

DANIEL PHILIP SYMONDS - 16th February 1929 - 4th March 2004

Dan Symonds died at Stroud shortly after his 75th birthday and after an unhappy 15 months of hospitalisation. He was always a puzzle to his carers!

Dan was an only son, with two older sisters. A very private and rather eccentric person, he never married but had a wide circle of friends, largely through St. Michael's College, Tenbury, which was the real love of his life; his knowledge of its extraordinary history was unrivalled.

Dan was a pupil and chorister at the school between 1937 and 1942 (when Maxwell Menzies was choirmaster, followed by Sir Sydney Nicholson). He went on to Oundle, from where he won an organ scholarship to Hertford College, Oxford. National Service interrupted and prevented the completion of his degree; he was also wanted back at home, to work for his father's Cotswold Game Farm in Camp, as secretary. He was discouraged from driving a car in those days because of petrol rationing and, typically, chose to just use buses and trains for the rest of his life. Unlike his father (who must have found him hard to understand) Dan was not in the least attracted by shooting parties, the functions of a village squire, or the large-scale marketing of pheasants' eggs. Unfortunately, his home belonged to the business, his freedom was quite circumscribed and he became reclusive: composing, researching, collecting, but always a lively correspondent - and once a year adventuring to the Royal School of Church Music in Croydon, where he would work for a week in the library.

St Michael's, however, remained his passion. Dan attended the annual S.M.C. Society's Re-union without fail for 55 years (1947-2002). We sadly miss his familiar gangling figure in summer jacket and straw hat, standing on the terrace above the cricket ground, sharing his recollections and stories with us all. A gentle, witty, always interesting, companion.

*"I remember, I remember, grey stone, a spiral stair to bed,
A long dormitory like the creaking hold of a galleon..."*

From "A Poem for Michaelmas Day",

By Christopher Hassall

The above was written by the Revd Tim Hollis who has known Dan since they were at the College together. If you've seen the large aerial photograph of the St Michaels area in the village hall you may not know that this was donated to us by Dan Symonds.

Dan's ashes will be interred in St Michaels Churchyard on Saturday 17th July.