



Prof David Last BSc(Eng) PhD DSc CEng FIET FRIN 03-03-1940 to 25-11-2019

Professor David Last died suddenly in a light aircraft crash near Puffin Island off the coast of Anglesey on 25th November 2019.

James David Last was born in 1940, in Urmston, Manchester, to James Howell Last (Jimmy), a shopkeeper and insurance salesman, and Edna Margaret Last (Billie), a primary school teacher. He was their eldest son and older brother to Roger. From a very young age David was practical and was interested in engineering - friends recount tales of him fitting a motor to his pushbike and creating lightning rods from tins. He was educated at Urmston County Primary school and then Manchester Grammar School, the University of Bristol gaining a BSc in Engineering in 1961 and the University of Sheffield where he was awarded his first Doctorate in 1966.

David met his future wife Mary Bryant when he was 15, on a Whit Sunday trip to Kinder Scout in the Peak District. They married in 1961 and moved to live in Ealing in West London where David worked for the BBC as a Graduate Apprentice. In 1963 when he began studying for his PhD at the University of Sheffield, the couple moved to Penistone in Yorkshire and started a family. Their sons Ben and Tom were born in Sheffield in 1965 and 1966 respectively.

After being awarded his PhD, David became a lecturer in Electronic Engineering at the (then) University College of North Wales in Bangor in 1966 and so the family moved to Llanfairfechan in North Wales, where David lived for the rest of his life. David and Mary's third child, Charlotte, was born in Bangor in 1968. David and Mary became grandparents in 1995. Mary sadly died early in 1998 from heart disease, at the age of 59. David remarried in 2003. His new wife Jean- Elizabeth Williams had known the family since childhood.

Much of David's career was spent at Bangor University, where he was awarded a personal chair and became Professor of Electronic Engineering. He was awarded a DSc in 1995. He was Head of the Radio-Navigation Group until his retirement in 2005, when he became a Professor Emeritus.

He joined the Royal Institute of Navigation in the early 1970s and was President from 2005 to 2008. He was also a Past-President of the International Loran Association, a Fellow of the Institution of Engineering and Technology and a Chartered Engineer. In 2010 he was awarded the Royal Institute of Navigation's Harold Spencer-Jones Gold Medal and, in 2015, the Necho Award of the International Association of Institutes of Navigation.

During his career David acted as a consultant on radio-navigation and communications to companies, governmental and international organisations. He had also published over 500 technical and policy papers on navigation and communications systems. After retirement from his post at the University he combined consultancy with a successful second career as an expert witness in forensic matters concerning GPS and tracking, advising in more than 250 court cases and earning numerous awards including a favourite: 'Best Major Crime'

David's great love was flying. He gained his private pilot's licence in 1977. For many years he owned a Robin DR400 and would fly for pleasure and for work, to conferences around Europe. Whenever he had some spare time and it was a clear day he would head to the airfield. He was a highly experienced pilot, gaining both his night rating and his IMC in 1978 and finally his full Instrument Rating in 1983 which combined his interest in radio-navigation with his passion for flight. He was one of the first private pilots to fly into Russia after the relaxing of restrictions between east & west.

His final flight on 25 November 2019 was from his usual base of Caernarfon airfield. He was flying solo in a hired Cessna 172, which disappeared from radar over the sea off Anglesey. His body was recovered on 12 December 2019.

He is survived by his second wife, Jean-Elizabeth, and his children Ben, Tom and Charlotte.

A public memorial service will be held at the Prichard-Jones Hall, College Road, Bangor on 23rd January 2020 at 1pm. Enquiries to funeral directors: John Hughes & Son, Machine St, Amlwch Port, LL68 9HA. Tel: 01407 830461. Email: info@johnhughesandson.co.uk or website: www.johnhughesandson.co.uk

Donations in lieu of flowers (via the link below) to the Wales Air Ambulance, a vital service which was close to David's heart.

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/professordavidlast