

### **Bill Nimmo**

I know that Valerie is very heartened by your presence today, by your expressions of sympathy and by the very large number of cards and other messages she has received. She has asked Michael Thomson and me each to say a few words on different aspects of Bill's life. I feel privileged to do so and I'm sure Michael does as well.

It is more than 50 years since my wife Carol and I first met Bill, when we moved to Murrayfield in 1970. He and Valerie were already ensconced just up the road and as time went by our two families became firm friends. Bill and Valerie moved to Dirleton some 30 years ago. When we were thinking of moving there some years later our decision to do so followed a strong positive recommendation from them.

Bill was born in August 1939 in the small rural community of Carperstane, just south of North Berwick and close to the Balgone Lochs, where he and Valerie often went for walks in later life. The family, which included him and his sister Alison, later moved to a house in Corstorphine and then to a flat in Drumsheugh Gardens in the centre of Edinburgh. Bill spent his school years at the nearby Melville College, followed by Heriot Watt University. After graduation he worked first with Bruce Peebles, a major firm of electrical engineers, and later with Scottish Agricultural Industries.

I want to mention two particular elements of Bill's life, both of which were very important to him. The first was his love of the hills and his mountaineering achievements. He and some of his friends, mainly parents of pupils at St George's school, had formed a walking group, the Reluctant Dragons, and members of the group decided to tackle the Munros - the Scottish mountains exceeding 3000 feet in height. This was no mean challenge, as there are over 280 of them, widely spread throughout the Highlands and the Hebrides. Only one of them, the so called Inaccessible Pinnacle in the Cuillins, is considered to involve serious rock climbing, but that was no problem for Bill, who roped up to reach the summit and abseiled down, having practised beforehand on the climbing wall at Meadowbank Stadium and the Ravelston quarry, behind Mary Erskine School.

The Scottish Mountaineering Club maintains a list, accessible on line, of those who have registered with them as having climbed all the Munros, which at present contains

over 8200 names. Bill is recorded as having completed them in 1995, the 1493<sup>rd</sup> person to have done so. His other notable rock climb was The Cobbler, near Arrochar, below Munro height but of striking proportions and with a challenging rocky summit, which involves climbing through a rock window and along a narrow and exposed outward facing ledge to reach the summit. Bill is reported to have achieved that without difficulty.

The other of Bill's interests which I want to mention is his renowned skill in carpentry and in particular in furniture making. After he retired he established his workshop at Overhailes, near East Linton, where he installed specialist equipment and took commissions from wide sources over many years, including for some of the furniture in Dirleton Kirk. While we were still in Murrayfield he built for us a splendid oak bookcase, a real work of art, more than seven feet long, to fit precisely into an alcove in our sittingroom. By good chance, when we moved to Dirleton, it also fitted exactly into our new sittingroom, so we continue to treasure it on a daily basis. Bill also built a bookcase for our cottage on Speyside, a story which I think demonstrates precisely his kind and thoughtful nature. The cottage was bounded on two sides by the Scots pines of Abernethy Forest. On his own initiative, and without telling us in advance, Bill obtained local pinewood from the timber merchants in Newtonmore to construct it. So the new bookcase was in effect coming back to where its timbers had been born - before its later move to Dirleton.

Bill is missed by us all and of course especially by Valerie. For many of us an impromptu cup of tea, a drink in the house or a shared supper at the Castle Inn will not be the same without him. And many of us in Dirleton will miss our casual meetings with him on our morning walks around the village. God rest his soul.

**Tom Drysdale**

**30 April 2026**

I have only known Bill for about 15 years mainly as part of the History Society. He joined the embryo Dirleton History Group in the early 1980s and was immediately co-opted on to the committee a position he occupied ever since. His last attendance was in February of this year.

Over those years he actively participated, promoted and perceptively pronounced verbally and in writing on a wide variety of historical subjects.

There will be those amongst you today who will recall his archaeological digs in Dirleton.

There will be those of you who have seen him at Heritage Gatherings, archaeological conferences and manning a History Society stall on Dirleton Green.

There will be those of you who have shared in his Front of House duties and contribution to the exhibition team at the Coastal Communities Museum in North Berwick.

There will be those of you who have heard his wisdom but not always conventional take at U3a events.

There will be those of you who have walked with him around Dirleton as he stimulated your imagination of the village in bygone times and many of you will have met him walking his and Valerie's much loved dogs.

All of you will remember the tall, slightly stooped, white haired figure leaning in to enlighten people on the local history or to explain the mysteries of his collections of ancient agricultural artefacts and bricks.

Personally I am left with two indelible memories, one aural, one visual. His fine, meticulous joinery has been mentioned but he worked with the mantra 'measure twice, cut once'. Many of us will have rued the day we forgot this maxim whether literally or metaphorically.

And the visual memory? Bill bottom up, head down kneeling in a precisely cut trench archaeological trowel in hand. May he rest in peace.