

So We Say “Thank You for the Music”

— Peter Sherred —

During the years 2014-2017 Dover hosted a music festival which was attended by thousands of people who were entertained with exciting live music of all genres. The first two festivals were held in Pencester Gardens while the 2016 and 2017 festivals were staged at the Dover Cruise Terminal courtesy of the Dover Harbour Board who generously gave the space free of charge and collaborated with the organisers of the music festival in a successful partnership.

The Dover Music Festival hosted top acts including the cult band Toploader, The Blockheads, China Crisis, the 1960s Paul Jones The Blues Band as well as Toyah Willcox together with many local bands. The organisation and presentation of these events provided formidable challenges to the organisers and, by common consent, the driving force for the festivals was Roger Marsden.

A seed of an idea for a music festival emerged in or about 2012/2013 when the company Dover Music Productions Ltd was incorporated with Roger as a Director. A second company, Dover Music Festival Ltd, was incorporated in January 2014 of which Roger was also a Director. Both companies have, since the last festival, been dissolved. In conjunction with his collaborators Roger's companies set out with a three-year plan of providing a substantial prestige music event on an annual basis in Dover. In the event they were able to manage four very successful festivals in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017. By 2016, taking into account the generosity of the Dover Harbour Board



Roger Marsden

providing first-class facilities for the music festival, Dover Music Festival scrapped ticket prices and the general public benefitted from prestige performances during afternoons and evenings free of charge. The 2017 festival ran over two days, 26-27 August, and was live from 2pm to 11pm each day and was sponsored by the port contractors VSBW (Volker,

Stevin, Boskalis, Westminster). These dates coincided with the Dover Regatta and also enabled Roger and the Dover Music Festival to permit appeal collectors to collect for the Kelly Turner Fund during the course of the Festival, at the end of which the collection for the appeal amounted to £11,186.

By late 2017 a decision had been taken that no music festival would take place in 2018, in part due to operational reasons of the Harbour Board and in part because Dover Music Festival was not able to continue in its then current form. Dover Music Festival Ltd was dissolved on 7 May 2019 having provided Dover with four hugely successful headline-catching musical events.

Roger, who died in August 2020 aged 66 was, in the words of one of his friends, a 'larger than life character' and his contribution over many years to Dover life was amply acknowledged by the number of people attending his funeral at St Paul's RC Church, Maison Dieu Road and held concurrently at St Peter and St Paul, Temple Ewell, the village in which he and his family had lived for over 30 years. As well as the service being streamed online people also stood outside the church and many lined the route of the cortege through the village.

Roger was born in Deal on 3 October 1953. His younger brother Bernard followed in 1956. He attended St Paul's Primary School adjacent to St Paul's Church in Maison Dieu Road, Dover and continued to St Edmund's School, Old Charlton Road. In essence he became a Dover boy and man for the rest of his life. In the 1970s he lived with his parents on Buckland Avenue Dover. Having had a successful school career Roger had a passing dream of becoming a laboratory scientist. He attended evening classes at Canterbury College before starting his first job with the Post Office. Subsequently he went into business on his own account with another local person, Peter Grilli, by opening a laundrette which he ran in River just beyond the old bus terminal in the parade of shops opposite the village church. Later he opened another laundrette in Pencester Road in Dover and a further laundrette on the High Street located opposite what was then the H. J. Sawyer garage and undertaker's business and where a portion of the Charlton Centre currently is sited. Having spent many years in the laundrette business he then started an amusement machine business, CBS Amusements, with David Grilli where he remained for 25 years. Another of Roger's ventures was undertaken in partnership with others in establishing Dover's first Pool Hall in a shop on London Road, not far from Beaconsfield Road. He and his long-term friend Nick Charlesworth played in several pool teams around Dover managing to win a few trophies.

Roger met his future wife, Carole, at a social club party being introduced by a mutual friend. They married in 1984 at the United Reformed Church in Dover. Carole was the love of his life and they were blessed with three daughters - their first-born Carrie was followed by twins Jessie and Sammie. At his funeral service Carrie, in her moving tribute to her father, said "he gave us the most amazing childhood, full of holidays and

adventures". Roger loved boats and it seems that every family holiday had a boat story of some kind attached to it.

Apart from business and family commitments Roger undertook much work in the local community. He was passionate about helping people and if he could he did. He was a keen member of the Rotary Club of Dover where his organising talents were put to good use in the annual Beer Festivals which raised many thousands of pounds for good causes. Noticing there were at least three members of the club called Roger he elected to be called Rufus for the purposes of distinguishing himself from others! He also took a keen interest in the Rotaract Club of Dover and was often found, as the visiting Rotarian, at their meetings to encourage and support the young people between the ages of 18 - 30. He was proud of his successes with the Dover Music Festivals for which he worked extremely hard and he was immensely passionate about them and their ability to provide entertainment for Dovorians and especially younger people.

His interest in music was longstanding and he was often playing the guitar and singing. His enthusiasm probably outstripped his talent but he was very happy when his daughter Carrie agreed to duet with him at home. As he played the guitar she sang. Music brought Roger together with many others and with Nick Charlesworth in particular, with whom he was a member of a band. Roger and Nick played guitar with their friends, Peter Grilli and Phil Medgett on bass and on drums respectively. They rehearsed at the Mill Club in River and the YMCA in Dover. After several personnel changes the band eventually became the Charlesworth Young Band and Roger became the band's 'roadie'. The band members travelled around East Kent for various gigs in Roger's Commer van which was loaded also with all their equipment.

The band did very well and supported some major acts at the Leas Cliff Hall in Folkestone.

Roger's main interests in life centred on providing amusements for others but he was a very good snooker player himself. He was indeed a 'larger-than-life' character and because of his business interests and community engagements, which included being a Parish Councillor, it was little wonder that when she was a child his eldest daughter, Carrie, thought he was a local celebrity as he seemed to know everybody they saw. He had many hobbies and, in his youth, excelled at basketball, confirmed by his brother Bernard. He also enjoyed squash, shooting and poker. Roger was a member of the Boar's Head Golf Society and was recognised as a good golfer. He played at home and abroad on holidays with golfing friends often referring to such holidays or any weekends as "drinking holidays (weekends) with a golf problem". He liked a drink and in later years when restricted in movements would often walk the short distance from his home in Temple Ewell to the local pub, The Fox, run by fellow Rotarian Steve Grayson and his wife Alyson.

In his last years Roger was not as active as previously and was treated for bladder cancer but he continued with his Rotary commitments and community activities for as long as he could, being very philosophical about his future and life, summarised by his comment to a family friend: "We've all got to die sometime, so we might as well make the most of it". His premature death hit his family, his many friends and acquaintances very hard for they had lost a jovial character who has left behind many memories and stories ranging from the failed launching of a boat called "Glayvar", a caravan fire at the back of the High Street laundrette, an exploding fire extinguisher in an undertaker's premises, a wandering

Madonna statue at a Portuguese villa and an amazing ability to fall into several rivers in his time.

Roger was a pragmatist and a man who would give a considered and honest view on anything for which his opinion was sought. His opinion was much valued as is shown by the following tribute from the current President of the Rotary Club, Tony Cook: "Roger was a popular and valued member of Dover Rotary. If he undertook a task you could be sure that not only would it be done well but with panache and his trademark love of life. He also had a very incisive mind; I recall sitting with him at Club Council especially during some difficult and lengthy discussion. Roger would sit there quietly taking everything in and then, just as it seemed all was concluded, he would come out with the most intuitive comment which would sum up the debate and often sway the result. We miss his fellowship, his integrity and that big brain too. I often used to listen to him and think, 'I wish I'd thought of that!'

Roger's enthusiasm and energy for community engagement will be much missed by many people and in particular his fellow Rotarians but it is the four successful Dover Music Festivals that will live long in the memory and will remain a significant tribute to a man who packed much into his life, often with the benefit of others in mind and for which Dover has much to be thankful. His enthusiastic and tireless approach to life was an inspiration to others and was clearly the basis for the major successes that were the Dover Music Festivals. Nick Charlesworth finished his tribute to Roger at his funeral in the following way "I am quite sure that many fond recollections will be shared later today as we celebrate the life of this quite remarkable man." Yes, thank you to Roger Marsden for the music in our lives given in so many ways.