

If you Google directions to 'Old Baptist Chapel, Bradford on Avon' you'll get a postcode that, keyed into your SatNav, will take you to a tiny chapel in a small village just outside Bradford on Avon. But it clearly wasn't the right place, even though the sign said 'Old Baptist Chapel' – it was far too small. So many people knew and loved Len Hope that I knew it had to be somewhere much bigger.

Len Hope

Louise Morse

I drove on into Bradford on Avon town itself and asked directions. 'It's just two minutes down the road,' I was told, 'there's a big funeral on there today so you might not be able to find somewhere to park.' There was hardly an inch between the cars in the car parks opposite, but a friendly builder let me park on his land to the side. As I walked into the full chapel I thought how the incident would have amused Len. Before I bought a SatNav, whenever we were both due at a meeting that meant navigating any distance Len would call me on my hands-free mobile phone to check that I was driving in the right direction. It was one of the many kindnesses that came so naturally to him. When it came to information I needed, especially for Royd Court materials, he would point me to the right people to speak to and when I interviewed them it was clear that they were happy to cooperate because of their high regard for Len. And, although it wasn't part of his job he would proofread my articles when I asked, applying the same precision he did to everything else.

Len the sportsman

Len Hope was born on 17th July 1940 in Oxford, the second of three sons. His older brother Gordon remembers that Len was a sportsman, always active, always working on some project or another. In 1964 Len obtained a



Former Director of Property Services

degree in Building (Technology) and Construction, and went to work for John Laing Construction, where he worked for 38 years. In 1998 he retired from Laing's, and began working with Pilgrim Homes. He retired in 2007.

To our supporters in Yorkshire, Len Hope was 'Mr Royd Court'. Len understood that the scheme was the culmination of their hopes and fund-raising. To his colleagues, Len was a source of expertise, encouragement and spiritual support.

A good listener

To Peter Tervet, Pilgrim Homes' Chief Executive at the time, Len was a dear friend and advisor as well as a colleague in a great Christian enterprise. Peter remembers, 'I loved to talk to Len and did so frequently over the phone. He was a great listener: he gave such good advice and was such a help to me in approaching difficult situations.

'The completion of Royd Court was, I believe, his crowning achievement. Len was unstoppable and his attention to every detail truly remarkable. All the professionals respected him. He was so totally reliable, honest and able that they liked to work with him. He made sure that they came up to the mark, that they could not get away with anything, but he did it warmly and kindly.'

To his family, Len was a beloved husband and father. He and Anna



Aerial view of Royd Court under construction

were married in 1966, and were members of the Old Baptist Chapel, where Len became an elder in 1970. His son Mark said, 'He was a real family man, organising wonderful holidays and always, every day, making time for family prayers. He always made time for us, helping us with homework, and sometimes building us toys.

A craftsman

'At heart Dad was a craftsman. Although he was involved with constructing some massive buildings, what he really enjoyed was working with his hands, especially making beautiful things out of wood. In his working life I think he enjoyed the years as governor of Emmaus School and with Pilgrim Homes the best.

'In our teens and early twenties we began to learn from Dad what a well proportioned building should look like; how to correctly punctuate a sentence, how to do the Daily

'Dad would have said that he was a Christian not because of what he had done, but because God had first loved him and chosen him.'

Telegraph crossword while watching a cricket match, how never to play him at Trivial Pursuit, how to be gentle and loving with someone who has offended you or let you down, how not to jump to conclusions, but consider a matter from both sides.’

His ability to see things from all sides was legendary. Pastor Paul Oliver said, ‘He would, very gently, talk through the whole issue from every angle, with thoroughness. He always seemed to have time. When you called him he would answer as though he had all the time in the world.’

A personal relationship with a holy God

Len’s son Mark noted that at the root of his father was a personal relationship with a Holy God, the God of the Bible. ‘Dad would have said that he was a Christian not because of what he had done, but because God had first loved him and chosen him,’ he said.

In his address, Pastor Oliver said, ‘Len didn’t have to go through his own life to find things to commend him to God – he had Jesus. Jesus was his confidence. Jesus’ death has changed our deaths. The Bible refers to the death of Christians as ‘sleep’. Jesus took on Himself the full horror of death in His own death.

‘Let’s look forward! This is not the end. The Lord will descend from Heaven with a shout. The dead in

Christ will rise first then we who remain will be caught up to go to meet the Lord in the air. We’re going to be together again – then we shall be forever with the Lord. We’ll have resurrected, transformed, glorious, immortal, powerful bodies, like Jesus’. All the church of Jesus Christ will be gathered. We’ll be with Len again – but better than this, we’ll be with Jesus in a cleansed world free of sin.

‘Len loved to read to the family. One of his favourite books was C S Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia, “The Last Battle” in particular. And some words that meant a lot to him and Anna come at the end of the story, where the children finally meet Aslan, who is a picture of the Scriptural mighty Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and Lewis said this – ‘as Aslan spoke he no longer looked to them like a lion but things that began to happen to them that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. For them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world had only been the cover and the title page. Now at last they were beginning Chapter One of that great story which no-one on earth has read which goes on forever and in which every chapter is greater than the one before.’”

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