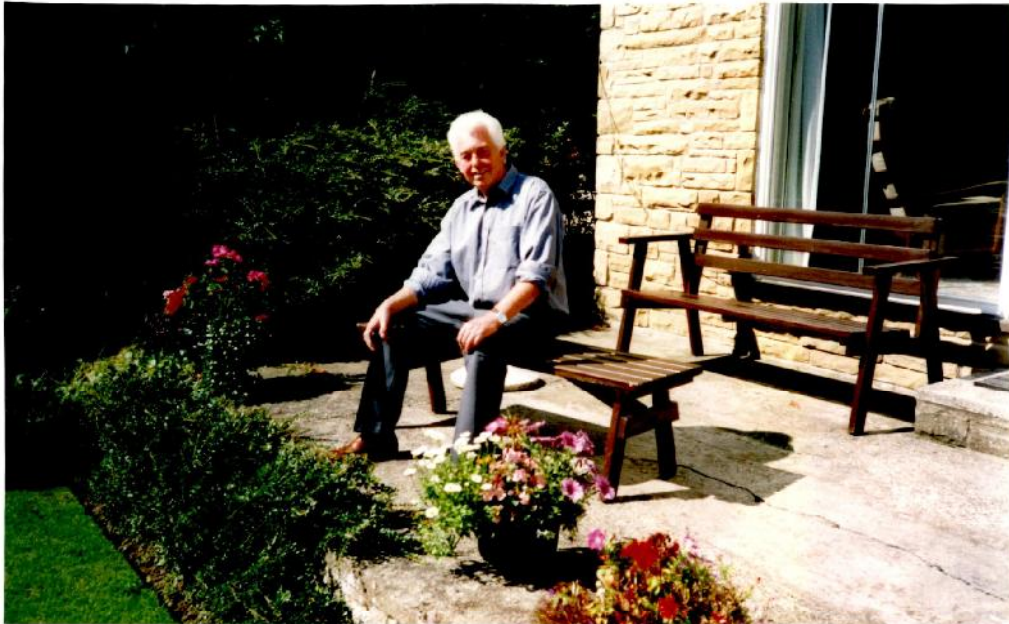


## **Bramham Millennium Characters : 4**

### **Paul Raymond Topping.**



Born on 10 December 1939 in York , Paul attended Nunthorpe Grammar School , and was a chorister at York Minster from the age of 8. Having taken A levels , he entered the Coldstream Guards to complete his National Service , signed on for three years , and undertook tours of duty in the Near East , the Persian Gulf [ he was in Kuwait when the Iranians first attacked in 1960 / 1 ] , East Africa and Zanzibar. Discovered as a natural shot , Paul trained as a sniper and became a weapons training instructor ; he shot for the Army [ and later as a member of the Leeds & Bramham Pistol Club ] at Bisley.

When he left the Army , Paul worked initially selling for large scales companies , before becoming a work study expert with the Gas Board in Leeds . Leaving them after 18 years in the 1980 ' s , Paul set up his own business in work study , organisation and methods , and has seen the massive development of computerisation in that field over the last quarter of the C20 .

Paul married his wife Anne, a teacher of History and English , in York in 1964, they having met in a joint York grammar schools ' production of " The Gondoliers " several years before. Also in 1964 they bought the plot of land on Clifford Lane where they were to build their home four years later, moving in to Bramham in 1969. Paul 's awareness of Bramham had , **however** , begun much earlier , for he had listened as a child to folklore tales from a **grandfather** in which Bramham had figured as the site of an inspiring battle --- hence his immediate attraction when he saw a plot advertised. Paul and Anne have four children --- Claire , **Gregory** , Catherine and James --- all native Bramhamers and all by 2000 into their **adult** lives .

Apart from his bell - ringing [ he and Anne revived a long - submerged tradition by training themselves , and getting together a group to ring in the Millennium ] , Paul 's involvement in village life has centred on the Village Hall and the Parish Council , to both of which he has given long , thoughtful and effective service . In the early 1970 ' s , the **Village Hall** was going through one of its regular chequered periods. Founded in 1908 after money was raised by public subscription , the Hall found itself by 1970 in debt to the tune of £2,500 , then a considerable sum . After a public meeting , a fresh intake of committee members included Paul , Elizabeth Bustard , and David Ingham , who , by hard work and ingenuity involving dances , social events and especially the New Year festivities , managed to pay off the debt within 4 years. As Chairman of the Management Committee , Paul was closely associated with the Hall 's success as a centre of village life . Only when he became a Trustee did he find that he could not combine the two functions , but he remains [ with David Ingham and Arthur Tindall ] in 2000 a Trustee , overseeing and helping ensure the Hall 's on - going prosperity.



It was this involvement which drew Paul to becoming a member of the **Parish Council** in 1976 / 7 , there being the need of greater understanding and cooperation between the two bodies. Paul 's membership of both made that possible , encouraging a growth in trust under the principle that the Hall should pay its way , but should **always** have the support of the Council as backup in especially hard times. As **almost** the longest serving member of the Council in 2000 , Paul has served effectively as Chair , Vice Chair , and member of a variety of sub - committees . He lists as his three most notable contributions his membership of the influential Bramaction group which raised funds and successfully fought off the worst effects of the A1 road expansion scheme ; his influence on the growth of a better culture within the Council exemplified in the change from decision - making by vote to moving forward after discussion and concensus ; and his constant attempts to avoid for the village the worst effects of Leeds Planning .

Anyone who has seen the detailed and mature thought , as well as the time , Paul has put into his efforts to secure good , attractive , appropriate building in Bramham will hardly agree with his own assessment that he has largely failed in this respect. Leeds , by the time of the Millennium , had managed to increase the village housing stock by nearly 50 % in the previous decade. Though some of its allowed building had been disappointing , and much of it less than perfect , it was only as good as it was through the efforts of Paul Topping and a very few others.

At the Millennium he continues to apply a vigorous, informed and detailed scrutiny to all matters of planning , whether associated with individual buildings , attempts to drown Bramham in a sea of New Town housing , or the effects on the district of the development of Thorp Arch Trading Estate.