

## De Mortuis

### GUS ARMSTRONG (1943) (1925–2012)

Tribute by John Glasscock:  
'We have come together to pay our respects and say good-bye to an old friend, whether as family, colleagues or a representative of one of his many outside interests.



We each bring our own special memories of Geoffrey, Geoff, or as many of you knew him 'Gus', and I cannot do justice in such a short time to all that he achieved in such a long life, nor what he meant to so many people. I can only offer a general tribute to the man as I knew him, many of you, particularly his family, will remember so much more.

My own special memory goes back to quite a recent visit to the Sunrise Home. He always asked me to lunch when I visited and got quite 'narked' when I could not stay. We were joined at our table by two ladies, which upset Gus because it limited his freedom of expression! Having indicated his displeasure, probably with one of his 'sotto voce' remarks, which were not always as 'sotto' as he imagined, one of the ladies whispered to me 'Of course, he really is a nice man, but he doesn't want you to hear it'. This was the enigma of Gus, a soft centre, sometimes difficult to read, one never knew whether he was deadly serious, or had a smile on behind the mask. He had mastered the art of appearing impassive, and as such would have made a great poker player!

Although I think Gus preferred male company in general, certainly the ladies often found the contradictions in him quite puzzling.

Tiffin School, and the Old Tiffinians were at the heart of his many interests outside his family, or families. He and I were at Tiffin School in the early 1940s and after what was then the G.S.C. he left and I stayed on. Whilst at the school he played Rugby, became a Boy Scout, and an Air Cadet, which took him into the Air Force as a photographer. He made little mention of his service life, but served in the Far East, arriving in Singapore just after the Japanese surrender - No connection I am sure! After his de-mob, he became a Quantity Surveyor and after he qualified he became, for his working life, a member of a successful partnership involving frequent travel abroad.

As an Old Tiffinian, he became an active member in many ways; playing rugby; helped to establish our Golfing Society; organised social events; became Chairman; and later was elected a Life Vice-President in recognition of his years of service. He was an enthusiastic member and supporter of Tiffinian Lodge, eventually becoming Master.

Golf became his outstanding interest, still remembered today by members at the RAC Club Epsom, and more recently at Walton Heath Golf Club where he was very active both on and off the course. If this was not

enough, he also supported a whole host of various societies.

In his family life he was married to Joan for 25 years producing Kevin and Jackie. Kevin in due course had grand-children in whom Gus took great interest. After Joan's sad early death, Gus married Beryl who had been widowed by the loss of the late Derek Walker who had also been at Tiffin School with us both, and so an enlarged family added to a range of activities for them both. They enjoyed busy lives in their 25 years of marriage, spending a lot of time in their second home in Cornwall where Gus enjoyed active membership of Trevoze Golf Club.

Gus's golfing came to a premature end as he struggled for many years with various health problems. He and Beryl have faced some difficult times with great fortitude. Gus made light of his problems with determination and a sense of humour which was never far from the surface. In this he was supported by both family and step-family, but particularly by Beryl who has shown unstinting care and devotion.

From your own recollections you will fill in the gaps which I have doubtless left.

Gus, a man of many parts and talents, a loyal friend, a much loved Husband, Father, and Grand-Father, thank you for your love, company and friendship. Rest in peace, you will be greatly missed but never forgotten.'

### MICHAEL WILLIAM SPENCER DANE (1934 - 2012)

I'm honoured to have been asked to say a few words to you about Dad, Michael, husband to Rosemary, brother to David, and father to Nigel, Simon & me.

It was life worth celebrating, a life of dedication, of hard work and of honesty and integrity, but also of family and friendship, of great humour, and the enjoyment of both the simpler and of the finer things in life.

Dad achieved much in his 77 years, and this was largely the result of his intelligence, his dedication and commitment to getting things done. It may have been in Clarkson, Glasgow where he spent his early years, that he learned his honest, no-nonsense approach to life, and where he learned the value of improving yourself through honest endeavour.

It was this philosophy no doubt that ensured he won a scholarship to Tiffin school in Kingston, when the family moved down to Surrey, soon after the war. He was a fine, diligent student throughout his years there, fully contributing on all things academic and sporting. His logical mind led him to become something of a chess champion, representing the school and the county. Rather than attend university he opted to go straight to work after his school days, working as an articled clerk and studying for his Chartered Accountancy qualifications in the evenings.



He applied the same commitment and integrity when he went into National Service immediately after passing his accountancy exams. For dad it wasn't a question of marking time, of doing enough to get by. Instead he applied his talents and rose to the rank of Captain. Indeed, had the calling of tax accountancy not been so loud, then surely all NATO's forces would soon have fallen under his command. But the army's loss was commerce's gain.

His first position after the army was a company called New Electronic Products, manufacturers of the world's first heart & lung machine (mission statement - we breathe so you don't have to), then onto XL insurance, Grindley Brandt insurance, and finally on to Willis Faber, where he became Managing Director of Willis Caroon worldwide until his retirement in 1994. A first class career based on his intelligence, and the professional qualities of rationality, fairness and integrity.

His work gave him the opportunity to travel the globe in some style. Once bitten by the travel bug, he and mum took off to foreign climes whenever time allowed, seeing the sights, sitting in the sun and eating the food, right up to the point where his illness made this impossible.

But all this was the Dad I seldom saw. To my brothers and me he left on the morning train and returned in the evening, whatever the worries and stresses of the office they were left behind in London and he was Dad the family man.

Dad married Mum back in 1960, having caught her eye across the tennis courts of Stoneleigh, wooing her with his legendary disguised drop shot off the wood of his racquet. During these salad days they made friends together that would last a lifetime.

For us boys Dad was always kind and fun, always cheerful, never displaying any temper despite intense provocation. There's no doubt having three boys appealed to his sporting tendencies. He always jumped at the opportunity to get out in the garden to play whatever sport we chose. In fact the garden at Walton became something of a multi-purpose playing field - football in winter, cricket & tennis in summer. Even golf.

Every summer he diligently prepared a 22 yard strip to facilitate our mini test matches, and cheerfully put up with dark marks all over the pristine white walls of Two Oaks, as muddy tennis balls struck the house. Winters he spent trying to prevent the garden resembling a WW1 battlefield as it sank under our relentless onslaught.

Dad always enjoyed sport, playing rugby and cricket at Tiffins, later cricket for Old Tiffinians, before seeing out his playing career for the Walton Strollers. He was always an opening bat of classic technique (with certain inevitable modifications), and I had the pleasure to play with him for the Strollers on a few occasions, and witnessed what must have been his farewell half century. Oh the pride!

As we entered our teenage years we started playing cricket for Walton Cricket Club, and inevitably Dad was generous in his support. Watching one, two, or occasionally all three, of his boys throw their wicket away or

serve up juicy half volleys to the opposition, he was always supportive, always uncritical. Indeed one of our friends, here today, remembers him, and I quote, 'walking round the pitch slowly with a puzzled gait, trying to fathom why his youngest son was turning every ball into an unplayable Yorker'.

Dad was an MCC member for 45 years and loved spending time at Lords. Never keen on the one-day version of the game, he would happily while away a day or three sitting in the pavilion at Lords watching the test match unfold.

Dad loved playing golf, and was a member of Burhill Golf Club for 40 years. No Saturday would be complete without 18 holes in the morning, either with friends at the Club or ourselves.

Dad was never one to go by the textbook, and this applied to golf more than anywhere. Off the tee and for the longer irons Dad had a pretty standard game, hitting shots with a low fade, accurate, reliable and solid in the wind. However, the closer he got to the hole, the more idiosyncratic and, dare I say, interesting, it got. He rejected any lofted pitch in favour of a low cover drive played at catchable height. Anywhere within 30 yards was putting territory, regardless of the terrain in between. His putting stroke baffled all who saw it. It was unique, a thing, if not of beauty then of considerable scientific interest. But it was the way he did it, and nothing anyone could say (and they frequently did) would make him change.

Some of my happiest memories, and those of Nigel and Simon, are of our golfing holidays. They consisted of 4 or 5 days in Dorset, Somerset or France, and saw us taking on the finest courses nature could offer, 36 holes a day, no trolleys, no buggies, no sweat. For someone with a deep seated suspicion of exercise for its own sake his fitness was remarkable. And, despite his disturbing technique, it was dad who sank the winning puts, who held his nerve, and it was one of us, normally me, who was left sobbing over a missed 3 footer.

Mum and dad moved to Shepperton after they were married and set about raising a family. A quietly sociable man, dad enjoyed membership of numerous clubs and societies. He was a founder member of Shepperton Round Table and Shepperton 41 Club, providing a sense of belonging that was important to both mum and dad. And for 30 years he was an active and popular member of Walton Rotary Club.

After retirement he became increasingly involved with the Esher & Walton Conservative Association, where he was highly valued for his ability to grasp and simplify complex subjects and for his quietly stated but firmly held beliefs. His financial acumen was second to none, and he soon became treasurer of the Association.

Dad always had a love of history, from the origins of our town to the lives of great statesmen. After retirement he set about translating this interest into something more tangible. He wrote and published a history of the Sassoons of Ashley Park. Copies can still be purchased from Amazon, price £7.99. It remains the de-

finitive account of this branch of a famous British family and their time in Walton on Thames. Lord Sassoon, on his ennoblement, requested 25 copies for his extended family. As you would expect from dad's pen it focuses on the facts, allowing the family themselves to be the stars.

In 2007, after 20 years serving on Elmbridge Council, Mum had the honour of becoming Mayor of Elmbridge. Unfortunately at the same time the Alzheimer's disease was starting to take a more visible hold on Dad. The role of mayor's consort is never an easy one but Dad, suffering as he undoubtedly was, played it to perfection.

Dad's final years were spent in Holly Lodge Nursing Home in Frimley Green, and I must take a moment to thank them for their wonderful care and for treating dad with such dignity. I think it's true testament to Dad's character that, whatever the illness threw at him, it couldn't take away his decency, his politeness, his care and respect for others.

It's these qualities that we are gathered here today to celebrate, to celebrate the 50 happy years he spent together with Mum, and the however many years he spent knowing you.

So let's give thanks for the life of Michael Dane, friend and colleague, businessman and traveller, sports lover and sportsman, author, father, brother and dedicated husband.

*(The above address, delivered at the funeral, was kindly supplied by Michael's son, Christopher.)*

#### **IAIN FAIRLEY DOUGLAS (1930 – 2011)**

Iain was born in Teddington and moved to Kingston in 1937, joining Tiffins during the war years and leaving in 1947. Needless to say, education was disrupted by periods of evacuation, including stays in Bournemouth.

He signed on for a mechanical apprenticeship with D Napier & Son Ltd., which subsequently became part of the English Electric Company. During his four years as an apprentice, he worked on the Napier Railton land speed record holder and the prototype of the Canberra, a first-generation jet-powered light bomber.

Apprenticeship completed and into the Royal Air Force as a pilot cadet, until a rugby concussion grounded him whilst training in Canada. He was posted back to England via New York where he appeared "In Town Tonight". The injury ended his RAF career and he returned to English Electric as a design draughtsman engaged on hydroelectric projects, where he married Diane and relocated to Southport.

In 1955 he joined Kennedy & Donkin Consulting Engineers, where he remained for the rest of his career. After periods in the design office and an extended period as the Resident Mechanical Engineer on the Ffestiniog Pumped Storage Scheme in North Wales, in 1965



the family moved to Malawi where Iain was appointed as the firm's Resident Representative for the Nkula Falls, a hydroelectric scheme which he nominated as his favourite project, not least of all because it represented the start of some 14 years of residence in Africa.

From Malawi, Iain moved on to Uganda and the Owen Falls Power Station on the River Nile, then back briefly to the UK, where he completed his qualification as a Professional Mechanical Engineer before returning to Malawi. He was appointed as the Resident Partner and remained in Malawi until 1979, with responsibility for numerous hydroelectric and thermal power projects, together with the associated transmission and control systems, as well as prestigious commercial and industrial building projects.

He returned to the UK as an Associate of the Firm, initially in Woking and, following relocation of the Head Office, in Godalming, with responsibility for development and implementation of consulting engineering services for clients in Africa and elsewhere overseas.

Following the change from operating as a Partnership, he was appointed as a Director of Kennedy & Donkin Group Ltd, Managing Director of Kennedy & Donkin Generation and Industrial Ltd. and Chief Executive of the Manchester Office.

In 1988, Iain was elected to the Association of Consulting Engineers and assumed the role of Group Managing Director responsible for the day to day management of the Kennedy & Donkin group of companies and for the implementation of corporate strategies and policies of subsidiary companies in the UK and overseas, a post he held until his retirement in 1992.

Retirement saw his return to Cheshire, where he stayed, with short sorties into Europe, his desire to travel having been quenched in his working years. Iain passed away in September 2011 after a short illness.

Iain is survived by Diane, his son Alistair and daughter Debbie and their four grandsons, all of whom live in Australia. Diane plans to move to Australia to be with them all.

#### **BASIL CHARLES GRAY (1921 - 2012)**

Basil was born in 1921 in Westcliff-on Sea, following on behind his older brother Alan. Six years later the family moved to Thames Ditton, thereby influencing his life-long interest in the river and boating.

His application to become a pupil at Tiffin School was an important step for Basil. Apparently the Headmaster of that time, one Tubby Dean, in

assessing Basil as a suitable candidate asked him how to spell the word 'bicycle'. He seemed to have got that right, thus ensuring his acceptance to the school. Clearly his other qualities were beyond dispute! No eleven-plus at that time!



At Tiffins Basil was very active in several sports, namely rugby, athletics and shooting. He became in due course a keen member of the school boat club, no doubt wishing to emulate his older brother, Alan, who was already making waves as an oarsman, competing for Kingston Rowing Club.

The Second World War quickly put a stop to these river pursuits, and Basil, who had been a sergeant in the Air Cadets at school, volunteered to serve in the RAF and learnt to fly. Among various escapades, including the 'pranging' of three aircraft for various reasons, he was seconded to Canada in 1942 and taught budding pilots there to fly Harvards. He was then transferred to flying Mosquitos, which he flew on active service over France in 1944. One particular highlight of his flying missions was a raid set for August 9<sup>th</sup> 1944 into France, when as one of four Mosquito pilots he flew to target the suspected secret Gestapo HQ in the Garonne district near Bordeaux. The twin-towered building was successfully breached and a large number of the French Resistance (believed to be in the region of a hundred) were able to be freed.

After the war Basil quickly returned to the river and his boating interests, both at KRC and The Skiff Club, both clubs sharing the same Turks Boathouse HQ. In 1946 KRC put together a crew to race in the Grand at Henley (the top event for eight oared racing), and Basil found himself in the thick of it at No. 2, being stroked by the formidable character of Dick Bale, known for his aggressive but dedicated style. This was part of a learning curve for Basil, however, as the crew succumbed to a Leander Eight by one and a half lengths. In 1947 the same KRC crew raced Imperial College, winning by one length but losing in the next round to Delft Sport. It was perhaps ironic that Kingston on Thames was by then already twinned to the Dutch town of Delft.

Basil continued to compete for KRC at Henley Royal Regatta in the Grand Challenge Cup event, having been promoted to the stroke seat on three occasions and including in 1949 competing in both the Grand and the Silver Goblets with his brother, Alan. In October 1949 he was asked by Richard Burnell, then head of the selectors, to ready himself to represent England in the team to travel to New Zealand for The Empire Games. Unfortunately he didn't quite make it, as a heavier crew were finally selected. In 1953 the Club entered the Thames Cup event with Basil valiantly stroking a rather mixed ability crew of characters. Sadly they did not progress further.

Basil's last entry to HRR was in 1956 in the coxless Wyfold Fours event, when he took on the thankless task of steering from the bow seat. Despite cries from the towpath of "Hit 'em Bas" their efforts did not match those of the Lady Margaret crew who rowed clear to win. One of that Wyfold Four crew and Skiff Club member was one Leslie Saywood, who now hails from New Zealand, where he is still very actively involved in the sport of rowing. On hearing of Basil's passing he sent these words :

*"I am terribly sad to hear the news about Basil. He was a shy man but with a puckish sense of humour. Together in a double skiff we were quite successful*

*over a number of years. I remember on one occasion we were asked why we drank between heats. Basil's riposte to this was that 'we were idling below peak form'!! Basil was tenacious, never gave up and was always determined to win. I will always remember him."*

Basil's Skiff Club record is also impressive, winning many events over the post-war years and up to 1956 in both the Club Championships and the Skiff Championships, and during that time he also served on the Skiff Club Committee. Basil was by then a senior and stalwart supporter of the Club and of the younger generation and the new intake of recent schoolboys. He is remembered for his ever-friendly face and keen interest in the crews and their fortunes.

In 1965 Basil's life took quite a different turn, meeting and marrying Ros. In 1974 Laurette came along and his interests matured into an active family life. His interest in rowing and KRC did not fade, however, and Basil was always to be seen at the Regattas, the Heads and the Club's major social events. His particular involvement with concocting and dispensing the grog at the Club's Christmas Rum Punch Party over many years is, I am sure, well remembered !

John White, now Chairman of Kingston Regatta, sent his regrets at not being able to attend the funeral but wrote : "We young rowers never really appreciated how much the heavies like Bas did to run the club for our benefit. That only hit us, when our turn came ! And in more recent years I really appreciated his support for the Kingston Regatta and seeing both Bas and Ros enjoying themselves at the Regatta Lunch".

Basil, who was often referred to by his generation of oarsmen as 'the boy', certainly became a 'man' in all respects, and we salute him.

Basil, you will be sorely missed.

#### **ROBERT W.L. HOLMES (1952) (1933–2011)**

Robert Holmes who was at Tiffin between 1945 and 1952. It should be said that he was an outstanding contributor to school life. He was one of my closest friends. In the holidays we would go off on austerity jaunts that would seem banal to today's jet-setters but in those parched years were significant adventures, such as hitch-hiking to Cologne and confronting in close-up the effects of Bomber Command, or sightseeing several Oxford colleges, the only boys in a party of a score of girls, an experience which probably sealed my choice to go to Cambridge.

I remember engaging in debate with him in the hall on the demise of the English gentleman, and befitting my then radical attitudes, seeing that we were toggged as roundhead and cavalier (costumes borrowed from the 1951 Three Towns Pageant at Hampton Court). I think he won because Cromwell didn't have a sense of humour.

Brigadier Harper, who deplored subversion in any form, and thoroughly upheld the school motto, which he interpreted as 'Shut up, and get on with it' (not so the local populace who thought we were unpleasant smarty-boots not to be messed with because we didn't ask

questions first) was much more interested in sporting prowess than artiness, which is one reason why I was never on his wavelength. Rob on the other hand could bridge both worlds with spectacular ease. He was good at most things, but really excelled as a long-distance runner. Cross-country then was an agonising, puffing and panting trawl around an unkempt Richmond Park when a large chunk of it was still in the hands of the military. Having taken care with my gammy knee to dodge such ordeals I would often find myself at the finish, waiting for the runners to appear. Eventually Rob would come trotting over the ridge, calmly padding up to the line, and usually crossing it before any of the others had even come into sight.

What made his natural athleticism even more remarkable was that he had in the middle of his school career developed a serious illness that nearly carried him off, and survived through sheer willpower. He was never an easy quitter.

He did his National Service in the RAF, then went on to Loughborough. Later he became a successful businessman, and settled in Africa, eventually running the East African operation of a large American pharmaceutical company. Only occasionally did our paths cross as the years flashed by. I remember once hanging out with him at the Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi in 1980, where he told me how heart-breaking it had been to lay off an excessive number of his staff because they did not conform to Daniel arap Moi's draconian Africanisation laws targeted at whites in executive positions. Eventually they got Rob too, and with huge sadness he left the continent that had been his home for decades, and which he grew to love with passion. Back in England he bought a pleasant house near Bristol and spent the rest of his career as a useful business consultant.

In Tiffin days we would go to the West End theatre quite a lot, he accompanied by a lovely, jolly, dark-haired Welsh girl called Judith Phillips and me, usually with whomever I had happened to be going with at the time. He married his childhood sweetheart soon after National Service. Their children and many grandchildren are now scattered around the world, and each year Rob and Judith would send us a chronicle of their extended globe-trotting to see them. The exotic travels continued long into their seventies, even after a move to peaceful retirement in Harrogate, and she was there with him when he died peacefully on 25 October last year.

It doesn't matter in which order you put it. He was exceptional, a good friend, and a good man.

George Perry

#### COLIN CHARLES KNAPPITT (1950 - 2012)

Colin was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1950 in Kingston upon Thames, first child to Ron & Eileen Knappitt, followed three years later by a little sister, Marie. He lived in New Malden and Worcester Park where he attended Old Malden School, Cheam Common Junior School and Tiffins, before



moving to Worthing at age 14 and attending Worthing Boys High School. He then went to Southampton University, where he attained a degree in Chemistry. He moved into 41 Cleveland Road on his retirement in 1975 and lived there ever since, creating a wonderful garden, where he loved to spend a lot of time, growing vegetables and sweet peas with a wild, woodland area at the back. Although he had left Tiffins at the age of 14, he joined the Old Tiffinians and kept in touch with the school.

Colin taught physics at Worthing High School for Girls and Shoreham College, before taking early retirement at age 55 to spend time caring for his parents, to whom he was devoted. He would go round to their bungalow every morning and do any tasks required, including much maintenance, gardening, decorating and DIY work – and in recent times dealing with a plague of indoor mice! Nothing was too much trouble for him to do for them, and he refused to take a holiday in recent years, as he didn't like to leave them.

He enjoyed playing the violin and trumpet in his younger days as well as having a fine singing voice throughout his life – he sang for St Botolph's choir for many years up to recent times and enjoyed an annual trip to the Proms at the Albert Hall. He was keen on fencing in his early years and was a member of Worthing Fencing Club. He was a keen amateur astronomer all his life, building his own telescope in his early teens and was a member of the Worthing Astronomical Society. This caused him to be extremely concerned about light pollution from cities and in particular from football pitch lights. He always got dad to record Patrick Moore's 'Sky at Night' programmes so he could watch them. He enjoyed family holidays in his youth and later abroad with friends (North America & South Africa).

Colin participated in Shoreham amateur dramatics and was an enthusiastic supporter of the Connaught Theatre, attending every dramatic performance on his season ticket. He was also a keen environmentalist, supporting the WWF and Woodland Trust throughout his life. Every Sunday morning for many years he patrolled the area local to Cleveland Road clearing litter with his litter picker. He was very keen on fairness and justice, with strong opinions on all kinds of issues, writing many letters to companies and the local paper, when he felt injustices were occurring. In recent years he has assisted up at High Salvington Windmill and served as their treasurer. He has never owned a television and was always amused at the number of 'threatening letters' he received from the TV licensing authorities about his non-purchase of a TV licence! He wasn't keen on technology of any sort and never owned a computer, but he did enjoy listening to the radio. He also greatly enjoyed reading and had a large and varied 'library' of both non-fiction and fiction books, particularly enjoying the Sherlock Holmes, Biggles and Billy Bunter series. Barbecues in the back garden featured high on events remembered with affection – both by the family and by friends (even being held in the garage, when the weather turned inclement!)

Colin was an extremely loyal and generous man, kind, caring and thoughtful. The family have been aston-

ished at the number of tributes received from unknown people wishing to tell of his loyalty, reliability and integrity, with many telling stories about his caring support and help to them.

His sister says they have always been a small but close-knit family (their Mum & Dad are both 'only' children, so no aunts, uncles or cousins), as they have always lived close to each other, and the 'hole' he leaves is enormous. They miss him so much and always will.

#### **VICTOR ERIC PRATT (1952) (1934 - 2012)**

Victor Pratt was a pupil at Tiffin from 1945 - 1952. They were happy years where he achieved academic success and made a number of good friends that he kept until the end of his life. Keen on rugby and all sports, especially rugby, he captained the school team and later played for the Old Boys.

After National Service, and Cambridge, he joined a building society and remained with the movement for the rest of his working life. In succession he worked for the Burnley Building Society in London, the People's in Lewisham, the Bristol and West in Bristol, and finally, the Staffordshire in Wolverhampton, gathering his professional qualifications and becoming a Fellow of the Building Society Institute along the way. Vic spent twenty three years with the Staffordshire, becoming Joint Chief Executive, and retired in 1994.

Outside work, he shared his interests in Literary festivals, antiques hunting, walking, theatre and gardening with his wife, Hilary. After his retirement they bought a cottage in Cornwall where they had many enjoyable holidays, sharing it with their three children and five grandchildren.

John Everson

#### **ALEC MAURICE PRINGLE (1937-2012)**

Alec was born in Fareham in 1937 before moving to Southampton and then onto Kingston in 1946. That is where he first met Paddy, the young lady who was to become his wife as they were in the same fourth year at Latchmere Junior School. Alec moved on to Tiffin School. They met up again in a local youth club when they were both 16, although Paddy rejected his first request for a date for the rather feeble excuse that she had already seen the film. Alec left school in 1955 at the age of 18 years and started to work in local government in Surbiton, where, through the day release system, he achieved an honours degree in engineering.

Alec and Paddy married in 1959 and had two daughters, Karen and Lorna, of whom he was very proud, especially in respect of their academic and professional achievements.

During his career, Alec worked for various local authorities in the fields of highway and traffic management. His lasting legacies were Tolworth Broadway and the Riverside Walk in Kingston, the latter being very convenient for the nearby Ram Public House (they must have served Youngs bitter). He was also responsible for the Skew Arch at Raynes Park while working with Wimbledon and the Randalls Park development. His last project was Kentish Way in Bromley before he took voluntary redundancy in 1993. Being involved in local gov-

ernment meant that Alec also had a role to play in elections. He spent many a happy polling day in Surbiton Assembly Rooms fuelled by copious pints from the Wagon and Horses opposite.

Alec happily settled into retirement giving him lots of time to play golf and watch sport on television. When his nephews were young, they were convinced that Uncle Alec's television only showed sport! His family realised how knowledgeable he was about football as he often made comments followed shortly by the same words being expressed by the commentator. The only thing that tends to contradict this view is that he was a lifelong Southampton supporter. That said, he was proud to see them back in the Premiership.

Alec's own sporting career started at Tiffins where he took up cross-country running as an alternative to rugby which he was not keen on. On leaving school, he played football for the Old Tiffinians. On a number of occasions, he rang Paddy to tell her not to be surprised when he came home bandaged up after a hard tackle. On other occasions, from Paddy's perspective, the football matches seemed to go on quite late but when she rang to find out where he was, he was always on the way home. In the summer, he also played cricket for Paddy's father's team.

There came a time however, when he realised that football was a younger man's game so he and his brother Alan joined Malden Golf Club in 1972. It was not long before his name began to appear in the winner's enclosure. Alec really enjoyed his golf and was good at it, achieving a handicap as low as 7 at one time. I must confess however that in later years, he became a bit of a bandit, playing in the 18-20 handicap range and taking my money on numerous occasions. He served on the club committee for a number of years before becoming Captain in 1984. He also served as President in 2000/2001.

In addition to the above, he also served on the committee on several further occasions as a representative of Malden Golf Club Limited. Clearly a workaholic, he also ran the Seniors' section for a number of years. A further task he undertook at this time was to prepare an update of the history of Malden following the earlier publication of Robin Gems' book.

As a past Captain of the Club, he was entitled to join and indeed did join both the Society of London Golf Captains and the Society of Surrey Golf Captains. It is fair to say that his main support was to the latter where he ultimately served on that committee before becoming Captain in 2000 and President in 2004. During his time with Surrey, he also served as the Malden 'ganger'. For those who do not understand the term, it simply means that he was responsible for organising the Malden members who wished to attend the Society's Annual Dinner at Wentworth Golf Club and, perhaps most importantly, organising the wine on the tables. It was due to Alec's diligence that generally every year, Malden supplied more participants to the function than any other golf club in the country.

By what I have said so far, it would seem that Alec was never at home but always playing sport. I just want to

point out, that is not true. Both he and Paddy enjoyed walking in the Lake District and the Surrey Hills. As I have hinted at before, Alec enjoyed his pint of beer and joined CAMRA. That gave him and Paddy the incentive to visit other counties staying at pubs chosen from the Good Pub Guide. After he retired, they set their sights further afield and travelled far and wide for sunnier climes as well as visiting their daughters working in Chicago and Sydney.

Alec will be sorely missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him. He was a hard worker and a devoted family man who never gave less than 100% in everything he turned his hands to.

He was diagnosed with lung cancer in December 2011 and also had a leg amputated. He died 2 September 2012.

#### COLIN SLATTERY (1975) (1957–2012)

Anyone who remembers Colin probably recalls him as a bit of a loner, as was I, not easily integrating into the Tiffin way. As birds of a feather we soon became close friends. Speaking to Bruce Pullan in Canada



recently he recalled that I was 'a naughty boy' - and Colin thought that he (Colin) was as well! In any case he was proud of having attended the school between 1968 and 1974. He was a pretty good Chess player and had a knack with card games too. A very strong swimmer, he represented both his club and the district at many galas. Colin also loved rugby all his life; Tony Smith told me recently that he was a very decent tight-head prop. What many won't know is that he was very artistic and extremely good at embroidery!

After Colin left Tiffs he gained a distinction in his HNC in Electronics and Electronic Engineering from Kingston College, after which he went to work for a government testing laboratory where his job was to test household devices to complete destruction (eg Just how long will this washing machine run without any water before it goes bang?).

The rest of his working life was spent working for Radamec Defence Systems where he specialised in designing noise eliminating circuitry used in tracking heads for cameras on naval vessels.

Colin died on September 1st 2012. To many he was a gruff man on the outside, always ready with a truly tasteless and shocking comment for any occasion, no matter how inappropriate. However, this belied the fact that he had an enormously generous character and a big heart, always ready to help out any of his friends at a moment's notice. We will all miss him terribly.

Scott Reynolds

#### DAVID JOHN SMITH (1927-2012)

Dave Smith left Tiffin School in 1943 and was a well-known playing member of the OT's Football Club from the early 50s. He featured in teams captained by John Squire, including the legendary 'Strollers' and went on

many of the Isle of Wight tours. He sadly passed away on 17th March 2012, aged 84.

#### NICHOLAS WEBB (1949-2012)

To know Nick Webb was to fall in love with his wit, intelligence, affability, generosity and self-deprecating charm ("No, no, too much, dear chap. No need to pile it on with a trowel," I hear him say in his wonderful voice: a deep mix of fruit, honey and chocolate with an occasional distinctive stammer.) To



meet him was to see a bearded gentle giant, beaming in a knowing way like the kindest of uncles, whose comforting presence made one wonder for a moment whether one's parents had been too hasty in blowing the whistle on the old geezer and there was a Santa Claus after all.

Nicholas Webb, who died suddenly and unexpectedly on 10 April at the age of 63, was an important figure in English publishing for more than 20 years, not least because he was key to ensuring that the works of Douglas Adams were translated from radio into book form. Given that *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* and its companion works look set to be classics and that their author was famously reluctant to buckle to and actually write, Nick's service to English literature was inestimable if only for this. As it happens, however, he was an author in his own right. He was entrusted with composing Adams's official biography, *Wish You Were Here*; and he also penned *The Dictionary of Bullshit* and *The Dictionary of Political Bullshit*.

His background was unconventional. On his father's side he was descended from a raffish strain of Irish gentry, and when in the mood (which was most of the time, since he was a brilliant raconteur) he would tell tales of his paternal grandmother, a critic for the *Irish Times*, and her many amours. Webb-père, was Bill Webb who, under the names Auger and Solon, was a racing tipster for the *Sporting Life*. "My dad was very knowledgeable about horses, but addicted to impossible accumulator bets," Nick reported without rancour. In his youth he would go with his father to the races in some style, only to return penniless. His aunt was Kaye Webb, publisher of Puffin books, who was married to Ronald Searle and by Nick's account a racy character in her own right.

Nick's mother, Eve, came to England from Germany on a Kindertransport and was taken in by an academic family in Oxford. Her natural family was destroyed in the Holocaust. An effect of her marriage to an Irish racing tipster was that her son had no sense of a Jewish identity, a matter about which he mused occasionally though with no particular regret. Once, in New York, a publishing colleague tried to connect him with this element of his inheritance but failed. "There was simply nothing there - and I really couldn't get used to gefilte fisch," he said with a wry smile. In the end the ritualistic side of Jewishness was incompatible with his rationalist, atheist beliefs, though he had a soft spot for Unitari-

ans “because whenever you mention any actual doctrines they start to look shifty.”

Nick was brought up in Kew and educated at Tiffin School, Kingston on Thames. He studied philosophy and English at Warwick University before entering publishing. He described his career thus: “For most of my professional life I was a publisher, but not the kind of publisher in a crumpled corduroy suit and a book-lined office. No, I worked for giant corporations with their octopoid fingers up many pies. Actually I preferred it that way; the besetting sin of the publishing business is snobbery, but the organizations for whom I toiled were preoccupied only with the “bottom line”. So I was a commercial publisher with a brow below the socks, and I believed in trustworthy information or a good story rather than smart reviews.” Nick also believed in the old-fashioned publishing virtues of commitment to authors and cultivating budding talent over the long haul, and he was a pleasure to deal with.

In the 1970s Nick became Senior Fiction Editor at Pan. “It was a bit of a fib inasmuch as there was no Junior Fiction Editor, but you know how organizations employ such subterfuges to massage the ego in lieu of wages.” Though not a scientist he had a lifelong passion for cosmology and it was this enthusiasm for science and dislike of humbug that underpinned his relationship with Douglas Adams. Their great height and liking for beer and lively conversation also seem to have helped. In 1979 Nick bought the rights and commissioned Adams to convert the radio script for the first series of *The Hitchhiker’s Guide To The Galaxy* into a novel, and thereafter they remained friends until the latter’s death in 2001. He was modest about his role in the book’s success; as he put it, “We were all taken by surprise. I thought it would do well, but had no idea that it would go utterly bonkers (publishing techy term).”

Nick was to work for Penguin, Granada, Hodder & Stoughton, and Sphere where he was Managing Director when the company was acquired by Penguin and later when it was under Robert Maxwell, whom he disliked intensely but was able to handle by responding in tedious detail and at boring length to the latter’s memos. He was also Managing Director of Simon & Schuster UK between 1991 and 1999. Given his convivial nature he found the lifestyle at the top end of the business in this period congenial: “It was great fun, but alas it made my waistline bigger than my IQ.” Typically Nick took no credit for his own success, and, when he lost his job at Simon & Schuster in circumstance that many considered unfair, he commented simply that he had been “found out”, as if he had done nothing in particular for the previous twenty years and the fact had only now been spotted.

After Simon & Schuster, Nick found himself increasingly disillusioned by publishing and tired of the ruthlessness of large corporations. He involved himself in a start-up dotcom venture, but it failed after running through the seed money. He was also, for a spell, Editor-in-Chief at Duckworth. For most of the time however he was working on his own literary projects, studying for a Certificate in Astronomy at the University of London and making the occasional progress round the country and

abroad to visit his pals. He was also very fond of Deal where he had a second home and yet another circle of friends.

It was natural that Nick should be approached to write Douglas Adams’s biography, *Wish You Were Here*, but he didn’t find it an easy task. “I felt uncomfortable, like some moist reptile from one of our many crap papers. All that private stuff, some of which I never mentioned in the bio, was not for the eyes of some biographer, even a pal.” He struggled with the inherent problem of writing about the recently dead, namely balancing the biographer’s duty to the reader with showing some decent feeling for those who would be affected by what he wrote. He was unconvinced that he had made the right call in deciding how much of the darker, more difficult side of Adams to reveal, and for this reason was frank in saying his book was not the last word on the subject. Perhaps, yet it remains a primary source about the life of a possible genius, and for that reason important.

Of *The Dictionary of Bullshit* (2006) and *The Dictionary of Political Bullshit* (2010) Nick said, I confess that in my time I have been responsible for disseminating a fair tonnage of BS and would like to make amends.” The books are funny, insightful, and informed by a serious purpose. Nick loved words and despised bullshit because it corrupts the integrity of language as a vehicle for expressing truth. Characteristically he regarded the task as a collaborative effort and invited contributions from anyone who wanted to stick the knife into purveyors of hypocrisy, meaningless blandness and cunningly disguised evil. His friends duly chipped in and this accounts for the uneven length and tone of the entries. However the overall effect is pure Nick Webb.

Nick was universally popular (or as near as makes no difference) because he liked people and was kind and encouraging to those who struggled in the difficult business of writing and publishing books. Even the most trivial encounters with him were fun. He was committed in his friendships and always open to new ones. Quoth Nick: “Gather ye sense data while ye may. I don’t hold with this Death malarkey.” How true.

Nick was devoted to his family and adored his wife and daughter. He married the author Susan Moore in 1979. Their daughter Catherine is the successful fantasy writer Kate Griffin. They and his mother, Eve, survive him.

*Jim Williams (reproduced by kind permission of Jim Williams: <http://jimwilliamsbooks.com/blog/2012/04/nick-webb-1949-2012/>)*