

RONALD FRANK JEFFRIES 1921-2018

An Appreciation by **Neville Wrench**

Ronald Frank Jeffries, Ron to everyone, was the longest serving Chairman of the Association. He served with distinction in this position for more than 32 years from December 1978 until June 2011. He succeeded **Charles Beedem**, who had himself served 10 years. Ron's period of service is unlikely to be bettered.

Ron became our President in 2011 and continued his active interest until his death in February this year.



Ron was of course an active member of the Hockey Club. His interest in hockey at School was stimulated by **Alan Stewart**, a history master, who also played hockey at Teddington and was capped for England. Major Alan Stewart was killed in action in July 1944.

Ron became involved with the Association in 1948 when, as Ron described:

"I'd settled down for an evening meal when there was a knock on the door. There was a rather avuncular old chap, Charles Beedem, who announced that he was an Old Boy of Kilburn Grammar and he was hoping to revive and promote the hockey club. 'I understand you played hockey and cricket for the first XI. We've got a team but we need more.'....."

The rest as they say is history.

Ron came to Kilburn Grammar on a scholarship in 1932. He had been due to go to Marylebone GS but his parents moved from Paddington to Willesden in the intervening period between terms. He did not claim an especial academic career but he did enjoy sport. In 1939 he won a place at the Royal Naval Academy at Dartmouth but he did not start his course. Is there something of a pattern here? For reasons not entirely clear he was offered a place at RAF Cranwell and in 1941, still a cadet, he was posted to a Polish Squadron. He trained as a navigator and was attached to a USAAF bomber wing as a flying liaison officer. He was nearly court marshalled because his pilot, having trained under the

cloudless skies of the south west USA, got lost in Yorkshire murk and put down on an incomplete runway. Subsequently Ron trained with the RCAF in Nova Scotia and then joined 109 Squadron, a Pathfinder unit flying Mosquitos.

Following his release from the RAF Ron engaged in what can only be described as pioneer civil aviation, flying between Europe and Africa. His tales of this period engaged audiences young and old. Primitive airstrips, *“they had to move the elephants before we could land!”* Inaccurate weather reports, navigating by ‘line of sight’ using rivers and other not well documented features were his stock in trade. On one occasion his aircraft was impounded by the Sheriff of Johannesburg for non-payment of landing fees.

Marriage and his young family brought Ron down to earth. He studied at Birkbeck College London and took up a career in teaching at Pound Lane. His head at Pound Lane was **Geoffrey Dakin**, who had been Ron’s first form master at KGS and chemistry teacher. They developed a friendship which was to last until Geoffrey’s death.

Later Ron went to the Copeland School in Wembley where he taught geography and mathematics. In the early 1960’s he returned to Pound Lane as Deputy Head and then Head. The educational ‘reforms’ of the late 60’s amalgamated Pound Lane and Willesden County to form a new comprehensive. **Max Morris**, another Old Boy, was the head of the new school. Max was an avowed communist so it must be assumed that the relationship was at times strained. Ron always said he used the opportunity of being at Pound Lane to keep away from Max.

There is a theme to Ron’s career; geography, mathematics and navigation. To the hockey club members invited to travel with Ron this would seem surprising. Many of us share similar memories. Some of us became involved with the OCHC whilst still at school. With no pitch in the mid 1950’s, following the confiscation of the Aylestone Avenue Ground, Uncle **Albert (Mr Toley)**, invited us to play for the Old Boys.

We would either go to Ron’s house in Chevening Road or were picked up at a suitable location.

Stuart Melsom recalls:

*"I was picked-up outside Barclays Bank on the corner of Chamberlayne Road and Chevening Road. Here I learnt my first lesson about Ron - time was an indefinite continued existence of the universe. A stately Wolseley, reg GM58, eventually drew-up with **Laurie Israel** in the front passenger seat resplendent in his battered brown trilby, grubby mackintosh and pipe; the owner, Ron of 102 Chevening Road introduced himself, and we made our way to Shepherds Bush CC, the first of what was to be many happy Saturday adventures.*

The conversation was always much the same: Ron in his inimitable manner bemoaning the latest disaster in Athletics (Jack Crump had to go), another Ashes loss, (the Selectors always got it wrong), a Ryder Cup thumping, (it was GB v USA in those days), or failure to make progress beyond the Group Stages in the World Cup with Laurie making "wise old owl" comment between puffs on his pipe. And, of course, there was the failing Education system; RAFA, Pathfinder Bennett and Douglas Bader; and Suez. Ron held forthright views on all of these."

The battered Wolseley was subsequently replaced with a Rover. However it did not improve Ron's terrestrial navigation. Returning from games in South London would often be a matter of finding the appropriate trolleybus wires and following them to Harlesden, where he

was on safer ground. It became something of a standing joke to ask Ron which bridge he had crossed the previous week. We certainly wondered how he became a Pathfinder and where he might have indicated the bombs should fall.

Stuart's remembrances were replicated over the ensuing decades, only the names and events changed. The opinions were strongly held, sometimes a little rambling, but never vindictive. Ron approached all his activities in the same good-hearted way. Masonry, Pathfinder Associations, the Hockey Club, and the Association and later, after his move to Newquay, the sports centre executive and hockey club secretary, as well as several war memorial activities in Plymouth. He could be business-like when needed but he never dictated or forced his views. The fact that he frequently got his own way was because he was so accommodating of others' views; except possibly Max Morris's!

Ron's road navigation let him down one last time. At age 95 he drove the wrong way up a Newquay one-way street, having just purchased his fish and chip supper, and into the arms of a waiting policeman. The policeman kindly drove him home but kept the keys! *"It was only a short street!"* was Ron's disarming explanation.

In Loving Memory
of
Ronald Frank Jeffries

Flt Lt RAF Rtd
who passed away on
Sunday 11th February 2018
Aged 96 Years



The Trelawny Chapel, Penmount Crematorium on
Friday 9th March 2018 at 2.00pm

Conducted by David Michael

Welcome and Introduction

Dear Lord and Father of mankind.

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways;
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard,
Beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow Thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love!

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm!

Eulogy

Prayers

Guide me, O Thou great Redeemer.

Guide me, O Thou great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven!
Feed me now and evermore.

Open Thou the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong Deliverer!
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside:
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee.

Committal

Closing Words



"Going Home"

Margaret, Rosemary & family wish to express their
gratitude for kindness and sympathy shown in thought and
deed, and for your attendance at the Funeral Service.

All are welcome to a reception at
The Headland Hotel, Newquay. TR7 1EW



Donations for
**Cornwall Air Ambulance or
RAF Benevolent Fund**
may be placed in the collection box or sent
C/O The Funeral Director,



74, Edgcombe Ave, Newquay, Cornwall. TR7 2NN.
Tel: 01637 851199
Henwoodfunerals.co.uk

