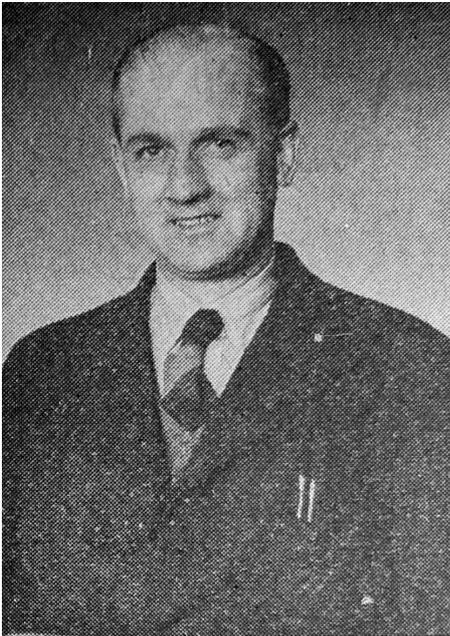


Stanley Kermode

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By Carl Whiteley



Mr. Stanley Kermode.

OF men who can justifiably claim they "know what they are talking about", Mr. Stanley Kermode, County Councillor and former local councillor, of 77, Barrack Road, Christchurch, is one.

Subject on which he can freely speak is that of social welfare. His many achievements in this sphere prove him a man with stamina, power of conviction and one who knows what others want.

There are many people in this town and district who owe a great deal to Mr. Kermode for he has won for them happiness and security.

He has stood alone on several issues. On one occasion he "took the law into my own hands" to provide a roof over the head of a family in distress and although he may have been thought a tyrant at times he has never "given in" on any issue in which he believed.

Why do so many people go to him for help? Not just because of his public positions, but because he treats their problems with human understanding.

Mr. Kermode knows the hardships which some people have to face for he lived through some of them at a young and impressionable age.

His parents, born in the Isle of Man, moved to Manchester on their marriage and Mr. Kermode was brought up in that part of Manchester known as Hanky Park, Yes, the Hanky Park of "Love on the Dole" fame which puts to shame that often boastfully used phrase: "The good old days!"

Mr. Kermode was one of a family of seven and for many years life in Manchester was "pretty grim".

At school he sat next to a consumptive boy who also came from a poor family. That same boy, recalled Mr. Kermode, was sent away to a reformatory school for six weeks and given the birch for stealing apples and food.

One evening school he attended was in a three-storey building with the playground on the roof, overlooking a paint factory and a bone yard.

Mr. Kermode wanted to attend grammar school but even if he had passed a scholarship the family budget would not have stood it. Later, he attended Technical College evening classes for five years.

WANTED TO BE A DOCTOR.

He saw so much illness among young children that he had ambitions to become a doctor. But without a grammar school education that was out of the question.

"It is because of that frustration of not being able to secure an early education myself that I have always been so terribly anxious to see that children of these days are not denied opportunity," said Mr. Kermode.

And perhaps it was an incident he encountered at the age of 14 that sparked off a desire to help old people.

He was an apprentice carpenter on house repairs at the time and he will never forget the sight of a partially blind old man sewing buttons on cards.

The man had to do this to earn one extra shilling a week to supplement his pension of five shillings. He was paid 2d. for 100 cards on which 12 buttons had to be sewn.

"I think of things like that and the things that happened to children in my young days when trying to help handicapped children and old people today," he said.

It is not hard to see why Mr. Kermode puts his heart and soul into his voluntary work for the Christchurch Housing and Old People's Welfare Society, and the Victoria Home for Crippled Children, Bournemouth, which is a branch of the Shaftsbury Society.

As we talked in his lounge, Mr. Kermode showed me two £5 cheques he had received that morning from Christchurch Cricket Club towards the Victoria Home and the Housing Society—"Gifts like these give me the greatest pleasure in life".

Mr. Kermode was given the idea of forming a Christchurch Housing and Old People's Welfare Society during a visit to an old people's home in Bournemouth opened by the Quakers.

TRAGIC SITUATIONS.

At that time, old people who were unable to carry on in their own homes were taken away from Christchurch and placed in homes as far away as Fordingbridge and Basingstoke. This brought about tragic situations for they were so far away that relatives and friends hardly ever visited them and in some cases they were probably never seen again.

The first nursing home opened by the society—Sunnyholm, Mudeford— was recognised by the Nuffield Foundation as a pioneer venture and a grant of £10,000 was made.

The society started with a capital of £20 but, said Mr. Kermode, if people know how to use money there is no difficulty in raising it.

At the age of 19, Mr. Kermode found a job in Bournemouth and at the age of 20 was foreman at the local building firm of Bryant & Trowbridge. He left after eight months to start his own business with £15 and a second hand lorry and at 23 was building houses at the rate of three a week and employing 130 men. In 1935 he rejoined Bryant & Trowbridge as a director.

He has been interested in prefabricated building's for many years and holds patent rights for a particular method of construction.

The County Education Committee took an interest in a prefabricated type of classroom introduced by Mr. Kermode in 1952 and since that time many such classrooms have been supplied not only in Hampshire but in other counties.

ENTERTAINING.

Mr. Kermode's general appearance is that of a serious-minded man. He puts serious thoughts into the problems he tackles but when off duty he can be a very entertaining personality.

He is an amateur conjuror and during the war was a member of the "V" concert party which entertained five nights a week. Among its members on occasions was Tony Hancock. Mr. Kermode took up conjuring because he wanted to learn to speak in public. "I thought that if I could talk about nothing I could talk about more serious things at a later date."

At one time he took an interest in music and bought a violin with the first 15s. he saved. But when he went into lodgings in Bournemouth he had to give up the instrument.

He became an independent member of Christchurch Council at the first elections after the war and served for eight years. On one occasion he walked out of the Council meeting during a debate on Holmsley and a Housing Tenancies Committee decision.

On another occasion, after he had been appointed Mayor-elect, the Council was thrown into confusion when he told members he would not accept the office. His reasons were outlined in a long letter to the Town Clerk.

Mr. Kermode was first elected to the County Council nine years ago when he defeated Coun. David Llewellyn with a 10-vote majority.

Three years later he was defeated by Coun. Llewellyn but returned three years ago with a clear majority. In April last he was returned unopposed.

FAMILY MAN.

Mr. Kermode was married in 1930 to Miss Ruth Lansdell. They met in an estate agent's office where Mrs. Kermode was a shorthand typist.

They have one son and two daughters, John Stanley (20), studying to become an accountant, Rosemary Anne (25), a French mistress at Worcester Grammar School for Girls, and Frances (24), a teacher at Addiscombe Road Infants' School.

Mr. Kermode has no particular hobby, for his voluntary work takes up a good deal of his spare time. And he finds he can concentrate better late at night when his family is in bed. He works sometimes until one and two o'clock in the morning and then sleeps until about 10 a.m.

NON-SMOKER.

A non-smoker, he finds this keeps him more active. He has invented card games, water taps and hygienic vacuum flasks in addition to pre-fabricated buildings.

But one of his main interests in life is the welfare of the aged and crippled children.

There are certain parts of his life which he would never want to live again. But at the age of 53 Mr. Kermode considers his life has been full and interesting.

He added: "When you have experienced bad conditions yourself and met with the real problems of life first hand you appreciate other people's troubles and treat them with sympathetic consideration".