



Basil Cracknell

(The brains behind the Walks)

February 1925 – March 2006

Dr. Basil Cracknell, **inventor of the Eutp/Unlock sponsored walks**, died in March, 2005, after a short illness. He had already, as an 81 year-old walker, booked into Unlock's 23rd Annual Walk! Those who were on walks numbers 1–15 will remember his cheerful welcoming presence as walk organiser, but may not know that he still came as a walker with his local church group until last year.

Bishop Peter Hall, Eutp/Unlock chairman 1984-2004, writes...

Basil was our treasurer from 1983 to 1998, and organised the walks for 15 years. He was an amazing optimist, who came up with the idea of raising funds by sponsored walks in deprived areas of inner London. We all said it would never work. Unabashed Basil drew together Jim Hart, with his remarkable map drawing skills, and Roger Dowley, with his keen-ness to involve local churches, and in 1984 it all began to happen.

There were just two hundred at first, despite a huge mailing to invite walkers, then next year more....then more....then more. The key was his tireless optimism, his incredible energy, and his infectious enthusiasm for EUTP/Unlock, which he unshakably believed was close to God's heart.

Jim Hart drew cartoons of Basil jetting early into Heathrow from his high-profile international consultancy work, going straight to the walk, talking to everyone all day, and then jetting off from Gatwick the same evening! It was not far from the truth! He was also a hugely generous person, and we have benefited not just from his time, energy, skills and imagination, but also from his direct giving of money as part of his faithful response to God.

It was a great privilege to work with him, and without Basil's contribution, I believe Unlock would not exist today.

Canon Neville Black, the first EUTP Project Officer writes...

My strongest memories of Basil focus on the series of annual EUTP conferences that took place at our large vicarage in Anfield Road, Liverpool, in the late 1970s, when the EUTP Council gathered to review the progress of the Project and to plan for the future. Council members and wives were invited to join the conference. Usually about 25 folk gathered. He and his wife, Sylvia played their full part in those conferences, Basil with ideas and plans, and Sylvia helping Val and the other wives with the catering. I was coming to the end of my contract with the Project and our initial financial resources were dwindling.

The Project needed to gain a second wind. Basil was recruited by John Hunter (member of the National Council of EUTP/Unlock) and came with a whole raft of ideas for developing the funding base of the Project. He was a senior civil servant, a consultant for the World Bank, a committed Christian from a traditional Home Counties background and an avid Daily Telegraph reader! - not the usual CV for a radical inner city training initiative. That seeming dissonance never got in the way of Basil's enthusiasm, and rugged determination to make a difference, and put his weight behind the EUTP plough.

I give God thanks for him.

Jim Hart, EUTP Project Officer 1983 -1991 writes...

I stayed with Basil and Sylvia on two weekends in Reigate. I needed to be energetic to keep up with Basil's pace! On the Friday we would meet members of the congregation at his church, and share our work with them. We went together to a meeting of EUTP National Council in London on Saturday, and then, on the way home Basil would work with me through lists of addresses and run ideas past me for the next London Walk. He was always kind, I never recall him ill-tempered or flustered. On Walk days he energetically met and conversed with hundreds of walkers. He commended my ideas and work warmly at all times. Basil would jet in from his world travels and at once pick up his EUTP files without showing any fatigue or jet-lag. He said little at all about the other aspects of his varied life and never commented about his foreign travels. I had always assumed that he was trained as an economist and had no idea that he was a geographer, which is my own discipline and interest.

Extract from cover note from *Outrageous Waves* (Basil's last book)

Dr. Cracknell studied geography at the London School of Economics, and it was his PhD work on the Alluvial Marshlands of the Thames Estuary that sparked his lifelong interest in Britain's coastline, particularly the issues of past and present global warming and sea level rise, and their impact on the coast. He has written several books.....as well as over 250 articles published in a variety of journals including *The Geographical Magazine* and *Geography*. In 1958 he was awarded the John Nichols prize for a monograph on Canvey Island.