

## **Celebration of Life for Don Hills**

Tuesday 30th October 2018 - 12:00pm

Mole Valley Green Burial Ground

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### **Entrance music/procession**

*He Shall Feed His Flock* ~ Handel's Messiah

### **Welcome**

*Ian Mowll – Interfaith Minister*

### **Tributes**

- *About Don Hills – read by Ian Mowll*
  - Helen
  - Clare

### **Music for Reflection**

*Panis Angelicus*

### **The Burial**

### **Scattering of Seeds**

**Background music whilst people are at the graveside**

*Scherzo* from Henry Litolf's Concerto Symphonique No. 4

## Celebration of Life for Don Hills

**Entrance music:** *He Shall Feed His Flock ~ Handel's Messiah*

### Welcome

Good afternoon everyone, and a very warm welcome to you all, family and friends, as we give thanks for Don Hills' life. It is wonderful that so many people are here to celebrate his life.

The music we have been listening to as we have been gathering was chosen by Don. He said:

*This section of the Messiah really melts my heart - the image of the shepherd feeding the flock and carrying the lambs with his arms and folding them in his bosom: so loving and beautiful. And then to break out so appealingly into 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' ... fantastic! Amen and amen.*

Thomas Berry once said: *The natural world is the larger sacred community to which we belong.* And so, true to his values, Don wanted a natural burial. To be absorbed back into the Earth and the larger sacred community from which he, and all of us, came. His connection with nature was strong and so we are at this glorious spot to remember Don, to give thanks for his life, and to commend him here to this resting place near ancient woodland. Following Don's wishes, a Crab Apple tree will be planted on his plot and this tree will be both a real embodiment, and a symbol of Don's life, for all he was, and all he gave to others.

I have been struck by the outpouring of love for Don with messages of condolences and to remember him. And, towards the end of his life, many people were supporting him with prayers, meditations or sending him healing energy.

After this ceremony, everyone is very welcome to come to the Town Hall in South Molton for refreshments and to continue to remember Don. The entrance of the Town Hall is the middle archway with a blue door.

The family wish to thank the manager and staff from the Pinehurst Care Home for all they did to help Don – their care for Don has been described as second to none. And I know that everyone here will want to express their heartfelt thanks and gratitude to Helen for all she did for Don throughout his life and particularly in his declining years – her support and love for Don has been immense.

I know there are many others who wanted to be with us today but were not able to make it. And so this service is both for those of us who are present, and we welcome the thoughts, prayers and meditations of those who also want to remember Don – may their presence be with us throughout this ceremony.

I had the privilege of knowing Don for the last 20 years of his life. What always struck me about him was that he was always helping the underprivileged or those that needed help. His big heart was a real inspiration to me and, in my view, the kind of compassion he displayed is at the heart of the spiritual journey.

Don was very much loved by his family and friends, and so this occasion is both sad as we mourn his passing, and happy as we celebrate the life that he lived so well and the joy that he gave to those who knew him.

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## **Tributes**

We now come to the tributes for Don.

Don Hills was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1936 to his parents Alfred and Doris in Stratford, East London. He had one older sister – Peggy, a twin brother – Derek and a younger brother – David.

Don was very young when the war started. Here is an adapted excerpt from his diary:

*Very soon after I was born, German bombers were appearing over London with English spitfire fighter planes trying to chase them off. But the Germans had an ace up their sleeves – rockets! And so, what with bombs and rockets raining down from the skies, London was a living hell. My Dad was a part-time fireman so he must have been in a lot of danger. After the war, I can remember playing in bombed out buildings and sometimes swinging on the rafters. Of course, war to us was quite “normal” so I can’t remember being really frightened at any time.*

In 1941, when he was 5, the family moved to Hornchurch in Essex. In time, Don passed the 11+ exam and went to the county technical school at Romford. He achieved 7 O-levels and 2 A-levels.

In 1955 Don did his 2 years National Service – an experience he described as very positive. He joined the non-combatant company due to his Christian beliefs and he had to face a tribunal to explain why he wouldn't want to take up arms in time of war.

After his National Service, Don decided to take up a teaching career. He did a teacher training course at Newland Park College in Buckinghamshire and he specialised in PE and Religious Knowledge. He became interested in teaching students with special needs and so he decided to head for a career in Educational Psychology which would involve re-training - which he did.

Eventually, he worked as an Educational Psychologist in Leeds, Coventry, Birmingham, London and Wolverhampton. By this time, he was a Chief Educational Psychologist but he found that he really wanted to work directly with the children, teachers and parents. So, he found a job as an Educational Psychologist in Devon in March 1984. This was a time of happiness and fulfilment professionally and, after moving to a job in Dorset, he retired in 1996.

Particularly in his younger years, Don kept very fit. He enjoyed playing football and he became a brown belt in Judo. He ran several half and full marathons culminating in the London marathon.

Don had one, much loved daughter – Clare who was born in 1967. And, to his great delight, his grandson Joe was born in 1989. Don was very proud of his daughter and grandson and he would often tell his friends about them.

When Don came to Devon, he met his wife Helen who, at the time, was a trainee Educational Psychologist. They married the following year and they have been married for just under 27 years. Don and Helen enjoyed their marriage, sharing their love of spirituality, travel and animals. Don also supported Helen through a serious illness in 2007 and again in 2013.

Don loved adventure and so, in 1996, he joined a round the world yacht trip. Here is an adapted excerpt from his diary:

*In September 1996 we set sail in strong winds for Madeira. Soon everyone onboard was seasick but many of us managed to laugh it off somehow. I found it generally hard going but fascinating as our 30 foot yacht cut through the waves of the Bay of Biscay. Unfortunately, I had an accident and had to spend some time away from the boat but I re-joined it on the east coast of the USA and we sailed down the coast and through the Panama Canal. Our boat headed westwards towards the Galapagos Islands. I loved visiting the wonderful places and learnt much about the preservation of fragile habitats and endangered species. We arrived in Hawaii on 24th of January 1997. I decided I couldn't face the next long leg to Japan and so I returned home arriving in England on Wednesday 5th of February 1997.*

Don loved writing and he published his book *Moving On*. He also wrote poetry and he loved being part of a writing group in Combe Martin. Don was also a great animal lover and he had many pet dogs throughout his life who he adored.

Don was very well read and he took a keen interest in culture, history and the arts. He also loved traveling and he visited places such as France, Spain, Portugal, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Germany, Egypt and Greece.

As time went on, Don developed a strong interest in Earth based spirituality and he joined the GreenSpirit movement. He was involved in running and supporting local groups in the Southampton and Gosport areas and he then joined the national council. Highlights included the Southampton group's *Night in the Forest* and a GreenSpirit national event hosting David Abram in Leicestershire.

He also did a U3A course in oceanography and he joined a local, vibrant coastways group. In 2002 he did the Camino walk in Northern Spain, a walk done by many who are exploring their spiritual journey.

Don loved a big occasion and so he threw a big 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Here is an adapted excerpt from his diary:

*I was 70 in April 2006 and we had a marvellous shindig at the Large Pavilion room at the Landmark Theatre. Lots of the 70 or so guests took part in the celebration including my grandson Joe. I was thrilled when he joined the Random Band on the guitar. Helen and I were not lacking either, we managed a demonstration cha-cha-cha to the amazement of our guests.*

As time went on, Don's energy and health ebbed. But he always kept positive where he could and he never stopped helping others. Don passed away peacefully in hospital surrounded by his close family on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October.

Don – your life has been long and your heart has been big. You have helped others, animals and the whole planet. You have been much loved and an inspiration to many. You will be sadly missed.

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Helen will now read her tribute.

➤ Tribute by Helen

Clare will now read her tribute.

➤ Tribute by Clare.

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**Music for Reflection**

And now we will have some time to reflect on all that has been said about Don and all that he has meant to everyone here. Let us listen to a piece of music that Don loved and which he said has lovely words and beautiful music. The words are:

*Bread of Angels,  
made the bread of men;  
The Bread of heaven  
puts an end to all symbols:  
A thing wonderful!  
The Lord becomes our food:  
Poor, a servant, and humble.  
Amen.*

Let us listen to *Panis Angelicus*.

**Music - Panis Angelicus**

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## **The Burial**

As we have heard, Don had a great love for other people, all living things and the whole planet. Let us remember this as we prepare for his burial.

On one level, we are about to say goodbye to Don in his earthly form. But remember this. Don passed away at 3:05pm on Saturday afternoon, this was the same time as the birth of his grandson. And so, the cycle of life continues, death gives way to life. And in this glorious place, Don's life lives on in all the wild life that will grow around his burial spot, and in our many thoughts and memories of him.

We now come to the burial where we will say our goodbye to Don.

Don, we are so glad that you lived among us, that we saw your face and felt the glow of your friendship and love. We thank you for your many gifts and the many kindnesses that you shared with us. We will always cherish our memories of you. And so, we now say to you, Goodbye Don, may our love be with you, and may you rest with our blessings.

### **The coffin is lowered into the grave**

I wish for you joy in your most beautiful and wonderful memories of Don,  
Comfort in your love for one another,  
And some day, peace again in your hearts.

As a way of honouring Don's connection to the Earth, we have some wild flower seeds. You are welcome to take some and scatter them in this field. And as you do so, I invite you to remember Don, and all the seeds of hope and compassion he has scattered throughout his life. May these seeds grow into beautiful wild flowers in memory of Don and all he has meant to everyone here. And after the seeds have been scattered, you are welcome to come back to Don's graveside and say your final farewell before we leave.

And during this time, we will have a final piece of music that Don loved. This is *Scherzo* from Henry Litolff's Concerto Symphonique No. 4. Don wrote the following about this piece of music:

*I have loved this sparkling piece since first hearing it on the radio when I was quite young. After listening to it, I seem to remember going out into the Essex countryside on my bike with its lovely dancing rhythms as a perfect accompaniment to the sights, sounds and smells of that glorious spring. It is about the sheer joy of being fully alive - something I wish to carry with me to whatever lies beyond this earthly existence.\|*

So please scatter the seeds and come back to say your final farewell to Don and wish him well on his new journey beyond our earthly existence.

## **Music**

*Scherzo from Henry Litolff's Concerto Symphonique No. 4*