

Mitcham Grammar School for Boys Obituaries

Michael Brooks Hugh Clarke
George Farebrother Alan Simpson Don Walsh
David Powell

Michael Brooks



Michael Brooks

Archivist, historian and Grammy award-winning producer with a passion for early jazz and blues

My father, Michael Brooks, who has died aged 85, was a Grammy award-winning archivist, historian and producer who introduced American roots music to a new generation of listeners. He had a lifelong passion for early jazz and blues, together with a knowledge of elusive 78rpm recordings that bordered on the uncanny. "He's like Merlin the wizard," his fellow producer Steve Berkowitz told *Billboard* magazine in 2004. "To try to find an obscure master or acetate, you can go to the vault or try the internet. Or you can just go to Michael."

He was born in Tooting, south London, and largely raised by his grandparents. But he found his spiritual home in New York and his inspiration in the music of Louis

Armstrong and Billie Holiday. He barely knew his father, Alfred Brooks, who skipped town when he was four. His mother, Maude (nee Buttle), remarried and left to run a pub in north London. Michael attended Mitcham county grammar school but left with few qualifications.

Music, though, was to provide his real education. By his early teens he was trading jazz records and used the proceeds to supplement his income during stints as an advertising copywriter and a hotel scout for Thomas Cook. By dint of skill and good fortune, he spun a cherished hobby into a career that he loved.

Adventurous by nature, he and his first wife (and my mother), Stella (nee Hoyer), moved to Manhattan in 1966, initially intending to stay for three months. For several years he worked in the marketing department at St Martin's Press, where he suggested the title for James Herriot's *All Creatures Great and Small* (his first suggestion, *Ill Creatures Great and Small*, was rejected). He and Stella separated in 1974 and he married Pat Sweeting in 1982.

His big break in the business came when he caught the eye of John Hammond, the producer credited with discovering both Holiday and Bob Dylan. Michael served as his

assistant from 1971 until Hammond's retirement five years later, mastering the intricacies of the recording and restoration process along the way.

Michael worked as a reissue producer at CBS and then as an archivist and consultant at Sony Music in Manhattan - a role he was still filling, very happily, into his 80s. He won six Grammys in total, including prizes for reissues by his first loves, Holiday and Armstrong. In 2019, the Michael Brooks Collection - his personal archive of more than 10,000 records - was acquired by the University of California Santa Barbara Performing Arts Library.

My father was self-taught and self-made; a discerning consumer of news, politics and popular culture. Intimacy did not come easily to him. He regarded himself as a natural outsider. But his puckish dark humour masked a deep-seated concern for the wellbeing of others, and he would never knowingly under-tip a waiter, or pass a beggar on the street without emptying his wallet. He never learned to drive, in part because he liked to walk. The world is a little less interesting without him walking through it.

He is survived by Pat, me and his grandchildren, Ada and Ira.

Xan Brooks

Hugh Jenner-Clarke (aka Hugh Clarke)

Known at school as Hugh Clarke. His father George's birth surname was Clarke, but his mother remarried a Mr Jenner after her first husband died and Hugh took the surname of his stepfather and prefixed this to Clarke.

Hugh died on 31st March 2016 at Cape Town in South Africa and I'm still piecing together details of his life, but what I have is summarised below:-

Student at Chelsea College from 1950 to 1954; he graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Geology

Joined the mining company AngloAmerican in 1954 and was seconded to De Beers in South Africa where he worked as a field geologist specialising in diamond exploration

Went freelance and became an independent consulting geologist in the late 1950s (still exploring for diamonds in South Africa, but later worked in Canada, Australia and other countries)

Became director in charge of exploration at Firestone Diamonds plc in 1995 (in South Africa)

Helped establish Frontier Rare Earths in 2002 and acted as consultant for rare earths exploration in South Africa and other countries

Hugh had a species of pollen named after him by the South African Museum in 1985 - this was to honour his discovery of this rare species when he was exploring for diamonds in the 1960s; the species is *Spintricolpites jennerclarkei*. This is mentioned in the Annals of the South African museum on p68 which says "The species is named after Mr Hugh Jenner-Clarke, an exploration geologist, who during many years work has located numerous kimberlite pipes in the Gamoep area". A digitised version of the book can be found here: https://archive.org/stream/annalsofsouthaf951985sout/annalsofsouthaf951985sout_djvu.txt

The Mining Feeds journal of 29th June 2011 carried an interview with James Kenny, CEO of Frontier Rare Earths in which he mentioned how he first met Hugh: "On an early visit we were very fortunate to meet a renowned diamond exploration geologist by the name of Hugh Jenner-Clarke who had, at that time, spent over 40 years in the diamond exploration sector in South Africa and elsewhere and had some important discoveries to his name. On a handshake we formed a partnership with Hugh and established Firestone Diamonds plc, an emerging diamond producer now with operating diamond mines in Botswana and Lesotho". See: <http://www.miningfeeds.com/2011/06/29/james-kenny-frontier-rare-earth-tsxfro/> (7th paragraph)

Hugh was also a fellow of the Geological Society in London and a member of the Geological Society of South Africa.

Steve King (relative)

George Farebrother

My friend and colleague, George Farebrother, who has died aged 77, was a deeply committed member of the global anti-nuclear movement who was intricately involved in moves to mount legal actions against governments that possess nuclear weapons.

From 1991 to 2004, George and I worked together as secretary and chair, respectively, of the UK affiliate of the World Court Project, an initiative that used the International Court of Justice at the Hague to challenge the legality of nuclear weapons. After the court confirmed in 1996 that the threat or use of nuclear weapons should generally be regarded as illegal, George sustained the project virtually single-handedly until his death.

For many years he had been a history teacher, but from the moment he learned about the World Court Project in 1991 he took early retirement and dedicated the rest of his life to its activities. Applying his Quaker beliefs and teaching experience, he came up with the idea of collecting individual "declarations of public conscience" against nuclear weapons, which were accepted by the International Court of Justice as "citizens' evidence". This characteristically inventive concept was taken up all over the world, especially in Japan, and George helped present nearly four million declarations to the Court before its historic judgment.

He never gave up trying to engage with decision-makers and their advisers, and became a familiar figure in the corridors of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, parliament and London embassies. His cogent writing, networking flair and grass roots appeal brought in enough funds to allow him to travel to key United Nations events in New York and Geneva. Constantly devising fresh ways of using the law to mobilise against nuclear weapons, he became adept at producing computerised publicity material.

George was born in Streatham, south London, to Robert, a docker, but never knew his mother, who died when he was very young. He went to Mitcham County grammar school and met his future wife, Jean (nee Rudd), a neighbour in Mitcham, in 1956. On his return from Leeds University, where he studied history and philosophy, he began teaching at Bournemouth secondary modern school in Hampshire in 1960 and married Jean, who also went into teaching, a year later. George subsequently had spells at secondary schools in Newmarket, Letchworth and Kingston upon Thames, and for his final 20 years in teaching was head of history at what is now Hailsham community college in East Sussex.

George's favourite recreation was countryside walks, which helped him explore how history had shaped the British landscape. Enthusiastic about amateur theatre, he also enjoyed an annual pilgrimage to Shakespeare's Globe in London.

He is survived by Jean, by their two sons, John and James, and by five grandchildren.

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Robert Green
Guardian

Alan Simpson (1929-2017)



Alan Simpson, who has died aged 87, was half of one of the most talented and socially-perceptive comedy-writing partnerships of post-war Britain. He and Ray Galton created two of Britain's best-loved comedy series, Hancock's Half Hour and Steptoe and Son.

Alan Simpson was born in Brixton to a working class family, the son of a window-cleaner. He attended Mitcham grammar school but left early to work as a shipping clerk.

Simpson and Galton met as teenagers and became close friends, their sense of humour forming the heart of their bond. They sent in a script to Frank Muir and Denis Norden, the most successful broadcasting comedy writers of the time. Then in 1954, Tony Hancock commissioned them to write a series.

The 1950s was the decade when Tory prime minister Harold Macmillan assured the British people that they'd "never had it so good". With the rise of the supermarket, shopping centres and television, class and class conflict had also allegedly withered away.

But the 1950s was also the decade that witnessed the beginnings of the industrial action and political protests that reached a climax in the 1960s. Playwright John Osborne caught this mood of rebellion in his 1956 play *Look Back in Anger*.

Hancock, Galton and Simpson revolutionised British comedy by inventing sitcom. They created a character - Anthony Aloysius St John Hancock - whose comedy burst the bubble of complacency to reveal British society as still racked by class conflict and contradiction.

Hancock hates the rich and powerful who frustrate his search for fame and social acceptance. His humour is the collapse of the grandiose into the mediocre, the powerless or the bewildered. He gets his revenge by parodying their arrogance and snobbery.

At its height, the TV series was watched by one third of the British population.

The essence of *Steptoe and Son*, about a father-and-son rag and bone business, is the inter-generational conflict between "dirty old man" Albert Steptoe, and his son Harold who is full of social aspirations and pretensions reminiscent of Hancock.

At the heart of Galton's and Simpson's work is the notion that the best comedy reveals the true nature of the world we inhabit, debunking society's myths and phoney images.

Sabby Sagall

Socialist Review 3/01/2017

22.2.1926-16.12.2015

My brother Don died in December 2015, a few months before his ninetieth birthday.

He was born in Canonbury, north London and came to Mitcham in 1928, when my parents escaped “the smoke” for leafy Surrey. He started at the school aged 10 in 1936 as a scholarship boy, as I was to do 10 years later, though by that time the financial benefits of the scholarship had been made obsolete by Butler’s Education Act of 1944. His schooling was interrupted in 1940 by evacuation – not with the rest of the school to Weston-super-Mare, but with me and our mother to join relatives who had already fled the Blitz to rural Huntingdonshire. Life in those parts was still surprisingly basic; we had no mains water, electricity, gas or sewage. Water came from a hand-pump in the scullery and then had to be heated on a fire that was also the only means of cooking, so it had to be lit every morning, winter and summer alike.

One amenity available was, however, secondary education, in the form of Kimbolton School, a boarding, fee-paying institution that, under the war-time arrangements, admitted Don free as a day boy. Something he told me about this has remained with me: at Mitcham, he had done fairly well academically, usually being in the top half-dozen in the form at exams time; at Kimbolton, he suddenly found himself to be “the school genius”. This says much for the standards of attainment of our little south-suburban establishment compared with a typical public school of the time.

Returned to London, he took a war-time degree at King’s College and then opted for work in the coal-mines as a “Bevin boy” rather than military service. This choice was rare enough to make a story in the Evening Standard (with photo, to our mother’s delight) but it came to nothing, for he started work in electronics, first with Mullard’s at Hackbridge and then in the Scientific Civil Service, employment which gave immunity from National Service, including its coal-mining version. In 1955, with several innovative electronic developments to his name, he was awarded a research fellowship at Oxford and this led to his gradual absorption into the academic life. He became a University Lecturer and fellow of Oriel College and was at the height of his powers when, in 1977, tragedy struck: he was cycling to work when knocked over by a car. He very nearly died as a result of the brain trauma that resulted and probably owed his survival to the close proximity of the Radcliffe Hospital.

He recovered well, but after some time it became clear that he would not in fact be able to fulfil all his previous duties, because of the permanence of some of the damage, and he took early retirement. The remainder of his life was still active, with particular interests being silver-smithing, coin-collecting and, above all, gardening, all pursued with the thoroughness that had made him such a good researcher. He enjoyed it, but it was a poor alternative to “what might have been”.

His enduring memorials are a part of the research programme in the Engineering Department at Oxford and the text-book “Lectures on the Electrical Properties of Materials”, co-authored with Laszlo Solymar and now in its ninth edition. My memory is of the complete selflessness and limitless generosity he always displayed towards his younger brother. He is survived by his wife, Dorothy (Reynolds), their sons Nicholas and Andrew, and five grand-children.

John Walsh, December 2015

David Powell

David Frederick Powell, MA MMBA FRICS FRTPI

DOB: 9/3/1941 - Died: 18/4/2020

David left Mitcham Grammar School in 1959 and commenced work as a trainee Surveyor with London Borough of Richmond at Barnes Council.

He qualified as a Chartered Surveyor while working at Surrey County Council.

In 1969 he qualified as a Town Planner whilst working at Brighton Borough Council.

He was appointed in 1973 as Rother Council's Chief Planning Officer in Bexhill, at that time the youngest in the Country.

After 10 years he was appointed as Rother Council's Chief Executive in 1984 which he held until his retirement in 2001.

In retirement David worked abroad in the USA, Albania, Tajikistan and in 2003 Baghdad in Iraq for USAID. David attempted to introduce local governance and local government practices in new emerging democracies.

David was married to Janet for 55yrs and had a son and daughter and two grandchildren.

David was a member of the Scout movement from a cub in Colliers wood through all disciplines of Scouting eventually becoming, Hastings District Commissioner, Chairman of East Sussex Scouts and Broadstone Warren Scout Camp.

Janet Powell

David was a member of the 2nd Mitcham Scout Group, as a cub, a scout, a senior scout and rover scout.

He applied himself and worked hard and progressed very quickly through the scout badge and award system, finally achieving his Queen's Scout award in 1959.

John Barringer (Rutlish)



Frank Jones

David Powell

circa 1963