

TiffNews Bulletin no. 252

June 2012

Chairman's Letter - June 2012



Dear Fellow Tiffinian,

Time passes all too quickly, and already I find myself writing my second article for Tiffnews as Chairman.

It was with great sadness that we heard of the passing of Gus Armstrong. A former Chairman of the Association, Gus was an all-round nice guy, who I was privileged to have known. He was always a source of great support, especially in my younger days when I was OTA Chairman.

Back in May, I attended the Skiff Marathon, a traditional long-standing event that I am glad to see is still going strong. Next year will see it celebrating its centenary and I know Tony Ellis and his team see this as a great opportunity to revitalise the event. It would be nice to see a big field of entrants, and we are hoping for some new faces alongside those veteran stalwarts from the past. It would also be great to see a large crowd of supporters.

Ongoing discussions with the School surrounding the future management and possible development of our facilities at Grist's have been taking up much of my time. The talks are going well and I feel we are moving very much in the right direction for all concerned parties.

Those of you who attend Grist's regularly or occasionally, will have seen for yourselves the dilapidated condition of the Dean Pavilion. The pavilion was opened 50 years ago this month and has, in fact, done a sterling job. However, it is now in need of serious refurbishment and modernisation. A recent condition survey has concluded that a minimum of £250,000 is required to put right the structure that is there. This figure does not include any additional changing or activity facilities that we would like to consider.

To try and assist with this we are currently looking to apply for a grant via Sport England's Inspired Facilities programme. The programme gives Clubs grants for refurbishment and upgrading of their clubhouse facilities. We believe that we meet all the criteria for this, including ownership of building and land, a building that when upgraded will have significantly more purpose, and our strong links with the local community. The grant is based on matched funding, i.e. if our application was to be successful, then Sports England would match £ for £ what we are able to invest. The maximum grant available is £50,000, and therefore putting up £50,000 ourselves, if successful we would have £100,000 to spend.

Whilst this is a significant figure, and certainly something we have to try for, it will still unfortunately only allow us to tackle

the highest priority areas: the roof being the major item. I believe that although it has been patched on a number of occasions, the roof has never been replaced in the pavilion's 50 year history.

The Trustees will put some funds towards this, but I would like to ask all members, and I guess in particular, the more sports minded amongst you, or those that have benefited from Grist's in the past, to consider making a donation to a fund to enable us to apply for this Grant. In an ideal world we would also like to be able to raise additional funds to allow us to carry out further works in order to bring the pavilion up to a modern user-friendly facility. I would also ask that if you know of any Tiffinian who may be in a position to support this, then please forward details of this to them.

In addition to directly benefiting all those that play sport at Grist's, Old Boys and pupils alike, these improvements will also significantly improve our ability to fulfil a number of TAL's charitable objectives.

There is not much time as our application has to be ready to be submitted by the beginning of September. By that time we need to show that we have our funding in place. If this is something you feel that you might be able to support, or know someone who would, then please get in touch with me ASAP.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Summer Reunion on the 6th July at the School. Lastly, may I take this opportunity to wish you all a good summer and let us hope we have now seen the last of all this rain!

Tony Millard, Chairman

Tiffin School Summer Reunion, Friday 6th July 2012

7.30pm to 9.30pm in the Head's Garden

All Tiffin alumni and friends of Tiffin School (ex-Tiffin teachers/ex-Tiffin parents/Tiffin Girls' School alumnae etc) are welcome to attend the Tiffin School Annual Reunion - whether you're 18 or 88! It's your chance to meet old friends and teachers. Why not contact others from your year-group and tell them to meet you there!

The Tiffin School Swing Band, led by Simon Ferris will play during the evening and drinks will be available at a cash bar.

It's a great opportunity to see the School as there will be guided tours .

There's no charge to attend, but please click here to book your place or contact Alex Swift, the TAL Administrator
aswift@tiffin.kingston.sch.uk .

Parking will be available on-site.

You can view the list of attendees here:

<http://www.tiffinfriends.org/page/TAL%20Dinner%20Attendees%202011>

Dates for your diary

Thursday 5 July

Old Tiffinian Association Summer Social Lunch

Friday 6 July

Tiffinian Association Summer Reunion

Thursday 19 July

Founders Day & Widders Match

Friday 9 November

101st TAL Annual Dinner

Thursday 20 December

Tiffin School Evening Carol Service at Southwark Cathedral

Sunday 19 May 2013

100th Skiff Marathon

The Tiffinian Association 101st Annual Dinner

Friday 9th November 2012

6.15pm for 7.30 pm in the School Hall

Please make every effort to come along for an enjoyable evening, to join old and new friends - gather your friends together for a group table.

Pre-Dinner drinks from 6.15pm in the lecture theatre.

Entry via the London Road gate - plenty of parking.

Dress code: black tie, lounge suit or Tiffin blazer.

Tickets at £35 each may be purchased:

a) online by going to the Events page of Tiffinian Association website www.TiffinFriends.org or

b) by cheque, please make your cheque out to The Tiffinian Association and send it to John Wright at 1 Delta Road, Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 7HP

johnwright@clifton66.freerve.co.uk / 0208 337 8965 or

c) directly into the Tiffinian Association account (account number 71886533, sort code 40-26-12)

Please quote your name as the payment reference and email Alex Swift at TAL@tiffin.kingston.sch.uk to advise us that you have paid directly into the account

Alternatively contact Jack Foster at j.foster@ucl.ac.uk / 01372 813021

OT Golf Club

Our third meeting of the year took place at Surbiton Golf Club on May 21st. This was our annual fixture versus Old Surbitonians. On the day we had 14 players and Old Surbs had

21 which meant we had an uphill struggle as we agreed to count the top 12 cards on each side. Old Surbs retained the trophy winning by the handsome margin of 405 to 375. Ian Redington as Surbiton club captain graciously presented the trophy to Ian Calori. We were very pleased to welcome two new OTGS members namely Gary Ayres of Surbiton G.C. and Chris Bennett from Shropshire, both introduced by Ian.

The greens at Surbiton were superb and the sun made an appearance too, making the course look very attractive. Our winners on the day were three Surbiton members, Gary Ayres with 39 points, Geoff Howes with 37, and Ian Redington with 34 points. Front and back nine prizes went to Chris Bennett and Norman Mayes (countback).

Our next meeting is the Surrey Schools Old Boys competition at Clandon Regis on Friday June 29. This event sees teams of 7 golfers from as many as 11 Surrey Schools competing against one another. I have selected a strong team comprising our most consistent golfers this year. Our team is made up of Messrs Howes, Goodbun, Redington, Wright, Mayes, Baker and Piggott.

Remaining 2012 dates for your diaries are as follows:

- Wednesday August 8 at Royal Wimbledon vs KCS Old Boys (team of 10 by invitation)
- Monday 29th October Autumn meeting at Cuddington.

In 2013 we will start the year with a 2 clubs and a putter competition in the first week of January, venue TBD.

Allan Piggott

Letters and Emails

Dear Gareth,

Those who knew Ben Lyon may be interested in the attached extract from Wisden, reporting on the year 1943.

It shows Ben as the captain and leading player that year.

I suppose that 500 runs and 50 wickets might be regarded as the "double" in school cricket!

Regards,

Roy Barnes (1943-49)

PLYMOUTH COLLEGE					
Batting					
	Innings	Not outs	Runs	Highest inns.	Average
C. F. Lyon	20	1	527	71	27.73
I. M. Clarke	19	0	471	94	24.78
J. A. Wynton	19	3	274	68*	17.12
P. O. Williams	18	1	215	41	12.64
G. A. Heywood	17	1	163	27	10.18
Bowling					
	Overs	Maidens	Runs	Wickets	Average
G. A. Heywood	110	12	458	46	9.95
C. F. Lyon	174	21	635	50	12.70
J. R. Hamley	137	19	474	37	12.81
A. C. T. Scott	64		342	19	18.00

People

TOM BLOXHAM MBE

(1982) was featured in The Times. The article describes his company Urban Splash, and how they have turned “vast relics into chic apartments”. You can view much of the article on the Urban Splash website at <http://goo.gl/FII8E> .



The Royal Choral Society celebrates its 140th anniversary this year. **RICHARD COOKE (DIRECTOR OF CHORAL MUSIC AT TIFFIN FROM 1974 TO 1980)** has been their Musical Director since 1995, and was interviewed by the Independent for a podcast about the society. Read and hear more at <http://goo.gl/SOP5H> .

DR BERNARD LAMB (1960) is

Reader in Genetics in the Biology Department, Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine. His books cater for all tastes, including *The Applied Genetics of Humans, Animals, Plants and Fungi* (Imperial College Press, 2007), *Judging Wine and Beer* (National Guild of Wine and Beer Judges, 1990) and *The Queen's English and How to Use It* (Michael O'Mara Books, 2010, e-book 2011, and Italian version in 2012!)



Comedian, **ANDREW LAWRENCE (1998)** is a regular on Channel 4 programme “Stand up for the Week”. He is also doing a new tour starting at the Edinburgh Fringe

(<http://goo.gl/6d4ux>) and then continuing throughout the UK (<http://goo.gl/7YjKV>).

STEPHEN MITCHELL (1996) who still holds a few school athletics records, has moved from playing Lacrosse to triathlon and he is building up to Iron Man Distance. In competitions so far he has been well up the field finishing within the top dozen. He gets married later this summer.

ROBIN SHAW (TEACHER) gained 3 bronzes in the Surrey Masters Track & Field Championships , including shot hammer and discus.

History – Tiffin Medicals

The old School

The information on school medicals in the old school is very thin indeed. School medicals started about 1906, caused by concern over the medical condition of many of the younger volunteers to serve in the Boer War. By the end of the First World War nearly all boroughs/counties had instituted school medical inspections. These were to be held at the ages of 5, 8 and 12, then the school leaving age; when the age went up to 14, the 12 year old medical went back to 11, and a 14 year medical was introduced. With the rise of the school leaving age to 15, the final examination was to be at 15.

There certainly were such examinations held in the old School as is proved by the words of no less a person than the Headmaster. His letter published in the Tiffinian of Autumn Term 1925 says “we have been a much inspected school this term. We have had medical inspections, dental inspections and finallya full inspection by six of his majesty’s inspectors...” This is the only reference to school medicals in the Tiffinian and it gives no indication of how many boys were inspected: few or many.

A number of years ago I spoke to one of the few Old Tiffinians still alive then, who remembered the old School. He joined at the age of 7 and spent three years in the Juniors before he was old enough to go into the main School. The governors constantly complained as to accepting boys at such a young age, but it went on for years. He remembered, clearly, such an inspection. It was pouring with rain when he left the Junior hut. This hut was as far away from the main building as could be, and when he got there he was soaked. He said he went upstairs into the old girls’ school, where he was examined in a cupboard (more likely a small room). I asked him what the doctor did, and he replied “everything he could think of” - I think that we can conclude that he received a full medical. He said that he saw no other boys, but there must have been more suffering the same fate as a doctor would not come in for one boy.

Elmfield was purchased by the borough from the executors of the last private owner in 1920 and they proceeded to modify it so as to act as the school clinic for all the children in the borough. On the ground floor there was a school for disabled children, and out of the first floor operated a dentist and an optician. It was laid down that children, having seen the dentist, should not be allowed to go back into the waiting room to be seen by other children, such were the sights caused by gas! Medical examinations were also carried out in Elmfield, but exactly where is not known. On ordinance survey maps, there is shown a small structure at the far end of Elmfield which disappears in Tiffin days. I don’t think that to be where the medicals took place - too small. However, I think it may have been a pram shelter indicating that the medical inspection room was in that area. I wrote to the Surrey Comet asking that anyone remembering a medical in Elmfield as a child should get in touch with me, but I got no replies. Surprisingly the ground to the left of Elmfield was used by primary schools as gardening plots.

The clinic got its marching orders in January 1928 as the estate was sold to Surrey County Council for the building of the new school. I'm surprised that Kingston did not retain Elmfield for it was not until 1931 that the new clinic was built in Grange Road. In the meantime a number of unsuitable buildings were entered and vacated rapidly.

Nurses in charge

That the arrangements for school medical examination changed is certain. When it changed is not clear, but by the mid-30s, if not earlier, all the boys at Tiffin were being checked once or twice in their school career. I say "checked" rather than "examined" because they did not receive a full medical. A group of boys was fetched from their classroom and told to go down to the medical room to see the school nurse. I had better geographically place the medical room; come in the main entrance, turn right into the main corridor and the room concerned was first on the right. This room over the years had many uses. On the original plans of the school it is labelled medical inspection room. By the later 30s, the prefects lived there, and in 1937 the lending library moved from the top corridor into there. Simultaneously, it was used for language examination orals. On this occasion the boys met the nurse in the room and were told to strip to the waist and bare their feet. Then the nurse weighed them and measured the boy's height. In addition a boy's sight was tested as was his hearing and his colour recognition checked. No parental consent was required as it was not a full examination. The nurse herself had the decision, for as she worked through the boys, she judged whether any of them required to see a doctor. If this was the case then a letter would go home giving him an appointment at Grange Road clinic for a full medical check.

No doctor was involved in the above, but a very small number of boys did receive a full medical in this period. I know of one OT who says he had a full medical almost every year while he was at the school in the 30s. Why? Well I can't be sure, but in his particular case, he had been kept in an isolation hospital in previous years so that might be the reason that he saw a doctor so regularly. It is also certain that a doctor would not come into the school to see a single boy, so although I only know of one case, there must have been more boys so treated. Perhaps a minimum of 10 boys per session would be required.

Selective Medicals

Around 1938/39, the arrangements for medical inspection at Tiffin changed. I do not think it had anything to do with the coming of war, but was more likely to do with the appointment of Dr Starkey as medical officer of health for Kingston in 1938. He remained in that position until 1965 when he retired. This was when the three boroughs Kingston and Ham, Surbiton and Hook, and Malden and Coombe joined together to become the London Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The new arrangements were, in my opinion, a retrograde step. Under the previous system a Tiffin boy might not see a doctor but would, at least, be checked by a school nurse who, if she felt it was necessary, would send him to see a school doctor, probably at the Grange Road clinic. Under this

new system, most boys at Tiffin were never examined either by a nurse or a doctor. It is difficult to say how many boys were examined under the new system. A friend of mine and two other boys were handed medical permission cards and the form master said, on being asked, that he had none for the rest of the form. If this was typical that 3 boys out of 30 were to be examined, it gives a percentage of 10%. There was a book in which the details were logged: no medical details but simply the boys name and form, dates when the consent form was sent and received, and whether a parent was going to attend. If that book could be found then we could easily calculate the correct percentage. It had a yellow or orange cover. The consent form that went home to be filled in by the parent asked for parental permission to proceed with the medical, and asked if a parent would be present when it took place. In my case, my mother ticked both boxes and handed it straight back to me. I protested that I could look after myself but my mother always said it was her duty to be present. I got some ribbing over that. The form was signed by Dr Starkey, though he probably never saw it, which led to the saying, "I'm going to be starkers for Starkey".

The main question is how was the choice made that a boy should or should not be examined; after 20 years of trying to find out why I was chosen, and not my closest friend for example, I am no wiser than I was 20 years ago. I am sure the school would not have made the choice, it must have been the health authority but on what basis? They might have read the past history on a boy's medical form. On the other hand, the choice might have been purely at random - I doubt whether I will ever know.

What did the school nurse do in this new system? Actually the same as in the previous system: She prepared the boys to see the doctor by weighing and measuring them, testing their eyes, and ensured they were not colour blind. I always failed to produce a chest expansion big enough to please the nurse. All this was done in the Prefects' room. A big difference to the past was that every boy fetched out of class knew that they would certainly see the doctor, who operated in the Deputy Headmaster's room next door. Many, if not all of the boys concerned, would have the infamous "cough and drop". I have been told by some old boys that they did not go all the way; all I can say to them is that I never went into a school medical either at Tiffin or at a school clinic without ending totally undressed.

A little bit about where a boy might be sent. One of the problems might be flat feet and I am told by one gentleman that after such a diagnosis he was sent to the Red Cross centre in Norbiton where he was made to walk bare footed on an upturned bench. The Red Cross denied having a centre there but it is shown in Washington Road on maps. My first medical when I was in 2B resulted in a diagnosis of severe heart murmur and we were told that I should see a specialist. My home doctor that evening said "rubbish"! My second one was when I was in 4B and both my mother and I were expecting trouble when the doctor discovered I had not seen a specialist. Actually it was not mentioned but the doctor decided that I had a curved spine, which led to me visiting a

school clinic behind the Kingstonian football ground. I was surprised at the sight of this building. Actually, it had been built in 1939/40 as a command centre of the ARP. Bomb proof it may have been, but my main concern was its coldness. Wearing only a do up at the back gown, I froze. I wrote a letter to the Surrey Comet years later and got 18 replies complaining, almost all of them, about the coldness. Some time before, I had had my teeth examined by a school dentist, and after that we had a number of letters asking why I had not had treatment on them. We had a private dentist who poo-hooped the whole need. So off we went to Grange Road clinic that very afternoon. Only my mother saw the dentist, but I saw what I've never forgotten. Boys and girls crying, screaming and being sick in all directions: the effect of gas and I haven't even mentioned nitty Nora!!!

First Years plus

The selective period ended early in the early 50s, exactly when not known. The late Ted Key told me that the Brigadier got a rocket over him failing to abide by the provisions of the medical section of the 1944 education act. This rocket must have been a multi rocket, for practically none of the southern grammar schools at least, followed the rules that a child even if totally fit, should be examined at the age of 11 and 14, later 15. An exception to this was fairly close, in the shape of Sheen Grammar, Richmond where all boys attending the school had a medical, not only at 11 and 15, but also at 13!! At Tiffin, in future, all boys in the first year were medically examined, plus any boy coming into the school from elsewhere. I know of one boy whose father got the managership of a bank in The Market, Kingston. He and his family moved from South London to live above the bank. That boy, now in Australia, remembers his "entry" medical, as the heating had failed in the prefects' room and he shivered as he waited there in the state of partial undress. The 15 year old medical was never introduced at Tiffin. I imagine that Harper argued that the main reason for doing the 15 year old medical was to send a report to the borough careers officer stating any medical problems the boy had which could affect his employment prospects, and that as all boys at Tiffins' stayed on to 16 it was totally unnecessary.

The processes of the school medicals were, mostly, not changed over the years up to the abolition of school medicals in the 1980s. The prefects' room and the deputy headmaster's were used as before except that at some point in the years, the boys concerned presented themselves before the doctor wearing only pants and not trousers as well as in my era. One mystery remains, a number of OTs of the 70s have told me that they were examined in Elmfield but I have failed to find out where exactly in Elmfield and for how long this went on. The date when the prefects left their room in the main school to go into the old kitchen may provide the answer; but when was that?

More or less a footnote, there were other reasons for medically examining a boy. From way back perhaps as early as the first world war, children doing a part time job under the school leaving age had to get a work permit which required a medical. After world war two, this job was usually a

newspaper round, and in that case the owners of the newspaper shops often ignored the regulations with the result that in two newspaper shops next to each other, one was getting permits and the other not. Generally these medicals were done in school clinics, but I remember one occasion in a school in which I was teaching at the time. We had about 40 boys stripped to the waist lined up outside the medical room after a borough purge on newspaper rounds. Also school trips abroad required medical clearance and even trips in England in some cases; the criterion was if they stayed away overnight, they required medical clearance. Most of these medicals were not full medicals though: it seems to have largely dependent on the whim of the doctor.

De Mortuis

NICHOLAS WEBB Publisher and Author – 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 Unitarians "because whenever you mention any actual doctrines they start to look shifty."

Nick was brought up in Kew and educated at Tiffins 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/>*)