

A perfect way to remember work of much-loved Mansel

RAILWAYS were definitely one of the great life-long loves of Mansel Williams.

Promoting fairness, compassion, peace and tolerance were high on his list also – along with, it seems, a strong liking for Welsh cakes!

A loving husband and father, a loyal and supportive friend. He was quite a guy.

My dear, dear friend who passed away last July – and who was honoured this week with the unveiling of a plaque in his memory – also loved poetry and music.

The two Dylans – Bob Dylan and Dylan Thomas (very different poets divided by both time and the Atlantic Ocean) – were equal geniuses in the eyes of Mansel.

One of them wrote about stumbling on the side of 12 misty mountains and walking and crawling on six crooked highways. That was singer-songwriter Bob of course, composer of Subterranean Homesick Blues and Leopard-Skin Pill-Box Hat.

Cycling

And the other one wrote about not going gentle into that good night, about “a moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black”, and about Eskimo-footed arctic marksmen in the muffling silence of the eternal snows.

To be perfectly honest, sometimes down the pub on a Friday night, when Mansel was going on about “Dylan” we weren’t entirely sure which one he meant.

A well-known and well-loved local councillor, Mansel will always be remembered for cycling around the streets of Shrewsbury on his trusty old bike – usually on his way to a meeting or on his way back from

Shrewsbury Matters



With Phil Gillam

a meeting. And he’ll be remembered for much else besides.

Last week’s service of dedication and the unveiling of the plaque on Platform 3 of Shrewsbury railway station was a delightful and deeply moving event, reminding those in attendance of just what a charming, thoughtful and caring man he was.

The plaque – in Welsh slate for a proud Welshman – was in recognition of his exceptional contribution to the railways of Shropshire and Mid Wales, his work with the Shrewsbury-Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee, his success in linking local government and the railways.

Quite right too. But, as I’ve said, we’ll remember Mansel for so much more.

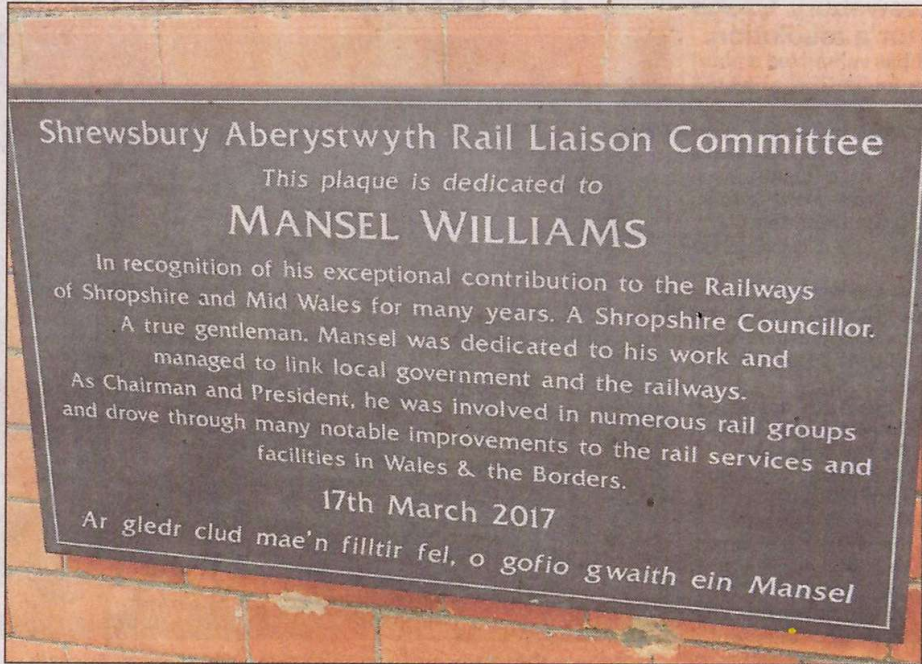
In my case, I miss his cheeky grin and his equally cheeky yet always affectionate greeting whenever I joined him for a pint: “It’s the Main Man!”

I loved the way he always referred to our boat-loving mutual friend, Chris, as “The skipper”.

And the lovely way in which Mansel pronounced Belle Vue as Belle Voo.

He was incredibly generous with his time, happily talking with all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds about all kinds of things.

I was always especially impressed by the way in which he was genuinely interested in the lives of people he’d only just met. He



The plaque in honour of Mansel Williams on Platform 3 of Shrewsbury Railway Station

would always listen intently and with humility. He was not merely being polite. He wasn’t just going through the motions. He genuinely cared.

As a councillor and as a human being, he was massively interested in and committed to his community.

He loved people and always wanted the best for them.

Yes, he could, when required, talk long

and hard about weighty subjects. But life-loving Mansel was also kind and gentle, enjoyed a laugh, and was incredibly good company.

The words at the bottom of the plaque are in Welsh – “Ar gledr clud mae’n filltir del, o gofio gwaith win Mansel” ... (On a good rail it’s a honey sweet mile, as we remember the work of our Mansel).

Just perfect!