

# OBITUARY: Gerald Barnes

Four people submitted appreciations of Gerald and they are reproduced here together with the funeral service sheet.

By **John Smith** [KGS 1947-1954]

Gerald Lynton Barnes was born in Hampstead in 1935 and he died on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. He was at KGS from 1946-1953.

I first met him at KGS in 1947-48. He had arrived the year before me - that would have been September 1946. He was a good pianist for his age even then, and he ultimately accompanied the school choir under the enthusiastic direction of **Mr Merlyn Smith**. He was soon concurrently playing for the morning assembly on the small pipe organ in the school hall. A group of three enthusiastic would-be church organists, Gerald, **John Payne** and myself, became friends. Gerald often played the organ at Willesden Green Baptist church, where the church was frequently packed out to hear the minister The Revd Frank Mildred deliver magnificent sermons.

We would sometimes spend a Saturday afternoon cycling into the city and visiting the lesser famous churches, when all was quiet but the churches were open for 'personal devotion'. On these occasions we would finish up near the organ, and we got quite good at finding where the organ keys were hidden. This way we were able to try out these large city church organs and we rarely got challenged.

Gerald had had some early harmony coaching with Mr Merlyn Smith, then with Alan Harverson, and then Eric Thiman. His improvising skills developed apace and I recall after one School carol service at Christ Church, Brondesbury, he improvised a complete fantasia on the last carol as we filed out. The first two chords were very non- traditional and I recall

seeing Merlyn wince, although I do think he was very proud of Gerald. He gained an LRAM while still at school and was awarded an organ Open Scholarship at Hertford College, Oxford in 1953.

After Oxford, GLB became an FRCO. His career included many years as musical director at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church and finally at St Columba's Church, Pont Street. He was an examiner in London for the Associated Board, and at the London College of Music.

After he retired he rarely touched the keyboard, but he enjoyed watching competent organists in performance from the balcony where he could follow every move.

From **Mark Dodgson** (Non member, cousin in law)

*[This was read out at the funeral service]*

It is with sadness that I stand here today, in the very same church where many of us were gathered just over five years ago for Rachel's funeral, after she had been taken from Gerald and all of us so abruptly.

For those who do not know me, Rachel, and my late father, Trevor Dodgson, were second cousins.

Regrettably, prior to Rachel's death I didn't spend very much time with Rachel or Gerald, and there are in this congregation many people who knew Gerald far better and for much longer than ever I did.

However, in the last five years I did come to discern Gerald's character traits – traits which have been reflected in the various stories about him that I have read in letters and kind messages received after his death, for which letters the family is most grateful. Whilst on the subject of Gerald since Rachel's death, I must also take this opportunity to thank Graham Marshall, from the carer agency, who on and off for the last

four years has looked after Gerald in his Regency House flat. Without Rachel, Gerald was a bit of a lost soul, but he was thankfully able to remain in his own home, surrounded by familiar things.

Despite his sometimes gruff exterior, Gerald was clearly a kind man, evidenced by the countless stories I have heard of help given to those starting their musical careers. Small talk was not his thing – a pithy and dry sense of humour most certainly was. “I don’t know which work you are singing, but we are rehearsing the Vaughan Williams”, he would say to an under-rehearsed chorister. Sometimes he would quietly drop a remark almost un-noticed that, once it registered, was very funny.

Although his interest in music waned during the years following his diagnosis with early stage dementia, music was what underpinned so much of Gerald’s life and moreover, Gerald and Rachel’s married life.

Whether as a schoolboy in shorts, seen on the back of today’s order of service, beaming out at us from an organ console;

Or the newly-married groom, who found his bride from among the choir at Bloomsbury Baptist Church – both getting into a taxi just after their wedding;

Or all the friends Gerald and Rachel made through music, whether in the choirs he ran, the churches he played in, or as club pianist for the Savage Club, of which membership he was immensely proud.

His rather worn and gravy- or wine-stained Savage club tie is with him on his way to meet his Maker. Whether St Peter will recognize the tie and fast track entry, I don’t quite know. Gerald’s sensitive touch on the keyboard will certainly complement the sweet sound of celestial harps, and might ease his passage.

The grandson of a Baptist minister, Gerald Linton Barnes was born in Hampstead and brought up in Kilburn. Although he did not hail from a musical family, his mother Connie supported and encouraged the development of what was evidently a considerable musical talent at a young age. Following A-levels that included Latin and Greek, Gerald won an organ scholarship to Hertford College, Oxford, and thereafter studied under Eric Thiman and Alan Haverson at the Royal Academy of Music. Thiman music remained a passion for the rest of his life.

He was later organist at the Central Baptist Church for 26 years, and in 1987 was appointed organist and choirmaster in this church, where he served for a further 17 years.

But like many professional musicians, his tentacles spread widely – he played and conducted in places ranging from the West London Reform Synagogue to the Wembley Philharmonic Society, from his own Elysian Choir to the Thiman Orchestra. More than one person has remarked that he was a sensitive accompanist and a great sight-reader. He composed a number of hymn tunes, including *Tetherdown* and *Pont Street*, the latter we will hear played on the organ shortly.

Gerald became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists as well as gaining a slew of other academic accolades. He was an examiner for the Associated Board and professor and examiner at the London College of Music.

I cannot close my remarks without talking about both Gerald and Rachel, who complemented each other perfectly. Her skill was putting people at their ease. Her hospitality to all their musical friends was legendary. There is no doubt that Gerald could not have done what he did without Rachel. A while before Rachel died a friend of theirs asked Gerald how Rachel was, and Gerald responded with relief “*She’s alright, thank God*” – he knew full well just how dependent he was on her.

Gerald's concern was always for musical performance; the worlds of theatre and couture that interested Rachel, were not quite his thing. On one occasion, as was sometimes his custom when finished for the day at Bloomsbury Baptist Church, Gerald had looked in on the Temple to catch a recital by the eminent organist Sir George Thalben-Ball, whom he particularly admired. Gerald was then joined in the back pew by a gentleman in a morning coat, whom he thought vaguely familiar. When he recounted this later that evening to Rachel, she simply could not believe that he'd failed to recognize Sir Laurence Olivier. I expect he referred to him as "*Oh, you know, Sir Doings*" – everyone in the last few years whose name he could not formulate seems to have been referred to as Doings or Thingummy.

Although he was very much a Londoner, Gerald adored going on holiday with Rachel, away from the bustle of the city, and their favourite destination was Switzerland. One chest of drawers in the flat is simply heaving with photographs and postcards of Swiss lakes, peaks and cable cars.

I know that many people here will miss Gerald, but we should all give thanks for the happiness he gave to so many people through music.

From **Robert Coupe** (Non member, University friend)

I first met Gerald in December 1952. We were among a group of six-formers spending two or three days in tests and interviews seeking admission to Hertford College, Oxford. Gerald was applying to become the organ scholar and I to read history.

I was impressed by how immaculately dressed he was at the first evening meal. We saw a little of each other over the next day or two and were pleased to find, the following October, that we had both been successful in gaining admission.

Four of us quickly struck up a friendship: Gerald and I, a friend from my school and another historian (from Nottingham High School). We used to meet in each other's rooms at tea-time, taking it in turns to host a snack of cheese, biscuits and cake. After a while we began to play bridge on Sunday evenings. Perhaps not as enthusiastic a card-player as the rest of us, Gerald happily joined in.

He sometimes gave the impression of being rather vague, but in fact he had a sharp mind. I treasure a photo I have of the four of us during our first term. It was taken after the formal matriculation ceremony and shows us all duly arrayed with white bow-ties, gowns and mortar-boards.

After leaving Hertford, Gerald and I kept in touch. We each had to spend two years on National Service before starting "work". Gerald developed his musical career, which included many years as organist at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church. I joined the Civil Service in Manchester but, in 1963, I was posted to London. That made it easier to meet again.

In December 1966 Gerald came to Liverpool to play the organ at my marriage to Elaine. Over the years we came to know Rachel too – discovering that she had also once lived in Manchester! Every year or two we would meet in each other's homes for a meal. During one meal at their house we were touched by the gentle way in which Rachel looked after Gerald's mother in her declining years.

We were invited to each other's special celebrations – most recently our Golden Weddings. It was not long after our Golden Wedding that both Gerald and Rachel were admitted to hospital, where Rachel sadly died. After Gerald returned home we had 'phone conversations occasionally and I visited him a couple of times at Regency House before the epidemic intervened. You can imagine the sense of loss when we were informed that Gerald, whom I had known for nearly 70 years, had passed away.

We mourn a gentle man and a steadfast friend.

From **Robin Paul** (from St Columba's Church, Pont Street)

At the morning service on 3 October, it was announced that Gerald Barnes would be retiring at the end of the year. It was a significant and emotional moment. You have to have been a member of St Columba's for a long time to remember when Gerald was not our organist and choirmaster.

He came to us in 1987 following twenty-six years as organist of Bloomsbury Baptist Church. He was indeed the grandson and son-in-law of Baptist ministers. He is a pupil and disciple of Eric Thiman, with whose wonderful output on anthems and choral music Gerald has greatly enriched our Sunday worship.

Gerald is a marvellously talented and gifted organist who has brought the highest standards of musicianship both through his individual playing and through his coaching and conducting of his loyal choir team. The anthems Sunday by Sunday have always been a highlight of worship at St Columba's as has Gerald's improvised accompaniment of the last unison verse of the final hymn. Boundless as ocean's tide roaring in fullest pride comes to mind. His Easter and Christmas performances with the choir, of which I would particularly pick out Stainer's "*Crucifixion*", have uplifted us at these special times of the year.

Gerald's versatility as a musician was stunningly revealed when he sat down at the piano to accompany members of the choir in the Christian Aid concerts which he organised for several years. With deft touch, amazing virtuosity and great sense of humour (albeit with a deadpan face), he brought old and new favourites to life, often sight-read off a patchwork quilted manuscript.

In September 2000, to mark the centenary of his mentor, Gerald staged a concert in honour of Eric Thiman. He conducted and accompanied a chorus entirely made up of former Thiman pupils. Those who attended will never forget his rendering of "*I wandered lonely as a cloud*".

Lately, Gerald has had to cope with the running refurbishment of the organ while continuing to provide the musical support for St Columba's worship. It was a trying period, but it was brought to a triumphal conclusion when Gerald joined two other distinguished organists for the inaugural recital on 16 May this year. The programme ended with a moving rendition of Gerald's own hymn tune "*Pont Street*".



In December, we will be given an opportunity to express our thanks to Gerald and Rachel for all they have done for St Columba's over the past seventeen years. We hope very much that *auld acquaintance will not be forgot*.

**DETAILS OF THE FUNERAL SERVICE SHEET FOLLOW**



Funeral Service  
for  
**GERALD BARNES**



6th June 1935 – 31st August 2022

**St Columba's (Church of Scotland)**  
Pont Street, London SW1

Friday, 30th September 2022  
2.30 p.m.

*Before the service music will include*  
*The Angel's Farewell (The Dream of Gerontius) by E. Elgar (1857-1934)*  
*Arioso (Adagio in G) from Cantata BWV 156 by J. S. Bach (1685-1750)*  
*and*  
*Pastorale on Dominus regit me (No 14 of four Chorale Improvisations)*  
*by E. H. Thiman (1900-1973)*

**PROCESSIONAL**

**Nimrod**  
(from Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 36, "Enigma Variations")  
*E. Elgar (1857-1934), arranged by W. H. Harris (1883-1973)*

*Please stand as the coffin is carried into church.*

**WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP**

**HYMN**

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;  
To his feet thy tribute bring.  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
Who like me his praise should sing?  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise him! Praise him!  
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.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Glorious in his faithfulness.

Fatherlike, he tends and spares us;  
Well our feeble frame he knows;  
In his hands he gently bears us,  
Rescues us from all our foes.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Widely as 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.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise with us the God of grace.

Praise, My Soul  
*J. Goss (1800-1880)*  
*H. F. Lyte (1793-1847)*

**OPENING PRAYER**

**SCRIPTURE READING**  
Read by the session clerk, Charlotte Bradford

**Romans 8:31-39**

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**HYMN**

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
Most blessed, most glorious, the ancient of days,  
Almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unchanging, and silent as light,  
Nor waiting, nor wasting, thou ruler in might;  
Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above  
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life thou givest, to both great and small;  
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;  
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
And wither and perish; but naught changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
Thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;  
All laud we would render: O help us to see  
Tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

St. Denio *W. Chalmers Smith (1824-1908)*

**TRIBUTES**

**MUSICAL INTERLUDES**

**In Summer Time on Breton**  
*G. Peel (1877-1937) A. E. Housman (1859-1936)*  
Recording of Ken Jones accompanied by Gerald Barnes.

**Pont Street**

Extemporisation on Gerald's hymn tune "Pont Street", written whilst organist and choirmaster at St. Columba's.



**TRIBUTE**

**MOTET**

**Ave verum corpus (K. 618)**  
*W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)*  
A tribute from singers who previously sang under Gerald's direction.

**PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & LORD'S PRAYER**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in  
heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us  
our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not  
into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is  
the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever.  
Amen.

**HYMN**

Thy hand, O God, has guided  
Thy flock from age to age;  
The wondrous tale is written,  
Full clear, on every page;  
Our fathers owned thy goodness,  
And we their deeds record;  
And both of this bear witness,  
One church, one faith, one Lord.

Thy heralds brought glad tidings,  
To greatest, as to least.  
They bade men rise, and hasten  
To share the great King's feast;  
And this was all their teaching,  
In every deed and word,  
To all alike proclaiming,  
One church, one faith, one Lord.

When shadows thick were falling,  
And all seemed sunk in night,  
Thou, Lord, didst send thy servants,  
Thy chosen sons of light,  
On them and on thy people  
Thy plenteous grace was poured,  
And this was still their message:  
One church, one faith, one Lord.

Thy mercy will not fail us,  
Nor leave thy work undone;  
With thy right hand to help us,  
The victory shall be won;  
And then, by men and angels,  
Thy name shall be adored,  
And this shall be their anthem:  
One church, one faith, one Lord.

Thornbury *B. Harwood (1859-1949)* *E. H. Plumptre (1821-1891)*

**COMMENDATION**

**ANTHEM**

This favourite of Gerald's will be sung by the choir.

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.

*H. Walford Davis (1869-1941)* *From a Book of Hours (1514)*

**BENEDICTION**

**RECESSIONAL**

**Fantasia in G minor BWV 542**  
*J. S. Bach (1685-1750)*

*Please stand as the coffin is carried out of church.*

Minister – Reverend Angus MacLeod

Following the Service, you are warmly invited by the family to join them for hospitality in the Upper Hall on the ground floor.

There is a retiring offering today for those who wish to support  
*The Alzheimer's Society.*



Pages 9 and 12