

ANTON BANTOCK: Man, Myth, Renegade, Wazzock?

By Emlyn Mathias

What always struck me the most about my crazy Uncle Anton was his sense of humour and his 'way with words'. He had a natural gift of making people laugh with his eccentric and unorthodox approach to life. I remember as a young child, accidentally kicking a rugby ball into a river. I thought it was gone for good in the rapid flow. But not Anton. Fully dressed he jumped into the water and battled through the large rocks and freezing water just to retrieve my ball.

Later, I experienced his 'mapless walks', which usually resulted in someone falling in a ditch but it was the sense of adventure that we all appreciated. Also his 'paper games' which have become legendary for those who were lucky enough to stay in Hen Gaerfynnon, they usually concluded with rude drawings of historical figures or well-known persons. These memories will always serve as a reminder to me personally that spontaneity and creativity will triumph, no matter where you are in the world.

He was indefatigable (one of his favourite words) in his efforts and energy towards helping others, local and abroad, proving that his heart was in the right place. It could be argued that his common sense and day to day practicalities were quite often misplaced, existing somewhere else in another realm.

His unique pen-and-ink drawings and watercolours, often worked from very rough sketches while travelling, will also live on. Many times he would suffer cramped conditions, dusty weather storms and fearsome Church Wardens just so he could complete a picture before the next mission. This coincided with his passion for traveling where he has explored the world with an open mind. The main difference with Anton is that he didn't just sightsee and sketch, he got involved. He met people and wondered how he could help them. As he could speak seven or eight languages proficiently, this wasn't so he could boast, it was so he could communicate with people of different cultures. For an Englishman to learn Arabic, Turkish and Polish, independently, purely so they can visit those countries with greater ease is exemplary.

Whether you knew Anton personally or not, he leaves behind a positive legacy for the local community to absorb and use as a constant source of inspiration for the future. To achieve all the many things he did, you need to have an original soul, to be a pioneer of sorts, and this is how we should remember him. Why not set up a film night? Conduct homemade plays in your back garden? Map out your own walks? Research a stately home? Just as Anton did. The show must go on!