

OBITUARY: CHARLES BEEDEM

By **Ron Jeffries** Chairman 1978-2011, President 2011-2018

Charles was Chairman of the KGS Old Boys' Association from 1967 to 1978 and President from 1978 to 1984.

It was early evening in the spring of 1947 when I first met Charles. I had just returned home after a very tiring day flying from Cairo (in those days it took rather longer and a lot more effort) and I was settling down to a meal and a quiet evening when a knock at the door revealed the presence of a middle-aged rather hearty stranger who declared himself to be an Old Boy of KGS and Team Secretary of the Hockey Club.

Having left school at the outbreak of war I had only a very vague idea of the existence of the Association and an even vaguer one about the hockey section. How Charles found his way to my name as a former player at school I have never really discovered, but suffice it to say that the meeting when I was recruited to play the following weekend marked the beginning for me as a member of the Association and the Hockey Club.

Later Charles also inveigled me into playing cricket for Tokyngton Club, one of the oldest clubs in Wembley and one to which Charles had given much of his time and energy for many years.

I recall these moments because they were very significant in directing my social and sporting life and, in a small way, they illustrate two of Charles' attributes – enthusiasm and tenacity.

Association records show that Charles left school in 1920, but little of his school life has ever come to light. He seldom discussed it and he seemed not to have any close contemporaries. Possibly the fact that he was at school during the years of the First World War may have had something to do with this. On the other hand, he was a very private person as far as his own affairs were concerned, though he was always very interested in others, and it is only since he died that I have realised just how little we all knew about him, and how much more he knew about all of us whom he met through the Association.

His father was a member of the crew of the Titanic and was one of those who died. It seems that Charles devoted himself to his mother and looked after her until she died in 1955. It was not until then that Charles married Sylvia, who had been his close companion for many years.

They were devoted to each other and, in 1962, when Charles retired as Chief Inspector in an electronics firm, they moved back to his roots in Portsmouth. Here they were very happy. Charles interested himself in the maritime associations of the town, in particular the Sail Training Association and one of the sailing clubs. At the same time he kept close touch with the OBA and, after serving for three years as Vice-Chairman, he became Chairman in 1967. In all those years until he died, to my knowledge never missed an OBA Dinner and he missed only two Executive Committee meetings and one AGM - the one just before he died.

Tragically, Sylvia died quite suddenly only a few years after they went to Portsmouth and Charles never recovered from the shock. The Association became even more important to him – it seemed that we “youngsters” were his family.

He was very honoured when he was voted President in 1978 and he continued to attend our meetings, though latterly he used the train service from Portsmouth rather than his car.

Charles will be missed by the Association and those who knew him. He will be remembered as a caring man, a man's man, a devotee of sport provided he could play a part. He wasn't a good spectator and he was not tolerant of inefficiency or ineptitude. He love occasion and a bit of “pomp” and doing things properly. He will be remembered as one who promoted the Association wherever he went, and was very proud of it.

I was pleased that I was accompanied at his funeral by three other Association members, two of whom were ex-staff who had met him only through the Association – Bob Whitmore and Geoffrey Dakin, and Cliff Symes who had first met him when the Hockey Club was formed

before the Second World War. Somehow the four of us seemed to reflect the kind of person he was, endeared by us yet none of us could claim to have known him well. As he had no living blood relatives, we were very much his “family”.