water until of course he had too....