

Wallis G G Hunt 1922-2001



The Tribute to Wallis paid by his son Peter at the Memorial Service held at Wellington College

A warm welcome to all Wallis' family and friends, to celebrate his life which ended in March this year. It is entirely appropriate that this service is taking place at Wellington, in this beautiful chapel. Wellington was almost Wallis' second home, ever since he walked through Great Gate in 1936. All four of his Sons came here. One was Head of College and Queen's Medallist; another was Captain of Rugby Football. There are now two grandsons here.

Wallis was Chairman of the Old Wellingtonian Society and a Governor. He left a few instructions for us before he died. One was to have a thanksgiving service in this Chapel. Another was to have Carolyn Chadwick and the Wellington Choir singing the Mozart anthem you will hear later in the service. Incidentally he would have been absolutely thrilled to have heard the Trumpet Tune played so brilliantly by a Wellington trumpeter.

One way and another it has not been a particularly good year for our family. It would be lovely if that could all change, starting today. The aim of today's service is to celebrate the life of a very special man. We very much hope you will all sing your heads off and help make it as happy a day as possible. You are all invited to join us for lunch, in Great School, after the service. Great School is in the front quad, directly opposite Great Gate, the main entrance to the school. After lunch I hope those who are interested will come and watch the college 1st XV play Radley. Wallis would have loved to have been here to watch that!

Right - that's the admin dealt with. Three more people are going to speak about various aspects of Wallis' life later in the service. I should just like to say a few things about this remarkable man.

He was the oldest of four children born to a headmaster who was 54 at the time. He was sent to Wellington from Sussex when he was 13. It was a little different in those days. He didn't see his parents at all during the term; there were no such things as exeat or half terms then. Despite that, he thoroughly enjoyed his time here. He won a scholarship to Jesus College, Oxford in 1940. War intervened, however, and he joined up as a private soldier in 1941, aged 19. In 1942 he was commissioned into the 11 Hussars. Wounded in action in 1944 during a successful mission to liberate a small town in Northern France, he rejoined the regiment in 1945 and stayed with them, mostly as ADC to General Brian Robertson, until 1947.

Meanwhile, Wallis had met Sue, at Subway 5 of Piccadilly Tube station, on a blind date on November 5th 1942. He was 20; she was 17. They were engaged on 5 January 1943 and married on 5th April 1943, exactly 5 months after they first met. Shortly after Daddy died it would have been their 58th wedding anniversary. Not bad, eh? Almost 58 years of marriage, and 6 children, having known each other only 5 months.

Wallis had a successful career in the City, which, sadly, ended on a less than happy note when the stockbroking firm he was running was brought down, through no fault of his, by fraud. Typically, Wallis toughed it out and was instrumental in ensuring that all the creditors of the firm were paid in full. Although he never complained, there is no question that this chapter of his life had a big impact on him and he did not work in the City again.

While all this had been going on, Daddy immersed himself in a huge number of diverse activities. Quite apart from bringing up 6 children, he was on the Court of Common Council of the City of London for 15 years, being appointed Chief Commoner in 1975. He was twice Chairman of the Cripplegate Foundation, a charity to help disadvantaged residents of several City boroughs. He was also Chairman of the City Police Committee, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama the Association of British Orchestras and the London Oriana Choir. In addition, he played sport into his fifties, running the first of three full marathons when he was 62, sang in several choirs, developed new hobbies such as bird watching, and travelling to remote and exciting countries on what can only be described as "intrepid" holidays.

Wallis retired to Wiltshire fifteen years ago. Retirement is a bit of a misnomer, because they found umpteen things to keep themselves out of mischief. Wallis worked at Clouds House, an addiction rehabilitation centre. This was probably the most rewarding work he had ever done; anyone who attended Wallis' funeral and heard the tribute by Nick Barton, the director of Clouds, will know of the deep affection and admiration in which he was held there.

Despite one or two great sadnesses in his life, including the early and untimely death of his oldest son, Wallis remained a rock to Sue and his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren until his death. He bore his last illness with remarkable but typical stoicism and strength, never complaining, and always far more interested in other people than in his own problems. A devoted husband, Mummy described him, in The Times death notice, as her "best mate . That sums it up perfectly. They did everything together. He was the most honest man I have ever met. He was, quite simply, in the words of Harry Enfield's character, a "Bloody Nice Bloke . We all miss him terribly.

Peter Hunt