



Obituary

Harry Crompton

25th February 1938 – 2nd July 2022

Information held in the obituary below, has been kindly contributed by the Rev'd Ken McLaughlin who gave the eulogy at Harry's funeral on Tuesday 5th July 2022, in Glendermott Church of Ireland, Londonderry.



Harry was born on 25th February 1938 at Dunfield Terrace into a family of 3 boys - Raymond who was killed in Germany in the Second World War and Gerald who is here today.

Harry was mostly reared by his Granny Wray. When young, he fell over in a quarry and when others had given up, Granny Wray had to teach him to walk again. She put a towel under his arms and walked him up and down the road. He was taught many other skills like basket making and weaving, knitting, sewing, and baking - skills that have stood by him all his life.

With Harry it's not so much what you include but what you leave out. He was a very complex character and lived a very interesting and full life.

Harry worked in Brown's foundry in Foyle Street with Evelyn Gibbons father John. Harry said he didn't know how he lived so long with all the fumes he breathed in. He then trained as a nurse and worked for 5 years in a London hospital before returning home to work in Gransha Hospital. When Altnagelvin Hospital was preparing to open he was sent with a ward sister to set up the casualty department in 1960. He told me that his years working in Gransha Hospital were among the happiest of his life.

But there is more to Harry than being a nurse, far more. He was an accomplished organist, played and tutored the bag pipes, a Campanologist as he called himself, not a bell ringer and he loved ringing church bells and was in great demand. He rang all over the place, from St Columbs Cathedral to St Finbarr's Cathedral in Cork, even to the lofty heights of York Minister. He travelled to St Donard's and St Thomas's in Belfast mostly every week to assist in ringing with their teams. I met bell ringers in Kilkenny who knew Harry well. Harry was a good singer and sung in Glendermot choir for many years. He loved his church and kept it immaculate while he was caretaker.

Harry had many strings to his bow, he knit and sewed, he altered clothes for both men and women and altered curtains. I remember him going to Ballymena for a new sewing machine just a few years ago.

He was a member of the lodge as he put it and chaplain in the Black Preceptory for over 60 years and will be buried according to their rites. If he had been able, he would have been at the Battle of the Somme service on 1st July. The brethren have been very good to Harry, and he appreciated it. It was good that Lowry and Robert were with him on Wednesday night when he was able to chat and enjoy the company.

Harry was adventurous. On one cruise there were two older ladies in the next-door cabin, and he said he spent the whole cruise trying to avoid them. Harry was great company, some of his stories were priceless and his turn of phrase brought a smile to your face. If someone talked a lot, he said they would talk a gramophone to rust or if someone was outsized, he said they were some acreage. Although Harry called a spade a spade, he was kind-hearted and very generous. He loved little children and would have a big smile and a wave every time he saw one.

If you did him a good turn you were a perfect treasure. He was always immaculately dressed, especially on Sundays and his hat and cap were never far away. His trademark in church on a Sunday morning was his belated AMEN, if I couldn't see him, I listened for his Amen and I knew he was here.

Above all Harry was a man of faith and of high principle, he loved his church and loved the scriptures. Psalm 116 was his favourite passage. When I prayed and read a portion of scripture with him, he would always say the Lord's Prayer with me. In hospital he had his prayerbook on the table. It was great at Easter that he got on the church bus tour to Llandudno and was grateful to Adrienne Edgar for organising it. In the past few years his memory was not the best and it annoyed him when he couldn't recall things. He enjoyed his morning coffee in Costa Foyleside where Melissa and the staff looked after him and gave him VIP treatment. His Costa family asked about him every day and I know there are some of them here today.

There are so many people who helped him along the way and so many he helped, and I know he would want me to thank each and every one. The warden of Lisnamon where he lived, those in Glendermott and Newbuildings, St Columbs Cathedral, especially the bell ringers who were lifelong friends, Canon Robert Boyd and Rev Ian McIlleavy for their pastoral care, the staff of ward 26 of Altnagelvin Hospital, his GP, and the staff of Longfield Nursing Home although he was sadly only there for 5 days.

Harry had this day arranged long ago not only for his funeral but more importantly to meet his Lord and Master. An example we would do well to follow. I'll just leave you with a quote from C S Lewis which is on his epitaph in Westminster Abbey – *I believe in Christianity like I believe the sun rose this morning, not because I saw it but because by it, I can see everything else. Today makes no sense at all except through the prism of the gospel.*