

## **Brunton Scott – Baptist Minister (1926-2018)**

### **A Reflection by his son Donald, of the St John's Music Group.**

I'm Donald – Brunton and Sheila's eldest son. My sister and brothers; Rosemary, Andrew, and Callum are here and we have a good representation of the grandchildren: Anna, Kirsty, Peter, Claire, Stephen, Kizzy and Fraser.

It is great to see so many folks here – some of whom have travelled long distances – friends who knew our dad across different times in his life.

I thought it would be good to share a little about his earlier and formative years – which may be less well known.

Born in Fisherrow Musselburgh in February 1926, he was named Andrew Brunton. His father was also called Andrew – so to stop them getting muddled up, the son became Brunton. He had an older sister, Muriel.

Our grandfather, Andrew Scott, had worked as a dyer in a tweed mill in Galashiels, and he married our grandmother, a young weaver in the mills called Mary, in 1922.

Andrew and Mary moved to Musselburgh from Gala with a view to running their own business - a fish and chip shop. Mary kept the accounts.

Brunton went to Musselburgh Grammar school. He said that his sister Muriel was a good student, but that he "was not enthusiastic", although he certainly was an enthusiastic rugby player – encouraged and supported by his Scottish Borders father.

He left school at 14 and went to a commercial college to learn office skills. Moving quite quickly on to work as an office boy in a company selling and fitting tyres – being promoted after 9 months to working the switchboard and also dealing directly with customers as part of the sales force – for 15s a week – for people born after about 1970 that is 75 pence – and most of that went to the housekeeping.

His father Andrew became ill with cancer and died when Brunton was 17 (1943). Mary continued running the business - by then a successful Fish Restaurant - and Brunton came to work there doing the food preparation and cooking and serving behind the counter.

Dad would talk about his own parents as major influences on him and on his own Christian faith. When he himself was a small child, his dad was the leader of the Methodist Sunday school in Musselburgh and he remembered watching him at the head of a large group of young people walking through Musselburgh to their Sunday School picnic. Later the family started attending Portobello Baptist Church where Dad's own faith was nurtured.

He told a story of when his father had recently died. Brunton was serving in the chip shop. Some sailors, home on leave from the royal navy, were waiting to be served. Having had a few drinks, they were loud and creating a bit of a scene, with considerable swearing – not a nice atmosphere. One of the women who was serving said to my Dad (age 17 and conscious of his own inexperience) "Brunton – you need to do something". So he swallowed hard and went out from behind the counter to speak with the men. Something along the lines of – "could you tone it down for the rest of the customers, please". In telling this story, my Dad emphasised that this was during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World war and these men were home from a life of danger on a warship. They didn't take kindly to being asked to behave better by a youngster. "Who do you think you are?" they asked. "I'm Andrew Scott's son" – said my Dad. "Oh. You're Andrew Scott's son – Alright son, we'll be quiet".

WWII was still on when Dad age 17 ½ received his call up papers to serve in the military. He had a strong feeling that fighting as a soldier was not compatible with his Christian faith and he registered as a conscientious objector. This was not all that common and he seems to have been the only young person from the Portobello congregation to see things this way. He was required to explain himself to a tribunal. The tribunal accepted that he was genuine and they required him to work underground

in a coal mine – as one of the Bevin Boys. He did that for 3¼ years until the Autumn of 1947.

On his first day working in the pit, meeting the men he would be working with, Dad was asked his name – Brunton he said. Brunton! – we can't call you that! We'll call you Bert. So during the whole time he worked in the Wormit pit, Dad was called Bert, including by the managers.

During that time he began to understand that his calling was to be a minister and he would need to up his game academically – so after work at the pit he attended a series of night classes – in English, History, Geography and New Testament Greek.

Looking back on his life, he felt that he had had a fairly sheltered childhood and that his immersion in the worlds of work had, in retrospect, been very important: in the tyre company and the coal mine where the people didn't all share his faith or even his perhaps rather polite manners. He would always talk with tremendous respect and admiration for the miners with whom he had worked.

Meeting our mum Sheila was the beginning of a strong partnership and shared commitment. Together they took on that great challenge of combining church ministry with family life. Negotiating that journey definitely wasn't easy for them and it wasn't always easy for us kids either: something that both Mum and Dad recognised.

Dad was accepted to Spurgeon's theological college in London where he spent 5 years, and after completing his studies moved with Mum and my 6 week old self to St Andrews where he was the Baptist minister and where Andrew and Rosemary were born.

That ministry was followed by service with the Baptist Missionary Society in Brazil – including a period of being back in the UK on what's called furlough – a kind of speaking tour. Our Callum was born during that time, After Brazil - Queen's Park Baptist Church in Glasgow, another period in Brazil and then a final ministry in Kirkintilloch Baptist Church from which Dad and Mum retired to Scone, becoming active members in this congregation here in Perth – for the last 30 years or so. Adding all that up made him just turned 92 years old when he died.

### **Reflection**

We know that Dad had an impact on many people's lives – sometimes a great impact. A friend of mine, on hearing of his death wrote to me with this sentence "He was the man who opened the cosmos to me. I love him for it."

I would just like to mention one quality that Dad had that I'm sure was part of the key to his effect on others. And anyone who ever went for a walk with him would recognise this. Here is an example: Our son Peter told me about being 12 years old on a day out with his 80 year old grandparents in Dundee. As they walked past a couple of skateboarders, Peter realised that his grandfather was no longer walking alongside him but was heading towards these young people. What sort of confrontation was brewing? It turned out that Grandpa was just interested to chat with them and they, in turn, were very happy to talk with this elderly man they'd never met before. That was typical. Dad had a conviction – expressed by St Paul who uses a word that echoes that of my friend - that "God was in Christ reconciling the cosmos to himself" - and that meant there was no such thing as a stranger as far as he was concerned – he loved engaging with people. And I would say more strongly, that what exuded from him was love for people.

This is a service of thanksgiving for the life of Brunton Scott. We'd also like to give thanks for the many people who showed great kindness and love to both our parents. We are very grateful to Charles and the friends in this congregation here in Perth, and from the other churches represented here. Also to local friends and neighbours in Scone who showed care over the years and most especially recently. I'd like to give a special mention to the carers whose kindness and practical help allowed Dad to stay happily in his own home until the last 4 weeks of his life. And we greatly appreciated the medical and nursing staff at Perth Royal Infirmary who exercised their skill in a sensitive and caring manner and helped us as family members through the uncertainty and vulnerability of our Dad's last few weeks. *(Perth Baptist Church - 27 March 2018)*