

Bill Greenhalgh (1949-2016)

How to describe Bill... a unique and colourful character, a man whose stand out quality was his generosity. He was generous with his time, with his help, and with his friendship.

Bill was born in Manchester and moved to Westhoughton in the late 60s.

Passion for Amateur Dramatics

With a passion for amateur dramatics, he became an active member of Westhoughton Methodist Amateur Dramatic Society from the early 70s.

As well as directing and having parts in WMADS productions, he would both adapt and write scripts for the group for players to perform.

The annual pantomime is a highlight of the year, and Bill would spend months working on the script, then directing and acting in the production; plus designing and printing the programme, and undertaking the publicity and ticket sales.

Bill was keen to involve WMADS in the wider community, and through Westhoughton Community Network, he was able to lead the drama group as it took on projects such as the Washacre FM radio plays, specially adapting pantos for the 7-part 15-minute episodes; the Big Fun Day, where WMADS performed in the open air; as well as other community events and fayres.

The group remember him in their performances – one of his penguins sharing the stage. His penguin suit stage-right.

Bill was also a keen, skilled photographer; canal boat enthusiast, and had a diesel train licence long before he could drive a car.

After a short career as industrial chemist, he went to work for, what became, the North West development Agency. He was passionate about his job which took him all over Europe, and included projects for the European Parliament. Typically of Bill, most of his journeys were by train...

Epic Journey – Shanghai to Daisy Hill

As part of his work he was fortunate enough to go the 2010 Expo in Shanghai. He flew there but travelled back by train on the Trans Siberian/Mongolian Railway to Moscow, and then all the way to Daisy Hill station here in Westhoughton.

The Trans Siberian/Mongolian railway is a scheduled service and provides a vital service to what are, at times, very isolated communities. A variety of food is available on board but as these culinary delights are not to everyone's tastes many people bring and share their own 'picnics'. The journey covers a wide range of landscapes with a multitude of photo opportunities. Bill thought it all totally amazing, even the miles and miles of trees.

Leaving Shanghai by train on the 6th of September he had an overnight hotel stop in Beijing before joining the 07:19 train to Ulan Bator, Mongolia, arriving the following afternoon.

Bill spent the next two days exploring the dramatic city and surroundings with a local guide before rejoining the train on the evening of the 10th of September

He arrived in Urtusk two days later, and had an overnight in a 'comfy' hotel (compared to the train) by the shore of Lake Baikal.

Lake Baikal is the deepest freshwater lake in the world, is a World Heritage site, and is one of Asia's Holy places.

Leaving Urtusk at 18:30 on the 13th, Bill had three nights on the train travelling through, what seemed like, endless forested areas before arriving in Moscow on the evening of the 16th.

There was time in Moscow to visit all the usual sites and, the highlight for Bill, a guided tour of the Moscow underground. Its stations are decorated with marble, mosaics, stained glass panels and bronze sculptures. Perhaps some inspiration for Daisy Hill station!

In the evening of the 18th Bill caught the sleeper train to Koln Germany, had an overnight there before getting the early morning train on the 20th to London St. Pancras via Belgium and the Channel Tunnel

The final lap was from London Euston to Daisy Hill, arriving home in the afternoon of the 20th September.

Bill's distinguished beard was frequently admired and became the start of many conversations with fellow train travellers and local people. He also had an enquiring mind and found lots of wonderful people to talk with about their lives and countries. He was invited to share their food and visit some of their homes

On the final lap from London he met an English couple who, when they asked where he had come from, were so amazed that you can travel all the way from Shanghai to Daisy Hill. I expect they are talking about it still.

An epic journey of 14 days; nine of which were spent riding the rails.

Helena Chappell, Bill's Sister

