

**By: Kathleen Pearson**

Denis.

I have known Denis for a very long time. At first through a mutual friend Pam. Pam and Denis initially worked together and continued a friendship. They often went on cruises when they retired. Pam and Denis always went to Bonds restaurant on Christmas Day and in 1999, I joined them for the first time.

Unfortunately, Pam died five years ago and Denis and I decided to keep up the friendship and every week we went out for lunch.

Denis was a very shy, private man but as you got to know him, he had a wicked sense of humour!

He was a perfect gentleman, opening doors and was very attentive. He was also very determined. He knew what he wanted and he would stick to it.

Denis was a former headmaster at Alkrington Primary School and as I was an education advisor we spent hours trying to put the education system to rights but alas we never succeeded! Denis was also interested in sports as am I and we frequently discussed cricket, football and snooker and reminisce about former players but I could never get him interested in rugby.

Denis loved going to the Lamb Inn at Hayfield for lunch. He would then drive on to Tideswell and then to Hucklow. Pam and Denis for several years took parties of children on a weeks holiday. He enjoyed recounting their exploits.

On another occasion, we tried to find a restaurant that Pam had introduced us to at Pots Shrigley. We managed to find the area but no way, even though we asked several people, could we locate the restaurant! Denis drove on towards Whalley stopping at a pub but due to refurbishment, they were not serving lunches! On we drove to Tideswell to the Anchor but they stopped serving at 2pm. On we drove trying other places but the answer was still the same. At last we got to the Hartshead just in time for tea! This was only 7 miles from where we had started and poor Denis had driven over 90 miles! We often had a chuckle about that.

One Christmas, I invited Denis to stay over for the festivities but it wasn't meant to be. He had an infection and was admitted to the Cottage Hospital in Bury. I went round on Christmas Day wearing my father Christmas hat only to be out done by Denis wearing his party hat. He had a big beaming smile on his face as he had just had his lovely Christmas dinner and I was going back to egg and chips! Denis loved painting and attended art classes. I was quite shocked when he recounted a chance meeting in Bury with Ingrid who was a model for the still life classes. He almost walked past her when she stopped him. 'I didn't recognise you with your clothes on' was his response!

Although, Denis was quite ill, he never complained and he did not let it interfere with his life and three weeks before he died, he came round for lunch. He was driving right up to the end. Good on you, Denis.

Denis formally opened the memory garden for The Diggers charity and he chose an oak tree in the wood to be named after him. He will live on through The Diggers.

Thank you for enriching my life Denis and I will miss you.

## Denis Kirk



**1st Aug 1926 to 29th May 2011**

**By: Jennifer Heaman**

Denis was born on 1 August 1926 at 11 Grosvenor Ave in Whitefield, the home he was to stay in nearly all his life. He was baptised at All Saints', Stand by Arthur Kershaw – the church is the one that dominate the view and perhaps watches over Grosvenor Ave.

His Father, David, came from a large family being the youngest and only boy of 7. Only 3 of his Aunts on this side of the family married and his surviving second cousins come from the marriage of his Aunts Ellen and Isabella.

Denis's Mother, born Mary Goddard, died in 1940 when Denis was only 14. Her direct family was smaller than that of her husband's and, from a fascinating family tree which Denis and his Father kept reasonably up-to-date, she had a bother and a sister.

His Mother's early death must have had big impact on Denis's life and it was not surprising (and possibly usual in those days) that his maiden Aunt, Mary came to live with and look after Denis and his Father and she remained in the house until she too died with Denis this time doing the caring for her in her latter years. The story goes that she was so worried about the cost of living that Denis and his Father could never tell her the true price of groceries and she probably thought that oranges were still 1 penny each until the end!

Denis was educated at Bury Grammar School and, of course, did National Service when he was posted overseas during his tour of duty. He then went to Cheltenham to study for his Teacher's Diploma and by studying by night also gained a degree.

He was obviously a good and popular teacher – an inscription in a very nice address book which was given to Denis in July 1961 by Nigel Royleam when he was working in Denton West End Primary School says:

'To Mr Kirk – just a token to recall a happy time spent in Class 1A'

The handwriting is impressive!

Denis ended his teaching career as Headmaster of Elkrington Primary School taking early retirement when that school amalgamated. He did not stop his involvement with children as we shall hear later as his good friend, Kathleen, will say more about his activities after retirement.

Denis always found time to keep up with his relatives, particularly his cousin, Winnie, visiting her regularly in North Wales and many times driving her to Bristol to visit her sister. Over the past two years or so Denis suffered seriously with his health spending considerable periods in hospital or in convalescence. However, he insisted on coping in his own home and driving almost to the end but he was watched over by his very good neighbour Jean Brunt and her daughter Carol, who helped him as much as they could whilst respecting his obvious wish for privacy.