

## THE VENERABLE HEWITT WILSON (1924–2008)



A thanksgiving service was held in Deddington Church on 9 July to celebrate a remarkable life and distinguished service with the RAF and Church. Hewitt Wilson was born in 1924 in Worcester, MA, whilst his father was working in the United States. He was educated in Ireland after the family returned there when Hewitt was two.

He matriculated to Trinity College, Dublin where he read oriental languages and theology, graduating in 1947 with a first-class honours degree. He was also a high achiever at sport, winning his university colours in rugby, athletics and tennis. In the 1950s he was at one time the only non-international rugby player to represent the RAF.

Hewitt took a commission in the RAF Chaplain's department in 1950; he and Joan married in 1951, and as a team they embarked on a 30-year RAF career. With his warm, caring and compassionate nature, he fitted in comfortably with young military personnel and their families. A string of high appointments followed, including that of Senior Chaplain at the RAF College, Cranwell (an 'inspired choice'). In 1972 he was appointed Honorary Chaplain to the Queen and, the following year, Chaplain-in-Chief of the RAF, a post that he held with distinction for seven years. He set and demanded high standards of his chaplains; he could be hard on them but was always fair and consistent. The quiet Irish lilt could soften any rocket being handed out. Sincerity, integrity and a sense of fun and humour made him a most effective, respected and popular Chaplain-in-Chief. In 1978 Hewitt was made a Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (CB) just before he retired.

Joan and Hewitt moved to Philcote Street in 1978 and in 1991 he was appointed Rector of Somerton, the Heyfords and Rousham, where he and Joan provided generous hospitality. Hewitt formed close ties with the USAF personnel at Upper Heyford, who benefited from his experience of relationships with local communities and how best to avoid conflict over controversial issues.

His retirement from this post was Deddington's gain, as Hewitt's generosity, good counsel and neighbourly support became more than ever available within the village, where they were greatly appreciated. He was quite without 'side', to which his distinguished career might have entitled him. In the final years of his life, Hewitt's health began to fail, but they were also years of continued fulfilment as he was able to devote them fully to Joan, Kathryn, John, Peter, Tim, Sarah and several grandchildren, a large family who always brought him great joy.



*With thanks to Joan Wilson for the address given at the service by Air Chief Marshall Sir Patrick Hine GCB, GBE, FRAES; the Daily Telegraph, Hugh White and the Valley News*