

We have come here this morning to remember with thanksgiving and affection a remarkable man. Jack Maguinness, apart from a short time in the North during the war, spent his whole life here on the peninsula, having worked as gardener in several of the big houses around the Bailey, finishing up in the home of Mrs Jennifer Guinness.

Jack was a very straightforward man, a basic honesty (he said it as he saw it) and a huge capacity for hard work. He was a gardener to his fingertips with a real love and knowledge of what he was about. Being a gardener of the old school the soil was to be dug deep – he did not have much sympathy for the modern ways of doing things – landscape gardeners were often dismissed – ‘Landscapers? – Land scrapers would be nearer the mark!’ He had a feel for the seasons, when and what to cut back. There is a story of lady who asked him to come and prune a fruit tree she had – when she returned she burst into tears when she saw how much Jack had cut it back – the following year that same tree was laden with fruit – Jack knew what he was doing.

Jack died at the age of 92 but he never quite cottoned on that he was getting old. He was regularly seen on the Carrickbrack Road heading up to the summit to do his shopping on his electric trike, the faithful dog in tow. Never did one of those vehicles cover such a distance, go through so many tyres and batteries. He was disgusted when his chain saw was taken off him when he was 86 – he had after all only just put a new chain on it. On one occasion a district nurse was sent round to see him and found him out. He was later asked by a doctor where he had been. He explained that he had been out in his glass houses. Oh yes, and what do you have in those. Well there are the vines from grapes, then

there are the soft fruits as well as the seedlings being brought on for planting. Oh said the doctor, as he pencilled 'Query Alzheimers' in his note book. Jack was a man who always wanted to push the boundaries, to keep working – he wasn't content just to sit back. Jack did not want to just go on living, Jack wanted to live.

Then there is Jack the family man. He lost his wife Bridie in 2002 – many at the time wondered how he would cope. He would often point to her picture when I was in his cottage. They reared their four children, James, Philip, Anne and Audrey – he took a deep pride in all that they did and in their children.

We read as one of our lessons, that passage from Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians. In this Paul presents us with the reality of our own mortality and death, he talks very plainly of the body wearing out. But just as he talks of the reality of physical decline and death, Paul talks of our new heavenly home. The words that really stand out for me are ; "So that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." This is our hope for Jack Maguinness, that all the limitations of these few months, the frailty, along with all the limitations that go with being human are "swallowed up by life", that is our inheritance in Christ.

So today we gather to thank God for Jack Maguinness, for the many different ways he touched our lives, for his love, his determination and for that fundamental empathy with creation, his skill in all things horticultural. We come to pray for his family, his children James, Philip, Anne and Audrey, the grandchildren and his surviving brother and sister George and Nancy.

We gather to set his life and our lives in the context of our faith in a loving and living God as we commend Jack, loving father, master craftsmen, remarkable human being into the hands of a loving heavenly Father.

We give them back to thee, dear Lord, who gavest them to us. Yet as thou didst not lose them in giving, so we have not lost them by their return. What thou gavest thou takest not away, O Lover of souls; for what is thine is ours also if we are thine. And life is eternal and love is immortal, and death is only an horizon, and an horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. Lift us up, strong Son of God, that we may see further; cleanse our eyes that we may see more clearly; and draw us closer to thyself that we may know ourselves to be nearer to our loved ones who are with thee. And while thou dost prepare for us, prepare us also for that happy place, that where they are and thou art, we too may be for evermore.