

Sir Angus Grossart, CBE 1937 – 2022

Sir Angus Grossart, CBE, Chairman of Noble Grossart has died aged 85.

A long time resident of the New Town, we photographed him most recently at the Sir Walter Scott Pageant in autumn 2021.

The two knights of the realm shared a similar career path since both went to the Bar to become Scottish advocates, and both loved the capital. Others have recounted his successful route to becoming the man who had his own bank, but we turned to people who knew him well to get a sense of who Angus Grossart was.

Sir Tom Farmer told The Edinburgh Reporter that he first met Sir Angus in the airport car park in 1968.

He recounted: “It was midnight. I had just come off the last flight from London, and heard someone trying to start a car, but the battery was flat. I went over to see if I could help, and offered him a lift into town. I asked for his car keys and said I would get his car fixed and delivered to him the next day. He was impressed that I sold him a battery for his car – even that late at night.

“We developed a friendship from then on, and he became someone who I could speak to and ask for advice. He had a tremendous impact on Scotland in many ways including in the fields of arts and culture. He has made his mark here and will be impossible to follow. It was largely as a result of our friendship that I became involved with the art galleries. He has left a great legacy and many people will not know that some things only happened because of Angus. The best tribute

to him will be for others to carry on doing good things.”

Author Alexander McCall Smith remembered him fondly and said: “Angus was a towering presence in Edinburgh. He made a major contribution to the arts and always did that in a modest and unassuming way.

“I shall remember him for his kindly manner, for the twinkle in his eye, and for the quiet way in which he did the things he did. Sometimes you had to listen very hard to catch his words, but it was always worthwhile. He brought light and fun to Edinburgh and all Scotland. He leaves behind him a great and inspiring legacy.”



Sir Angus Grossart at the Sir Walter Scott Monument last autumn following the pageant. Photo: © 2021, Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Sir Angus backed the recent Sir Walter Scott Pageant which took place last autumn.

The then Rt Hon Lord Provost, Frank Ross said: “Sir Angus was very much an unsung hero of Edinburgh and Scottish society. In

addition to his business interests his support for the cultural and civic elements of the capital was immense.

“A fitting tribute for his work was the Sir Walter Scott 250th anniversary event which Sir Angus was the driving force behind. Without doubt the most significant civic procession Edinburgh has seen for several generations.”



Sir Angus and Lady Grossart at the pageant PHOTO Roddy Martine Ben Thomson, Chairman of Inverleith Capital and former Chairman of National Galleries of Scotland, said: “Angus was a colossus in the Edinburgh financial community and his name will be written in stone for his contribution to Scottish business and culture.”



Rory Knight Bruce as Dandie Dinmont at the Walter Scott Pageant PHOTO courtesy of Roddy Martine

Rory Knight Bruce, an author and journalist who considered Sir Angus a “kind and good friend” portrayed Dandie Dinmont in the pageant at the personal request of Sir Angus.

Knight Bruce said: “Having known Sir Angus and his wife Gay for more than forty years of good friendship, it was the greatest privilege to be invited to take part in Angus’s wonderful commemorative service at St Giles Cathedral to honour Sir Walter Scott last October.

“Between us we hatched that I should come dressed as Scott’s Dandie Dinmont (the character of the Border farmer in ‘Guy Mannering’ who kept Dandie Dinmont terriers). We then managed to get forty-seven Dandies and their owners into the cathedral, and to process them afterwards down The Mound to The Scott Monument with not a cocked leg or snarl in sight. If the poet Philip Larkin once wrote that there are in any man’s life only twelve good days, this was truly one of mine.

“The day before, by chance, I was in the New Club having lunch and so was Angus. After our respective lunching partners had departed, we sat together on the balcony alone looking out over towards the castle, a misty haar wreathing the battlements. It was then he told me, which I did not know, that he had been a junior counsel in the celebrated *Argyll v Argyll* divorce case. Newspaper photographs at the time show him walking into court. “I wonder who will play me in the forthcoming television drama of the case,” he asked. Sadly he did not make the cut.

“On another occasion last summer, I sat with Angus and Gay in their sun filled glorious New Town garden. When I pointed out that my wife was from Mull and the 1943 Pressburger film ‘*I Know Where I’m Going*’ was partly filmed at her home, Angus struck up. He sang to a word and note the song from the film, taking the heroine’s singing part with éclat.

“There is no doubt that Angus strode Scotland like a quietly spoken Colossus, be it in banking, philanthropy, culture, public positions and the arts. In private I never enjoyed better conversation sprinkled with the occasional mischievous enquiry. Angus trusted people he respected and we in turn respected him. “Would you care for a cheeky red or white,” he would say to me. What would follow was warmth, wisdom, sagacity, intelligence, advocacy, friendship, interest in all matters of world affairs and people high and low (particularly the young or younger) and a love of Gay and great pride in their daughter Flure. “We are all Jock Tamson’s bairns,” Angus was fond of saying.

“That was also his genius: To make you feel equal to him as a man nothing short of a genius himself. Our weakness was, for a moment, to believe him.”

Sir Angus Grossart Born 6 April 1937. Died 13 May 2022.



Rory Knight Bruce as Dandie Dinmont walking up The Royal Mile
PHOTO courtesy of Roddy Martine



The Royal Company of Archers at the pageant for the 250th anniversary of Sir Walter Scott's birth. PHOTO Martin P McAdam



The parade was led by the Scottish and *North Irish* Yeomanry to mark the 250th anniversary of Sir Walter Scott's birth. PHOTO Martin P McAdam