

OBITUARY
DAVID MARK ROBINS
13th June 1943 – 30th March 2021



I first saw David in 1963 in 'The Left Bank', a trendy coffee bar above an equally trendy record shop, in Paris Street Exeter. I wondered in on a Friday evening to find a crowd of people, some with Guitars, who were attempting to run a folk evening. David was one of them.

He was born in Crediton, to Barbara and Dennis and later moved to Exeter living first in Cowley Bridge Road and then to Whitestone Cross, on the outskirts of Exeter. He was the middle of three children, with elder sister Susan who died a couple of years ago and Gaynor who now lives in Cumbria. He was educated at Exeter School where he met

the late Tony Rose. He became a member of the combined cadet force, was one of the first participants in Dartmoor's 'Ten Tors Expedition' and also achieved the Queens Scout award. He left Exeter to take up a Teacher training place at Goldsmith College, London but returned after one year.

Like many others he became interested in Skiffle in the 1950's, taught himself to play guitar and progressed to folk. In 1964 he was a cofounder of the Exeter Folk Song Club at The Jolly Porter St David's and was a major driver in the move to it becoming one of the earliest 'Traditional only' clubs in the country a few years later. He teamed up with the late Ken Penny as unaccompanied duo 'The Journeymen', which soon became a trio with the addition of Ged Higson. They quickly established a name for themselves in the Westcountry and featured on Westward television's 'Sing Inn', a folk programme hosted by Cyril Tawney.

During this time David worked for the EFDSS under the regional Manager Bill Rutter and was involved in staging the Sidmouth Folk Festival and hosting events at the newly established Halsway Manor in Somerset. I recall one such event where we visited Ruth Tongue at her home in Crowcombe.

In 1966 he married his first wife, Janet Arscott, and they had two children, Simon and Jenni. Sadly, they divorced a few years later. In 1972 he married Barbara and together they had two children, Rachael and Toby.

David left the EFDSS and became a delivery driver for Boots Farm sales Ltd. Visiting folk artists would often do Barnstaple on Monday, Exeter on Tuesday and Plymouth on Wednesday and David would provide accommodation and then take them on a tour of Devon in his delivery Lorry during the day and we would drive them to that night's venue. He transferred to Yeovil in 1972 and once again became a leading figure in the local folk scene. However, not long after this he moved to Driffield in Yorkshire and became equally involved in the Beverley folk scene.



He then decided on a complete change of career, moved away from Drifffield and took up a post as an assistant manager of a turkey farm, eventually becoming manager at Bradesburton and later worked on a development and research farm near Thirsk. Folk music took a back seat at this time and he became involved with Bridlington Road Runners, which at one stage involved taking part in a relay run from Bridlington to Bad Salzufen in Germany. With Barbara he also completed many long-distance walks. Sadly, in 2003 he suffered a debilitating stroke. He worked in a voluntary capacity for the local tourist board for a while following his recovery but never regained his singing ability.

David's interest in folk music was rekindled around 2008 and he became a regular attender at Whitby and other festivals. Following a 50th anniversary reunion

weekend at Halsway Manor, and subsequent annual traditional song weekends at that venue David once again started singing, and the look of joy and achievement on his face when he once again led a gathering in song will live with me for the rest of my life. He died suddenly and peacefully on 30th March 2021 at The James Cook Hospital, Thirsk, following a heart attack.

Bill Crawford
April 2021