

Speech at Grandad's funeral

One often hears the phrase 'jack of all trades, master of none'

And I think the greatest tribute I can pay to my grandad, is to say that he saw this phrase almost as a challenge, determined to prove wrong the logic behind it...

His interests and passions were too many to list in such a short space of time.

And some of my favourite memories growing up are sitting in the front room at 33 Shepherd's Hill, with Grandad in his big armchair, talking over tea and biscuits.

We could chat about anything: Politics, Science, and even Arsenal football club!

But what I remember above all are our discussions about Philosophy, something we both shared a deep interest in – me through my studies, and Grandad through his monthly philosophy group.

He was the driving force behind this group for over 20 years, sharing his enthusiasm with, and encouraging, the dozen plus people who attended every month. Even in his late 90s, he still hosted a session at Shepherd's Hill, the last one only three months ago.

When discussing Philosophy, Grandad always found a way to make links and connections with all kinds of interesting issues.

Reading through some of the papers he presented to the group, as I have since he passed away, you get a sense of the way in which Grandad could link Philosophy to almost any other topic.

He talks about the philosophy of music and time; the original principles of the welfare state in ancient civilisation; and the links between Kantian thought and Christian ethics.

No translator's work is safe, as he uses his extensive languages to question in amazing detail whether something of the key philosophical meaning has been lost in their translation.

In one passage, he examines the mathematics of poetry, counting the number of stressed and un-stressed syllables in popular limericks, and comparing this to patterns in nature, such as the ever-present Fibonacci sequence.

So, I think when you look at my grandad's interests, when you look at how varied they were and how they all linked together, you arrive at quite a simple conclusion...

They weren't discrete or separate interests. He didn't have a passion for a myriad of different things.

He had a passion for one thing... life. And he spent his time thinking, talking and writing about every aspect of it.