

THE CLARION

The Magazine of The Parish of St Mary The Boltons

SEPTEMBER 2004

John Henry Harris RIP

John died on 10 Jul after a short illness although he had become increasingly frail for some time. At the funeral Gerald paid tribute to his many qualities including his love for his family and his considerable professional talents.

For biographical information Gerald relied on a speech for given by a family friend at John's ninetieth birthday party in 2002. Here is an extract:

So, we are gathered here from London and further afield, as a family of Harris', to pay tribute to a remarkable man whose roots can be traced back to 1791 to a poor, but clever, Jewish family from Raciaz and Plock in Poland. His Great-great grandfather was one Shaya Przedecki and his greatgrandfather was Moses Prezedcki, born in 1812.

Moses was three times married; by his first wife, Gietel Ruchla née Zylinski he had at least four children and his firstborn in 1842 was Jakob Herz Prezdecki, the common ancestor of the Harris' here today, who passed on in 1904. This first J. H. Harris, for such became his name when he left Poland around 1870 and came to London, was father to seven children, the first of these was David, who was my mother's and my Uncle Eric's grandfather ...

David was born in Plock in October 1867, Jakob having married Krondel Rachel Witkowka, born 1844, the previous year. I have here now the original Hebrew Wedding Certificate from 4th October 1866, and can tell you that my mother was named after Krondel, or Carol. By 1881 as I have found from the census of the time the Harris family lived in 69 Mulberry Street off Commercial Road, and later at no. 15. John himself was born on 20th October 1912, he was later joined by two sisters, Beatrice, and then Trudie. ...

I do not need to tell the older generation here how hard life was in the East End during World War 1 and between the wars, but almost everyone moved out as soon as they could, to make room for later waves of immigrants. They were mostly able to move on because of their intelligence, education, drive and ambition.

John was no different, and thus it was not too many years before he, in 1932, won a place at The Royal School of Mines, Imperial College, London, ...

After graduation in 1935, with ARSM and a BSc in Mining and Metallurgy, and carrying of the Bessemer medal and the Glorney prize in his graduation year, John was off to apply his many skills and talents to the larger world. He was then, and remains now a man of vision, of loyalty, great technical skill and knowledge and dedication.

He started his career with the British Government in Tanganyika in 1935 as a Metallurgist and later as Assistant Director of the Geological Survey of that country. Already in 1936 he published a manual of cyanidation, which tells us he was likely working with gold. Working in Dodoma in Central Tanganyika from 1935 he struck gold again, for he first met and then married in 1938, Christel, who is a bold traveller also, not happy with going everywhere that John was sent, she now takes him everywhere she wants to go!! John was not always in R&D, turning his fancy to production with Christel's help, Peter arrived in May 1943 and Ingrid in June 1945.

In Tanganyika his most remarkable invention was the X-ray process by which diamonds are sorted. Instead of growing rich on it himself, this was quietly filed away in the government records and was later used by de Beers and the Russians. It is still the standard process by which all diamonds are sorted. He also did distinguished wartime work on the manufacture of abrasives, about which he has an entertaining story, and on building materials, which earned him the admiration of Governor Twining and seats for the Harris family at the Coronation in 1953.

From 1955-1960 he was Chief Research Officer at the Dept. of Mines in the Research Division at Ipoh, Malaya, working first for the British Government and then for the newly independent Federation of Malaysia, where he quickly became a world expert on tin and addressed several world conferences on the subject. ...

In 1960-1968 John was Director of Research at Consolidated Tin Smelters Ltd. dealing with tin, but also copper, tantalum, and niobium, and this work took him to mines in Australia, Bolivia, and Peru.

On the strength of this he joined the United Nations as project manager in Bolivia, where he was Director of the Mining and Metallurgical Research Institute from 1968-1970. By 1971-1973 ... John was in Indonesia as a Process Engineer and United Nations Project Manager

working on offshore exploration for tin and in tin ore dressing research. He was now 60 years old and celebrated with a huge fancy dress party on the tropical beach of the tiny island of Bankha where he and Christel lived.

In 1974-1985, since he did not retire till age 70, he was at the UN HQ in New York and the only question is where they did not send him! I know he once went to Climax Molybdenum Mine near Golden in Colorado. ...

His last United Nations mission was to return to Tanzania to assess the mineral wealth of that country, essentially to assess his own work of fifty years before (he found it very good!). Christel and Ingrid went with him, and on that occasion he was even able to meet up with his own lab assistant, an African of exactly the same age as himself – to be still alive at 70 was quite an exception. You would think that in 1985 he might slow down, but John was then in the Sahara, of all places, for a private Canadian company.

Since he finally retired and took up residence in Coleherne Court, John has not let mounds of tailings grow under his feet. His active mind, coupled with his life-long desire to be of service to his fellow man, found him active again, now as President of the Coleherne Court Association - it is rumoured, by some, that illegal tunnelling parties were sometimes held in the basement, but no ores were found! Despite this the residents celebrated his 90 years with another party on October 15th...

John was also Treasurer of the London branch of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District. ... With more yet more buried treasure to be counted in caves beneath St. Mary's Church The Boltons, John decided to be the Treasurer there also ... As if this was not enough John also looks after the gold bars mined by those lucky retired UN Civil Servants, whose club is called BAFUNCS.

John and Christel are also active members of the National Trust and Friends of the V&A and go the V&A for lectures every Wednesday night and for delightful meals in the basement, John's old School of Mines laboratory.

All that work in what some American once called 'the pink bits' - countries of the old Empire, bought a handsome reward in 1999. At the End of Empire celebrations at Westminster Abbey, John was presented to the Queen and her Consort as they arrived at the West Door of the Abbey, and he was also interviewed for *The Times*.

No speech can encompass such a large life. It is really true to say that they do not make them like John anymore. Did you know that John can also play the piano by ear, also with his fingers- and, if asked very nicely will make a coin appear from his nose? John also

survived a very grave illness and long hospitalisation in the year 2000 ...

John Henry Harris, man of courage, honour, integrity, social conscience, husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, traveller, scientist, engineer, manager, treasurer, bon viveur, fell-walker and musician, today we all stand to honour you and the many fulsome achievements of your long and rewarding life, and the many contributions you have made all over the globe ...

Letting Go

My husband Philip, son Phil and I would like to thank all our friends at St. Mary's and the Intermission Group at St. Saviour's who supported us during the five years of my mother's decline into senile dementia and her recent death in Bremen, Germany.

It was a difficult time. The hardest decision, my brother, who lives in Osnabrueck, and I ever had to make in our lives came when we had to put our mother into a nursing home. Luckily it was an excellent place. The care and devotion she received, most certainly prolonged our mother's life by three and a half years.

I am always amazed by God's perfect timing. There were many occasions when I felt extremely anxious that I would not be able to be with my mother during her final hours here on earth, particularly when my husband and I spent holidays or work-related periods abroad. I need not have worried.

On 21 June I made a spontaneous decision to fly to Bremen to see Mutti (mum). Normally I booked these visits well in advance in order to take advantage of the cheapest rates. With hindsight, I am certain that the Holy Spirit guided me. While the plane flew across Belgium and Holland, the nursing home telephoned my husband and informed him that my mother's health had deteriorated.

Although my mother was barely conscious during the last few days, the nurses and carers assured me that she could still hear me. So I sang songs, mostly her favourite hymns and read psalms to her. In a Christian bookshop I found a book of poems about love and loss which I read over and over to my mother and to myself when I was alone. When I was sitting at my mother's bedside and my grief seemed to be overwhelming, I wrote a loveletter to Mutti. All this, and knowing that people were praying for my mother and me, gave me comfort and strength.

Mutti died peacefully on Sunday morning, 27 June at 10.10 a.m. When she was well, this was the time she attended the regular service at the local Lutheran church.

The love and support which my family and I received from relatives and friends was a great consolation. Hana, the mother of our son's Japanese girl-friend Gyoku wrote from Osaka:

"Dear Anne, I am sorry to hear about your mother. I hope that you are o.k. I feel that Christ called her and it was her time to go. I shall sing hymn No.430: Nearer, my God to thee... for your mother, Love Hana"

Four weeks later Hana came to London and took communion with me at our regular Sunday service at St Mary's and attended the internment of my mother's ashes on a consecrated plot next to the church.

Gerald, our vicar sent me these words of encouragement: "I hope that the peace in which she now exists will also be a part of your life."

I thank God that He gave me a mother who was and always will be a good example to me. My mother had started her married life as the wife of a German missionary in Brazil, therefore, instead of flowers, donations went to a mission helping street children in Brazil.

Yes, Mutti you are at peace now. All is well. God is great.

Anne Swift

Royal School of Church Music Concert

Saturday 11 September, 7.30pm
St Matthew's Church, Redhill, Surrey
Choral Music by Padilla, Lobo, Vaughan Williams,
Elgar, Taverner & others
given by the Serlo Consort

Tickets £10 (concs £7) available at the door. You may apply for tickets in advance at a discount (£8/£5) to 'The Serlo Consort', c/o Kit Perona-Wright, RSCM, Cleveland Lodge, Westhumble, Dorking, Surrey, RH5 6BW (quoting that you are a member of St Mary The Boltons which an RSCM affiliated church).

St. Mary's Church Choir

Graham Caldbeck, the New Director of Music, is holding auditions for the voluntary church choir on Friday 24 September, 7.30pm, in church. Please offer your services if you can sing but it will be for Graham to decide who is in the choir.

The Scaffolding of the Spirit

A series presented by Carys Walsh
(psychotherapist & spiritual director)
Visiting the personal and spiritual journey
via the lives of four poets

Saturdays beginning at 9.30am
St Marylebone Healing & Counselling Centre,
17 Marylebone Road NW1 5LT (020 7935 5066)

11 September TS Eliot
23 October RS Thomas
13 November Christina Rossetti
11 December Elizabeth Jennings

1400th Anniversary of the Diocese of London

Kensington Area Celebration

Monday 27 September
Holy Trinity Church, High Street Hounslow
7.30pm Refreshments
8.00pm Service
Preacher: The Bishop of London

Everyone is welcome to this service as the diocese continues to rejoice in the church's presence in the capital city

Thanksgiving for the Work of St Jude's, Courtfield Gardens

There will be a special service at St Jude's on Sunday 3 October at 10.30am to give thanks for all that has happened in the past prior to it ceasing to be a parish church and a new project being started modelled on the San Egidio community in Rome. There will be no 10.30am Eucharist at St Mary's that day although there will be a Said Eucharist at 8.00am. Please join the people of St Jude's on that day to show solidarity and make yourself known to those who would like to worship at St Mary's in the future.

The St Mary's Harvest Festival will now take place on Sunday 10 October.

Items for the October edition of *The Clarion* to be sent to the Parish Office by Sunday 19 September please.