

Melville's image captured forever

by Janet Hughes

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THE finishing touches to a portrait of community champion Melville Watts OBE were made only weeks before his death.

The work by talented artist Rupert Bathurst – the new Lord Bledisloe – helped forge a firm friendship between two of Lydney's most famous sons.

The bond between the families goes back over many years and the land used for Melville's beloved Lydney hospital formerly belonged to the Bledisloe estate.

Melville, whom many regarded as 'Mr Lydney', died last Thursday morning in the hospital he helped save and raise £1 million to support.

A thanksgiving service will take place in September.

Prior to his death, Melville had been in the community hospital for several weeks.

He died just days after celebrating his 87th birthday.

His family had been holding a bedside vigil for the prominent member of the Watts family, who can trace their business roots in the town back more than 150 years and were once one of the Forest's biggest employers.

Tributes have been pouring in for the healthcare champion, who received an OBE from Prince Charles for his community work in 1993.

On July 30 he was last seen in public when he attended a ceremony in his wheelchair to rename a ward 'the Melville Watts OBE Outpatients' Department'.

Mr Watts was former managing director and an



PORTRAIT: Melville Watts by Rupert Bathurst.

honorary president of the Watts Group beyond.

The family, which pioneered the Red and White buses just before the Second World War, recently sold Watts Tyres but still have extensive business interests in the Forest and

Mr Watts was well known for attending practically every funeral of employees past and present.

He was the most Senior Verderer in the Forest and patron of the Lydney branch of the British

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