

## OBITUARY

### *Martin Allitt, 1945-2009*

On Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2009 one of the largest congregations seen at Marlborough Road church assembled for a Service of Thanksgiving, a chance to say farewell to Martin Allitt. Here was someone who was not only Banburian, spending a lifetime in the Leys near the Peoples Park, but who touched the lives of so many people whether through his work at Banbury Library or in the world of music, especially because of his piano teaching and organ playing at the Baptist, United Reform and Methodist Churches.

Martin started his education at Dashwood Road School where he first developed a liking for history. From his first day there he shared a desk with former policeman Tony King who became a lifelong friend.

After leaving Easington Boys' School Martin worked briefly at Twyford Seeds in Adderbury before joining Banbury Library in 1966. Here a period in excess of 40 years culminated in his becoming Head of Banburyshire Studies. In Martin's own words, 'That was the climax of my career. I love local studies and family history'. His actions matched those words so exactly that countless people furthered their knowledge because of what he knew and because his organisational skills turned the Centre into a treasure trove of history.

Martin was a modest man whose early life was influenced by his parents. Membership of the Baptist Church-based Boys' Brigade gave him a code of Christian beliefs, the basis of a strong faith that stood him in good stead. This, his marriage to Wendy, and his family provided all he wanted from life.

In 2006 his colleagues organised a meal at the Farnborough Inn to celebrate his 40 years at Banbury Library. During that occasion the Red Arrows formation team flew overhead. With a smile on his face Martin enquired if this had been specially arranged. Even though the answer was negative, this chance happening was no less than Martin deserved for a life of service to others yet so cruelly cut short.

**Brian Little**

### **Lecture Reports**

Following our usual season-opening reception on **10th September** we learnt from **Liz Woolley** about the parish of **St Thomas**, Oxford, close to the Castle and the railway station. On **8th October** **Nick Hill**, English Heritage project manager, told us of the gigantic restoration project at **Apethorpe Hall**.

Both were well-attended and absorbing talks, dependent on the fascinating and appropriate illustrations of buildings, their present use and the major craft work involved in their preservation. No merely verbal description would do justice to them.

Members are reminded that the meeting on **Thursday 10th December**, by Adrian Shooter on **Chiltern – A Railway Success Story**, will be held at the **Marlborough Road Methodist Church**, as usual at 7.30pm.