

ANTHONY HUTCHINGS: HONORARY FELLOWSHIP

Chancellor Dharker,

Today we are honouring Anthony Hutchings, an outstanding contributor to public life over many decades. He has been closely linked to our university for over 50 years, working on both sides of the Atlantic to support our academic community. His role as Chairman of the US Friends of Newcastle University played an enormous role in increasing our visibility in North America and in raising over £1m in funds from alumni and supporters. The funds donated to the Covid Emergency Student Fund were just one example of the enormous contribution made by Tony and his colleagues.

A proud son of the Midlands, Tony Hutchings's connection with Newcastle began in the early 1960s when he arrived to study as an undergraduate in modern languages. He went on to graduate in German in 1965. This was, however, only the beginning of a long journey, as language, in all its protean forms, was to be a major factor across the whole of his career.

Newcastle in the 1960s was a vibrant and energetic city. The university itself was new, having evolved from King's College Durham in 1963. Tony's time as an undergraduate led to a lifelong love of the North-East. It also gave rise to the three great passions of his life.

The first of these great passions was language itself. Harking back to his undergraduate days, he is fluent in both French and German. He is also rumoured to be more than capable in conversational Latin, although I suspect that conversations may be easier to come by in French and German. I am sure that the Latin fluency reflects another example of the influence of his time in *Pons Aelius*.

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After his time in Newcastle Tony went to Frankfurt, another city of which he has very fond memories, to do a Masters degree. This is where his interest in language took a new and completely unexpected turn. A flatmate in Frankfurt was a computer scientist; someone in at the beginning of the modern computer revolution. Tony became fascinated by the concept of computer “language”- the application of his linguistic skills in a completely new idiom. To him, this was the future. He had two job interviews, one at the BBC and the other at ICL, at that time one of the titans of computing. Suffice to say that computing’s gain was broadcasting’s loss. It was during his time at ICL that one of the transformative moments in his life occurred. American colleagues joined on an exchange programme and inspired Tony to explore the opportunities offered by the USA. His contacts in the USA led eventually to his emigration in 1981; moving to live in Boston and to work for the Digital Equipment Corporation; leaders at the time in his now chosen field of computing.

Ultimately, it was the application of computing into business practice, and in particular banking, that would be the focus of the rest of his career, taking leadership roles in Bank of America and Citigroup in New York. It was during this time that Tony contributed so much to the University through the Friends of Newcastle contributing both time and financial support. For that we will always be grateful. He has never lost the desire to increase opportunities for the next generation of computer scientists, setting up and running the Software Process Improvement Network (or SPIN) to help budding computer scientists make the key contacts to help propel them along their career path.

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Newcastle also played an integral role in the second love of Tony's life. His love of music. Newcastle in the 1960s was a hotbed of musical innovation. The Animals, the Club a Go-Go, the Marimba coffee house and the University Jazz club. There was also a little-known group who played on multiple occasions at the Mayfair Ballroom and the City Hall, called The Beatles. Tony has had a lifelong love of the mop-tops and I sincerely hope that he might be able to answer one of the two great trivia questions about Newcastle music. Which hotel did John Lennon and Paul McCartney write "Love me do" in? Was it the Imperial on Jesmond Road, which is still there, or the Royal Turks Head, long-gone from Grey Street? The second great trivia question is, of course, where did Jimi Hendrix give his first performance in Newcastle? The answer being busking on Chillingham Road. Tony was a lover of music of all types, frequenting the many jazz clubs in the city as well as a lover of comedy such as the Goon Show. He plays music to a high level and his pride and joy is a baby grand piano.

The third love of his life was, of course, his beloved wife of 56 years, Irene. They met during his time in Newcastle and it was with her that he explored the music of the city. Their love for each other, in fact, grew in the context of music and, in particular, their shared love of The Beatles. Irene told me about the time, shortly before she met Tony, that she camped out for 4 nights on the pavement to get tickets for the first gig The Beatles played in Newcastle, with her father bringing her soup every day. She also told me that Tony could outdo that. He first saw the Beatles...in Hamburg; something she told me with just a tiny hint of jealousy. The pride of Tony and Irene's lives are their children Charlotte and Mark and their grandchildren William and Graeme and love is fully reciprocated. Mark told me that he "loves his father to death; as simple as that".

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Tony now spends his well-earned retirement between Mickleton in the Cotswolds and Connecticut. Truly the best of both worlds for a man who spanned the world and gave back wherever he was.

Chancellor Dharker, for his outstanding contribution to our university, and its development over many years, I commend Anthony Hutchings for the award of an Honorary Fellowship.

Citation by David Jones

Public Orator

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