

# Great writer who told story of the space race

## Journalist Reg Turnhill dies

Report by Eleanor Jones

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HE WAS last featured in the pages of this newspaper when a telephone company wrote to his executor to express sympathy at his death.

Reg Turnhill joked last April that he had been watching obituaries columns for a mention of his name, hoping for favourable reviews. But in the early hours of Tuesday morning, the great-grandfather and former BBC aerospace correspondent from Sandgate finally passed away peacefully.

But his family said that Mr Turnhill kept his sense of humour until the very end.

The 97-year-old, who had been suffering from heart failure, spent his last days in the Pilgrims Hospice near Ashford.

His son Graham said: "When things were at their worst, that's when he'd be funniest, he was like that in the hospice.

"I admired everything he did. I didn't really appreciate his writing when I was young but as I got older, I realised how he could put

the facts together, working so hard to collect them, then precisising them in an extraordinary manner to get wonderful stories in the newspapers. When he went to the BBC, it was the same. His was a wonderful ability – not many people can do what he did"

Mr Turnhill, who was born in Dover, started work with the Press Association (PA) in London at the age of 14, as a telephonist. He progressed to journalism, spending 26 years with PA, then moving to the BBC as assistant industrial correspondent in 1956.

### Correspondent

He became air and defence correspondent in 1958, a job he stayed in until 1975 and for which he covered stories from the beginning of the space age to the shuttle era. Mr Turnhill regularly reported from Cape Canaveral and Houston on the Apollo Moon missions and in 1970, broke the story that Apollo 13 was in trouble.

He moved to Sandgate with his wife Margaret in 1976 but did not stop working, writing space flight directories for five years, Observer's Books on space flight and a

children's book, among others. His last published piece was an obituary of Neil Armstrong for the Guardian last year.

Graham Turnhill said: "He always asked the questions no one wanted to be asked, to get the facts. There were many times he upset politicians because he'd release things they didn't want released. He spent his life doing that and never changed – he was like it until about two months before he died.

"He literally worked his whole life. He was a great writer and I adored him."

Mr Turnhill's wife Margaret added: "He was wonderful, he seemed to remember everything and his memory was terrific.

"He could be a bit sharp sometimes but that was because he had to have the truth when people were trying to cover things up, he didn't like that. He liked the garden and he did help with the housework – although he didn't have time to do much – and he was really interested in everything. He was a very good husband."

Mr Turnhill also leaves another son, Michael.



ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER: Reg Turnhill, pictured with his wife Margaret, died this week

### Top stories

#### Mourning Reg

THE family of Reg Turnhill has paid tribute to an "adored" father, husband, and grandfather.

The former

BBC aerospace correspondent died early on Tuesday morning. He was 97.



Turn to page 3

#### Icy blackspot

DOZENS of motorists were forced to abandon their cars and walk more than a mile on icy paths because the county council "didn't do enough" when snow fell.

More than 15 cars had to be abandoned at the bottom of Spitfire Way on Sunday night.

More on page 5

#### Bank protest

A MAN pitched a tent inside the foyer of a bank last week to protest that a form had not been processed after almost three months.

Andrew Cole, 45, camped in the Royal Bank of Scotland branch in Sandgate Road on Tuesday morning to complain about delays which he says have put him £800 in debt.

Turn to page 4

#### Parking anger

JOBS are being lost – and more redundancies may follow if the council's parking strategy is not scrapped, according to Folkestone Harbour traders.

Business, page 15