

# MR. C. A. BINYON DIES: LEADER IN VALE OF EVESHAM

MR. C. A. BINYON died on Monday afternoon and passed, with a vigorous lifetime of distinguished service behind him, into the history of the Vale of Evesham.

He died at Avonside Hospital, Evesham, where he had been a patient, intermittently, for five years.

Thousands will mourn a great country man.

Mr. Binyon, who was 88 and a bachelor, was born at Burton-in-Lonsdale, Lancashire, the fourth son of the late Rev. F. Binyon, who was Vicar of Burton-in-Lonsdale and later, for a short time, Vicar of Winchcombe.

One of his brothers was Laurence Binyon, the poet, whose lines "For the Fallen" have been made immortal by the inclusion of some of them in Remembrance Day services for the war dead.

Another brother was the Rev. G. C. Binyon, who for several years was Vicar of Hinton-on-the-Green.

Mr. Binyon went to St. Paul's School, where he was a contemporary of G. K. Chesterton. As a boy, he wanted to be an architect, but an illness during his schooldays caused his doctor to order an outdoor career as the only way of saving his health.

Thus, eventually, there entered the Vale of Evesham and the market gardening industry a man who was to make a profound impression on both. His work and especially his leadership have conferred lasting benefits on the people.

## EVESHAM R.D.C.

He was elected Badsey member of the Evesham Rural District Council in 1904, became chairman in 1922, and was returned and re-elected continuously until he retired in 1949, when the members called him their "wise and beloved leader."

He had been 45 years on the council and chairman for 27 years. During that time, well over a thousand council houses were built, and a reputation gained for enlightened rural government.

It was he who, in 1919, persuaded the R.D.C. to build the first council houses under the 1919 Act, and he encountered formidable opposition in doing so.

At a luncheon to mark his retirement, the members applauded his statement that party politics had no place in local government and should be kept out.

And the "Journal" stated, in a leading article: "His retirement is a matter of supreme regret. Probably no man in such a position ever had a more magnificent record of most able most unselfish and most devoted service."

He received the Order of the British Empire in the Birthday Honours of 1950 in recognition of his 27 years' chairmanship of the R.D.C. Many considered the honour was long overdue. On this occasion he received a personal letter of congratulation from the late Mr. Aneurin Bevan.

## L.B.G.

His wisdom and foresight were recognised by Vale of Evesham market gardeners very soon after he became one of them, for, in 1908, he took a leading part in founding the Littleton and Badsey Growers Ltd., the first co-operatively owned horticultural concern in Britain. He became president of L.B.G. in 1909 and, during his 47 years in that office, saw the growers through difficult times to a period of development and prosperity.

In 1947, when the 1,000th member was enrolled, thanks and compliments were heaped upon his now bending shoulders. The untiring efforts of the

appropriate talent of draughtsmanship, as those observed who noticed on his writing pad the exquisite drawings of Gothic windows he made while tolerantly listening to speakers who were unduly long-winded.

In his declining years, he cultivated his garden. It was a small thing, compared with the cultivation he leaves as his monument in those parts of the Vale of Evesham that knew and loved him.

## HIS PERSONALITY

In a leading article published in these columns in February, 1938, entitled "A Great Local Benefactor," we wrote of Mr. Binyon: "He has always lived in a most humble manner and it is by the charm of his personality, his capacity for friendliness, his interest in his fellows, his broadmindedness and kind-heartedness . . . that he has endeared himself to his fellow men and obtained their affection, confidence and loyalty . . . Possessing sympathy, understanding and a true sense of humour, he is the same to all men, be they of high or low estate . . . His influence for good over a long period of years on many of the youths of the village which he has for so many years made his home is incalculable. He has, during their impressionable years, turned their minds into channels which, apart from him, they would never have discovered . . . It would not be too much to say that, by precept and example, he has led them, almost unconsciously, in the paths of right conduct . . . We have long known and respected Mr. Binyon, and what we write about him we know to be the simple and unvarnished truth. His public work is known to all, but the quiet and unostentatious influence for good which he exerts among those with whom he comes into personal contact is known to the latter only."

After the lapse of a quarter of a century almost to a day, we would not only endorse but would underline what we wrote then. A great man has departed from us. For him, however,



the end was a happy release, for he had been an invalid for several years. As might be expected, he bore his years of incapacity with fortitude, serenity and in that Christian spirit which guided him throughout his long life.

## BENCH'S TRIBUTE

Before the ordinary business at Evesham Magistrates' Court on Wednesday, the chairman (Mr. Henry Ashwin) paid this tribute to Mr. Binyon: "He was a member of this Bench for over 30 years and chairman for several years. He was a very prominent figure in the public life of the Vale of Evesham and I think I can say he was very much beloved by everyone who had any dealings with him."

Mr. H. Osborne Roberts (for the legal profession) and Supt. T. E. Lewis (for the police) asked to be associated with the chairman's remarks.

# Man of great and varied natural gifts

AT the funeral at St. James' church, Badsey, on Wednesday, the Vicar, the Rev. Peter Braby, said the names of Badsey and Binyon would for ever be linked.

The Vicar said it was sad to see Mr. Binyon during his last few months; his once vigorous body and powerful intellect had become more and more enfeebled by age. "But he was very tired. He longed for release that he might be brought nearer to the Beatific Vision of the King in His beauty. We thank God for calling him to rest."

For nearly 70 years Mr. Binyon had been a burning and a shining light in the whole Evesham district and they should thank God not only for endowing him with great and varied natural gifts but also for the grace whereby he consecrated those gifts. He was a truly God-centred man. He dedicated those talents to God in a very real inward life of devotion as well as in the public acknowledgement of God's glory in the worship of the church.

The Vicar went on, "Charles Arthur Binyon would have been distinguished in any walk of life he might have chosen. Like his brothers he might have gone to the university and pursued an academic or professional career."

yon, in which he fired them with some of his own enthusiasm for church architecture, natural history, astronomy, bell-ringing, sketches and various other pursuits. His knowledge of these things was profound, not merely book-learning, for he taught the value of field work.

He widened the horizons of many who might otherwise have been earth-bound, helping them to appreciate the finer things of mind and spirit.

"And so this man who might have been a great public figure on the wider stage of national life humbly devoted himself to the life and welfare of a village in the Vale of Evesham. The names of Badsey and Binyon will for ever be linked.

"This church in which we are met was the centre and powerhouse of his life of sacrifice. How he loved this church! I think he loved every stone of it. You can see that in his drawings. And he is surely built as a living stone into its spiritual fabric, a firmly laid stone on which other generations in their turn may be built."

Mrs. G. Marshall played the organ.

The family mourners, all nephews and nieces, were: Mrs. A. M. E. Higgins (Streatley, Berks.), Mr. D. E. Binyon (Skipton, Yorks.), Mrs. O. R. Major (Swanage, Dorset), Mrs. Phyllis Brennan, Miss Helen Binyon (Corsham, Wilts.), and Mrs. N. M. Gray (London).

Among the early arrivals at the

president, it was stated, were the foundations upon which the society was built.

"They owed to him more than they owed to any other individual, a great debt of thankfulness for the spirit in which he had met the tremendous difficulties which had beset the society—difficulties which would have brought it to bankruptcy but for the president's efforts." Thus spoke another veteran leader of the growers, the late Mr. R. R. Smith.

He was appointed to the Commission of the Peace for Worcestershire in 1912 and sat for many years on the Evesham County Bench of magistrates, of which he became chairman. He retired from the Bench in 1945.

As a governor of Prince Henry's Grammar School, as a leader between the wars in the Vale of Evesham activities of the League of Nations Union, and in many other spheres of public service, he was a beloved figure.

Succeeding Bishops of Worcester looked to him for wise advice in connection with the design, repair and upkeep of church buildings in the diocese.

### INFLUENCE

But it was in local government perhaps, that he made his influence most felt and respected. Whether presiding over the Badsey Parish Council, the Evesham Rural District Council, the Parish Councils Association, or any of the other bodies with which he was connected, he never failed to impress the gathering with his superb qualities of chairmanship, orderliness of mind, courtesy, tolerance, real wisdom and integrity.

He kept the vision and appreciation of good order all his life which had inspired his youthful ambition to be an architect. He also possessed the

But he pursued an outdoor life, took up horticulture and came to Badsey. "Immediately he was throwing himself heart and soul into the life of the church and village and surrounding district," the Vicar went on.

"A tremendously hard worker, he was never content to confine his labours within the narrow limits of his own interest. Co-operation rather than competition was his ideal."

There came into being the Littleton and Badsey Growers, that "model co-operative enterprise" which was famous in the market gardening industry throughout the country. There were many setbacks in the early days and more than once almost complete failure, but the indomitable faith and courage of the founder did not falter until they had won through to success.

In every kind of social service in the neighbourhood Mr. Binyon was a devoted worker and leader. He soon made his mark on the parochial church council, the Parish Council, the Rural District Council and the County Council. He was also on the Board of Management of Badsey School.

"He was a stubborn fighter for the things he cared keenly about," said the Vicar. "People often found him difficult to work with, but that is commonly the mark of great men who are not content with half-measures. He combined vision with practical common sense."

The Vicar said there were many people in church who had cause to revere Mr. Binyon's memory, above all as an inspirer of youth. He was unsparring of himself in his devotion to their interests and even in his latter years was forward looking. He had heard of those "exhausting but thrilling bicycle rides" by local youths with Mr. Bin-

tonal was one of Mr. Binyon's oldest friends, Mr. W. H. Churchill, now aged 85. Other mourners included Mr. E. Hartley (president), Mr. T. Archer (vice-president), Mr. L. V. W. Smith (general manager), representing Littleton and Badsey Growers Ltd. Members of the L.B.G. committee present included Mr. J. Harrison, Mr. H. D. Archer, Mr. W. T. Bearcroft, Mr. H. G. Archer, Mr. F. G. Bailey, Mr. J. Stallard, Mr. J. H. Jones and Mr. G. Bearcroft. Also present were many members of the company's staff.

From Evesham Rural District Council were Mr. S. Byrd (chairman), Mr. C. H. Gardiner (clerk) and members of the Council. Badsey Parish Council was represented by its chairman, Mr. G. H. Stewart, and the North Cotswold R.D.C. by Mr. G. E. Knight (surveyor).

Other public representatives included Mr. Henry Ashwin (chairman of Evesham magistrates), Mr. N. F. Davies (Evesham Town Clerk, also representing the District Education Committee), Mr. M. H. Harvey (headmaster of Badsey Primary School), Mrs. D. Carter (school managers), Mr. F. E. Amos (former headmaster of Badsey School), Mr. C. E. Miller (headmaster, Prince Henry's Grammar School, Evesham), Mr. A. J. Cork (headmaster, Blackminster County Secondary Modern School), Mrs. W. Stewart (Society of Friends), Mr. D. A. Jelfs (Vale of Evesham Asparagus Growers' Association), Mr. John H. Bird (also, with Mr. W. H. Tyler, representing the "Evesham Journal"), Mr. T. C. Sparrow (Badsey Horticultural Society), Mr. J. D. Johnson (Worcestershire Change Ringers' Association), and Police Supt. T. E. Lewis. There were also many others present.

Funeral arrangements were by Mr. W. E. Williams, Swan Lane, Evesham.

# Was 'Mister Binyon' to everybody

THEY TOLD the slim, bespectacled young man who had left a scholar's desk in London that he should seek his fortune in the countryside. His delicate health demanded an open-air life.

Accompanied later by the sturdy young Will Churchill (whom he met in Devon) and underterred by a letter from the author of *Grain and Chaff from an English Manor* explaining the hard, if healthy, life of a market gardener, Charles Arthur Binyon came to Badsey in the Vale of Evesham.

All that followed in public service to local government and industry, the Church, Education, charitable causes for the benefit of his fellows, is told more than ably by colleagues of mine who also have admired the man and his work for some considerable part of his long career.

It is of the personality behind the public figure of the man I grew to know so well that I would write. Above all, he was a self-forgetting servant of God and of his neighbour.

No man seeking his own fortune would have joined the ranks of gardeners who were still growing a little wheat in the hope of some security when so often golden plums rotted beneath the trees because, such were the precarious, irksome economics, they could not afford to pick and market some crops.

That way lies the story of Mr. Binyon's years of endeavour to improve the market gardener's return for his toil, and the chapter (on which I need not dwell) telling of the formation of the co-operative organisation for them of which he was founder, its inspiration and its guiding light for half a century.

In all those services he succeeded and, across the Vale, became "Mister Binyon" to everybody. Also, he found health (as old Dr. Cox of Winchcombe was later delighted to discover) and scope for his modestly held ambition to

## An appreciation by JOHN H. BIRD

"do something useful in life."

"Seek your fortune in country life." If Mr. Binyon did not personally prosper, it was only in the way that the world measures prosperity. He never sought that brand of success. Indeed, no man could have thought less about himself. In that he succeeded, it was for others—and he was content.

The boy born beneath Ingleburrow Hill might have become an architect or an artist; or, as were his brothers, lawyer, author, priest, but he became a gardener in the countryside, where he had an amusing eyebrow-lifter. Roaming near the Cotswolds, he was asked by a rustic if he had seen a ship. No, he hadn't, and how could anyone, he mused, expect to see a ship on the side of a hill? He soon grew to understand and to like the people who said "ship" for "sheep," and "fit" for "feet," and "Ow bist?" for "How do you do?"; and who were independent, friendly and helpful. Yet on his first nomination for a committee, some of them called him "an educated young gentleman and therefore knows nothing."

"I started in a small way, just as the local inhabitants did," Mr. Binyon once told me. "I had a small piece of land off the Bretforton road and gradually increased my holding, but it was always less than 12 acres.

"I never got fat on it," he added, using a local expression with a smile, "and, needless to say, I could never afford a wife."

The head of the house at Badsey, where Mr. Binyon found his first rooms, must have thought him totally lacking in ambition: "Why, I've had four wives and if I survive this one I shall have five," he boasted to his young lodger.

There was an occasion when we talked—against the background music

of church bells ringing Mr. Binyon an 80th birthday tribute—about the years that had formed a life so different from that envisaged for him.

"I can't help feeling," he told me, "that the whole thing was determined by my desire and need for an outdoor life. I don't think I should have been so happy in any other sphere. My aim has been to lead a useful life; to have hobbies as well as a job. Concentration has been helpful—it is a most valuable thing."

Concentration could be a cousin to faith. Mr. Binyon was a man of simple, unswerving faith. That he never wore his heart on his sleeve was silent testimony to his own steadfast nature, and an inspiration to others.

During our long friendship, I saw him in many lights and changing scenes. Yet, in his essential character, he never changed. He was kindly, quietly courageous, utterly unostentatious; his courtesy was gentle, and his tastes simple. He lived humbly, or most frugally by some standards. For him, the story that began at Bethlehem never lost its clarity or its comfort, and in it was his Guide.

His sense of humour had a boyish delight. Indeed, there remained something of the boy in him throughout his long life. His love of books of adventure and achievement; his love of engines and trains (his maternal grandfather was engineer for the London to Birmingham railway, completed in 1838) and, moreover, his love of boys themselves.

So many owe so much to him who, through sheer goodness of heart, widened the horizons of their lives and enriched their interests.

If one can say more in appreciation of the man who, such was the appraisal of him by all classes, of people that he became a legend in his own lifetime, it is that, discounting Mark Antony, the good men do lives after them. In his 89th year, we take leave of Mr. Binyon, our hearts warmed by having known him; thankful for his life, and for those graces—bits of immortality—which live on in others because of him.