



Yorkshire & North East Branch Newsletter No 18 - May 2020

Edited by Paul Kampen -
paul.kampen@Gmail.com
74 Springfield Road, Baildon,
Shipley, W.Yorks BD17 5LX
01274 581051

IN MEMORIAM TONY POOK

The abiding memory of anyone fortunate enough to have known Tony Pook, who died on Easter Sunday 2020 in his 84th year, is likely to be of a gentleman of wide cultural interests, significant achievements, yet modest, unassuming character. Members of the Elgar Society will be eternally grateful for his sterling work: Tony was Chairman of the Yorkshire & North East Branch since it was re-established in York in 2012, until he handed over the reins to his successor in January 2019. During his time as Chairman, Tony presided over 49 meetings and related activities, including 2 trips to the Elgar Birthday Weekend at Worcester and Great Malvern, and oversaw the planning for the 2019 branch meetings. The various challenges which any organization invariably faces were met head on, overcome, and the Branch continues to grow and flourish. He was supported in these endeavours, as in everything else, by his second wife, Muriel, to whom he was devoted to the end, and who died just five days after Tony's passing.



John Anthony Pook was born on 4 June 1936 in the City of Westminster, London, to Wilfred (Jack) Pook and his wife Lilian. Jack was a stationer's shop assistant at the time of Tony's birth and keen amateur musician who became an RAF bandsman during the War, and played at various times in the Royal Opera House Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. After wartime evacuation to Bedfordshire, Tony attended junior school in Uxbridge, Walpole Grammar School in Ealing, and continued his education through the Royal Navy at HMS *Ganges*, Shotley, and in Malta; he continued to serve in the Royal Navy until 1961. Following a period with Rolls Royce in Scotland and other companies in Scotland and the North East, during which time he studied part-time for a diploma in Management with the University of Strathclyde, he

joined the General Accident Insurance Company, moving to York in 1971, again specialising in Organization and Methods, and ended his career with them as a Compliance Manager. Tony's love of music was fostered by his experiences as a chorister in Uxbridge, and his love of choral music remained with him into retirement through his membership of the York Musical Society, with whom he sang in performances of *The Dream of Gerontius* in York and Münster in 2003, and who honoured him with Lifetime Membership in 2015. His commitment to the importance of live music was further reflected in his patronage of the Guildhall Orchestra of York. He was also interested in Scandinavian and Czech music, and his longstanding membership of the Dvořák Society included many happy trips to the birthplaces of Dvořák, Janáček, and Martinů, and music festivals in Brno and Prague. As well as the Dvořák and Elgar societies, a suitable organ for sharing his musical



enthusiasms proved to be the Federation of Recorded Music, of the York branch of which Tony was Chairman for a number of years, and through which he was in demand as a speaker and presenter around the country, most recently in October 2019, when he gave a talk on Scandinavian music to the Barnsley group. Another interest was the Victorian novelist Anthony Trollope, and it is pleasing to note that a lifetime's ambition of reading every one of his novels was eventually realized.

Tony's last contribution to the Yorkshire & North East Branch of the Elgar Society came in January 2019 when he gave a delightful presentation on Elgar's Concert Overtures, where his thoughtful, clear, and unpretentious delivery perhaps typified the best of his character.

Tony is survived by his first wife, Jean, their three children – Alison, Mark, and Gillian – and four grandchildren – Sarah, Richard, Sean, and Owen – a brother, Julian, half-brother, Gerard, half-sister Jocelyn, and three step-sons – Richard O'Connor, to whom I am grateful for most of the information contained in this tribute, and Julian and James O'Connor.

David Young
Branch Chairman

TRIBUTES TO TONY POOK

Caroline Gilderdale: My enduring memory of Tony is of the very warm and gracious welcome I received when I first became a member of the Yorkshire & North East Branch. His kindness and support were particularly appreciated when I later became a member of the Branch Committee. We have all greatly benefited from his wisdom, knowledge and experience and we are extremely grateful for all he has done for the Elgar Society. May he and Muriel rest in peace.

Paul Grafton: Tony had that very rare combination of an unassuming nature with a quietly authoritative presence, which helped him to steer our Branch successfully through its formative years. Committee meetings at his home in riverside York were always a delight, Tony uplifting our souls whilst Muriel nurtured our bodies. Tony's computer skills were deployed to the Branch's benefit in his production of our pocket-size annual programme and our regular newsletters. May he and Muriel be at peace together.

Howard Gregg: I met Tony through a shared interest in the novels of Anthony Trollope of which he was a committed enthusiast. I am very grateful to Tony for introducing me to the Elgar Society when the Branch was revived in 2012. The Branch owes so much to Tony for his quiet and efficient chairmanship and the other services he so generously gave, not least his friendly welcome at meetings. May he and Muriel be at peace together.

Bernard Porter: I met Tony in the earliest days of the formation of the Yorkshire & North East Branch of the Elgar Society, whose committee I joined as Branch Treasurer. His enthusiasm for a wide range of music, but of Elgar's in particular, made him a wonderful companion at our meetings and seasonal forays into the Elgar country; and his calm but effective steering of the Branch in its early days was mainly responsible for its success. Latterly he fell into ill health, and suffered from the flooding of his house on the riverside in York, but soldiered on regardless. He will be remembered with joy, but also sadness, not only for his accomplishments but also for his kind and old-fashioned gentlemanly demeanour in performing them; aided of course by the wonderful Muriel, whose death just a few days after Tony's added to our blow. I had grown to love them both, and shall sorely miss them.

Paul Kampen: In the space of one week the York and NE Branch of the Elgar Society has lost three much loved and respected members. I cannot claim to have known any of them well but it was a great privilege to make their acquaintance and share some very happy Elgar experiences with them. May they rest in peace.

Julian Rushton: I appreciated meeting Tony and benefiting from his wisdom and engaging chairmanship, if, alas, on all too few occasions. His zeal for Elgar will be much missed, and I greatly enjoyed it when he came forward to offer thoughts of his own, as after his last AGM when he spoke on the overtures. I was much honoured when the Committee decided to offer him a retirement gift of the Complete Edition of orchestral songs, grandly dedicated to a supreme interpreter of Sea Pictures, Dame Janet Baker, and which I so greatly enjoyed editing.

Pamela Scowcroft: I have the fondest memories of Tony and Muriel, particularly shared lunches at the Bar Convent cafe prior to Branch meetings and also their excellent company on the two Elgar Birthday Weekend trips. I mostly attribute my membership of the Yorkshire & North East Branch - and in due course the Branch Committee - to the warm-hearted and convivial atmosphere engendered by them both. Tony was always self-effacing with regard to his own considerable achievements yet was extraordinarily positive and encouraging to others' endeavours. I feel incredibly blessed to have counted Tony and Muriel as my friends and shall miss them both immensely.

Philip Scowcroft: Sadly Tony and his charming wife Muriel have died within five days of each other. When the Branch was (re)formed in 2012 I knew of Tony by repute as we were both members of the Dvořák Society of Great Britain. For us he chaired Branch meetings with characteristic urbanity, hosted committee meetings, mostly at his Lower Friargate home (refreshments by Muriel) and organised trips to Elgar country (2014 and 2016). On a personal note he encouraged me to write for the Branch Newsletter which he produced so splendidly for the benefit of us all.

Richard Surrey: I first met Tony Pook when the idea for a reformulated Yorkshire Branch was proposed over ten years ago. Tony was the perfect Chairman at the re-inception of the Branch, a warm, friendly and intelligent man whom I respected greatly. It was always a treat and pleasure to go to his house for committee meetings with good conversation plus tea and biscuits. A lovely man and the only regret is that I only knew him for such a short time.

POSTSCRIPT

Sadly we must also report on the death over Easter of Marc Seccombe, a longstanding member of our branch and well known to the wider Elgar community especially for his introductory video for the Birthplace Museum, still being enjoyed by visitors fifteen years after it was made. An obituary tribute will appear shortly.