

Well-Remembered Friends – Eulogies on Celebrated Lives. Collected by Angela Huth.
John Murray 2004.

Having had to give hundreds of eulogies during the course of my career I fell on Well-Remembered Friends with enthusiasm, well aware not only of the fact that there would undoubtedly be some felicitous phrases to be stored away for future use but also mindful of the fact that a well constructed eulogy can paint a picture of the deceased unlike anything else.

Angela Huth has assembled 110 eulogies, written between 1940 and 2003: the eulogised include Neville Chamberlain, Henry Williamson, Rebecca West, Kenneth Macmillan, Peter Cook, Ted Hughes, Yehudi Menuhin, Nigel Hawthorne and Dudley Moore, and the eulogisers include Winston Churchill, Isaiah Berlin, Bernard Levin, Seamus Heaney, Alan Bennett and Michael Parkinson.

The texts vary in length, most are in prose but some are poetry; some are serious and sonorous others are funny, but all are written with sincerity and must have been touching and inspirational to hear.

The chief joy of this collection – and there are many – is that it need not be read all at once but can be savoured gradually, like the finest malt whisky, secure in the knowledge that down to the last eulogy of all the quality will not slip or falter.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh