

# Frank Major RIP

## 1920-2015



Frank died on Saturday 10 January in the Royal London Hospital.

He was baptised at the family church of St Barnabas Manor Park. He went to East Ham Grammar School, was a conscientious objector in the Second World War, an undergraduate at Kings College London, he became a teacher and finally head of history at Willesden Grammar School.

In 1969 Frank and his brother moved to the Barbican and after his retirement in the early 1980's he began his many years of devotion and service to St Giles' and the community.

### **Frank's Funeral on 21 January at 11.30**

About 115 family and friends from far and wide gathered in St Giles for Frank's funeral. His coffin was escorted into the church by the Crucifer, the Church Wardens' with their staves, Katharine and his family as the congregation sang the hymn, All people that on earth do dwell. We were welcomed by Katharine and the service including Holy Communion saw old and new friends read lessons, say prayers and the St Giles' Festival Choir singing anthems and hymns.

Katharine in her sermon reminded us of an occasion in her early days here when she asked the then Church Wardens at a PCC meeting what being a churchwarden meant to them. Frank had modestly listed what he did from the parish magazine to his guided tours of the church on Tuesday afternoons and at the end of the long list he said with a warm smile, "And I do this because I love God". To read Katharine's sermon [click here](#).

### **Anne Marsden Thomas' tribute to Frank spoke for us all**

" I suspect that most people here can remember their first encounter with Frank. Mine was at my interview for the job of DofM in 1982. I thought then: what a charming, warm person. As I got to know Frank, I began to appreciate the extent of his devotion to this worshipping community. He was Church warden, Secretary of the Friends of St. Giles, Church historian, our parish representative as Governor and trustee of the local church school as well as trustee of a large number of local endowed charities. He attended every service unless on holiday. He gave history tours every Tuesday afternoon. He attended **everything** organised by church colleagues: music recitals, parties, lectures, Scottish dances. You name it, Frank was there. He was generous in his support for fundraising activities, too, including the fundraising for the Steinway piano and the organs.

He organised a long series of successful dinners for us, 3 times a year, at local restaurants, pinning down every single member of the congregation to persuade them to come, and maintaining records in his little book.

His records also extended to birthdays and anniversaries. Frank's care and foresight made us lazy: **we** didn't have to plan ahead because we knew that Frank would buy the card, get everyone to sign it and stage-manage the presentation.

In 1988 Frank became editor of the Parish magazine. He did this job with extraordinary energy and efficiency. He wrote much of the text, with great elegance, and his accounts of church events always included the names of every worker; he badgered all of us to write articles and never let us forget that an article had been promised. He interviewed people relentlessly to gain copy and was absolutely determined when doing so, for example, he quizzed one of the visiting Palm Sunday brass players while the poor chap was waiting for his next musical cue. He procured sermon notes from our visiting preachers, including the Archbishop of Canterbury – almost before the preacher had descended from the pulpit. He was advertising manager, too, for the parish magazine, asking all the local shops and restaurants for support – and, in most cases, receiving it.

Frank carried a charmingly old-fashioned air – witness his gallantry and his Sunday best 3-piece suit, albeit worn with green trainers – and why not, since he lived to an impressive age. Nevertheless, he remained wonderfully cheerful and courageous when faced by change. In 2000 when we were considering appointing the first woman incumbent in the City of London, he vigorously supported Katharine's appointment, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than the growth of our happy community under her leadership. When it became necessary to submit text digitally for the parish magazine he asked staff at St. Luke's school how to use a computer and then typed his articles on computers in the library – I think he was aged about 85 at this time. When the church's website made the demise of the parish magazine inevitable, he accepted this without a fight and instead wrote a quarterly publication: 'Frank's Newsletter'. This was appreciated more widely than perhaps he realised; one of you wrote:

'I have been a devoted reader of Frank's newsletter for many years and followed the spiritual and social life of St Giles through his eyes.'

He spoke his mind – Frank by name and frank by nature, but always with kindness. Although he was most definitely **not** a game-player, he was extremely astute at sizing up people and situations, so he was a very valuable member of committees. A couple of personal examples: while most of my wardrobe earned frequent compliments from him (and I'm sure other women gained quite as many compliments), he had no compunction in telling me that brown didn't suit me. On another occasion he told me that my hairstyle was unsuitable for a woman of my mature years! He knew well that I was far too fond of him to take any offence.

For most people, though, Frank's most visible and vivid identity was as meeter and greeter when they arrived on Sunday morning. Frank arrived every week an hour before the service, so you could always guarantee his enthusiastic welcome. He expected – and got - a kisses from all the women. He knew everyone's name and how frequently they attended. If a first-time visitor met him in Waitrose a while later, Frank would urge them to return to St. Giles the next Sunday. His warmth and serenity, right up to the end, were irresistible; he had that enviable gift of making everyone he met feel special and important.

Now I like to think that it's Frank turn to receive a welcome –  
May the angels welcome our dear friend into Paradise"

At the end of the service when Frank's coffin had been escorted out of the church the Refreshment team moved to the North Aisle to serve the "repast" Frank had requested in his Will. There was time for us all to remember a dear and charming friend.

The next morning saw Katharine, two churchwardens and a former churchwarden driving to Golders Green Crematorium for the Committal. In the peace and quiet of the chapel we remembered Frank and sang his favourite hymn, Abide with me.

### **Frank Major**

Church Warden 1982-2002 and member of many church committees,  
Editor of the Parish Magazine and Newsletter,  
Governor and Trustee of St Luke's Church of England Primary School,  
Church Historian and Archivist