

DAVID GORDON WILKINS

6 February 1937 - 26 October 2018

On Friday 16 November a memorial service was held at Thornbury United Reformed Church to celebrate the life of David Wilkins. Eight BFVS members attended. The Order of Service was aptly entitled 'a celebration of the life . . .'. It was a long service and our attention was held throughout. Family and work colleagues spoke eloquently and with warmth and affection: David was born in India to missionary parents in 1937 and he spent childhood years at boarding school there and subsequently in England. Keen on a career in medicine, he sought a place at Cambridge, only to learn that a pass in 'O' level Latin was essential. He immediately applied himself, studied the language and passed the exam - all in a fortnight!

After graduating from Cambridge, he trained in a London hospital then, as consultant anaesthetist at Bristol Royal Infirmary, he pioneered the UK's first medical simulation centre. David was convinced of the benefits of computerisation in medicine. He had been inspired by the US airline industry's use of flight simulators for training. The centre, one of the most advanced in the world at the time, was equipped with a mannequin which had a pulse, blood pressure and could breathe exactly like a human. Bristol Medical Simulation Centre is now an established part of the city's NHS provision, training medical staff, and a testament to David's vision.

We heard about the part music played in David's life. And we enjoyed Handel's triumphant *Zadok the Priest*. David was an accomplished violinist so it was appropriate to have Mendelssohn's lyrical *Violin Concerto in E Minor*. We sang Charles Wesley's *Love Divine, all Love Excelling*, composed in Bristol in 1747, in the house, now a museum, where we filmed *Encounters with Wesley*. Can we be excused for some introspection: was the choice of hymn a nod from David to BFVS . . . ?

His love of music nourished his interest in audio. David built a professional recording studio where the largest speakers, Dalek-like in appearance, had cost more than the family car! The difficulties of editing audio tape with scissors led him to develop his own computer digital editing system in advance of any commercial equipment available.

And once video gained a domestic footing David embraced it with enthusiasm. His camera captured the antics of garden squirrels (shown on BBC) and an ambitious trip to the Galapagos Islands. And once he became a member of BFVS, his technical expertise was invaluable on all the club productions at that time. He was Chairman for three years during which time he devised a successful video training programme attended by neighbouring film clubs. Members were always welcome at this home – as a filming location, for discussion about productions and for recording soundtracks. Beneath David's modest demeanour were great qualities: intense technical ability, creativity and administrative skills. Our club has benefitted immeasurably from his input.

We heard of David's family commitment – Central Farm in its lovely rural setting with paddocks for horses; Christmas gatherings with the burgeoning family - eight grandchildren.

After the service we adjourned to Thornbury Golf Club for a lavish buffet lunch. We welcomed the chance to meet up with David's daughters who had starred in the Wesley film and recall those times.

I'm sure I speak for all those who attended from the club to pay our respects: we learned a great deal more about our fellow filmmaker David Wilkins on Friday. It has truly enriched our memories of him.

Gordon Young