

*Celebrating the Contribution of  
Billy Donald*



*from the Parish Council of  
Chelveston-cum-caldecott*

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On behalf of the Village, it is my great privilege to mark the contribution made by Billy Donald to Chelveston-cum-Caldecott over the last 30 years.

Cllr Michael Foulger first met Billy in the late 1970s during the planning of the first 305<sup>th</sup> memorial on the tower of this church. As was Billy's style he was very much "behind the scenes" in this project doing the research and ensuring accuracy. When the memorial was unveiled in September 1980, he was there, but in the background as always – saying it was someone else's day for glory.

In the years that followed Billy came to the Remembrance Day service each year with a wreath dedicated to the men who died flying from Chelveston. Billy again preferred to be the man in the background, not wanting to steal the limelight and always wanting someone "more important" to lay the official wreath, even if that someone was Carole his wife!

In the year 2000 Peter Hill, who farms in the Village, found a set of pilot's name tags whilst ploughing. Billy gave Peter the benefit of his years of research and together they were able to trace the identity and family of the pilot who had crashed and sadly died in the Village. This success and Billy's enthusiasm ignited Peter's passion for the 305<sup>th</sup>, an interest that continues today.

I first worked with Billy back in the summer of 2003. With Billy Betts, he approached the Parish Council with a proposal to build a modest new memorial to the 305<sup>th</sup> in the centre of the Village. The airfield was being sold into private ownership and Billy was concerned that the memory of the 305<sup>th</sup> might die as all traces of history vanished.

Their idea was simple but compelling – to build a new memorial with the wind-sock mast from the old hangar at the heart of it, a permanent reminder of the sacrifice made by the men of the 305<sup>th</sup>.

Negotiations to secure the land seemed to take years but Billy didn't lose heart – all he wanted was to see the memorial built before the last of the veterans passed away. Every time I met him, I learned more of the history

of the airfield and the 305<sup>th</sup> and soon caught the bug. I began to realise that Billy's modest plans weren't enough to commemorate those brave men.

Together we set about designing the memorial you see today in the Village. We used all of Billy's research to capture the details that were important to the Group – from the symbolic “G” plate on the front to the stunning B-17 on the top and down to the squadron badges on the posts.

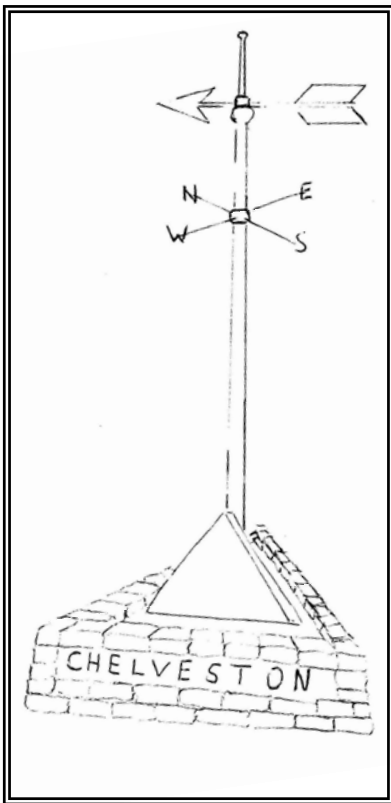
Billy had estimated the cost of his original modest design as £500 and had been worried about raising funds even for that. To his amazement donations flooded in. Over £20,000 was raised by public subscription and we were able to realise Billy's dream design.

When I designed the dedication plaque, Billy didn't want his name on it all. He reckoned he hadn't made much of a contribution and didn't deserve a mention. The Parish Council overruled him and “William Donald of Rushden” is credited as designer – his name engraved forever.

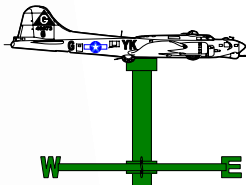
On the dedication day last year Billy worked with us in the morning tidying the site and getting things ready for the veterans. But during the ceremony he was back to his usual place, the man in the background taking photographs and keeping the veterans on track – staying out of the limelight as always - “Adrian” he said in that lovely brogue of his – “today is for the veterans, not for me”.

So ladies and gentlemen, I ask you, let's make today Billy's day. When you follow him out of the church on his final journey, please glance left to the memorial on the tower and remember his quiet contribution. And then whenever you drive past our glorious memorial in the Village – remember first the fallen and the veterans just as Billy would want – but then please remember Billy Donald, that quiet unassuming man who made it possible to keep their memory alive forever.

*Billy we thank you for your contribution to our  
Village and may you rest in peace*



Billy's original sketch  
July 2003



Our final design  
May 2007

