

DONALD GEORGE HARMAN

18th May 1920 - 9th January 2006



[I thought this tribute would be of interest to ex-pupils who were either taught by Pat Harman or friends of Melissa or Deborah Harman. It is a charming account of a lovely man, written by Melissa.] AJH

Donald George Harman 1920 - 2006

"I was born Donald George Harman on the 18th May 1920. My mother was a schoolteacher and my father a Civil Servant in the Post Office Savings Bank. We lived with my grandparents in a large Victorian house off the Kingsland Road in East London. So from birth I was a true Cockney."

As he wrote in a memoir of his early life, Don Harman was born within the sound of Bow Bells, and educated at City of London School. Both his parents were Londoners - his father's grandfather had been an undertaker in Covent Garden. His maternal grandfather was a Hoxton cabinet maker. Though his adult life and work took him far and wide, the London lad lived on in his personality.

At the City of London School he forged a reputation as a fine sportsman and at Cambridge he represented both his College and University as a front row forward at rugby. He was an excellent cricketer who had once been coached at school by the great Jack Hobbs. His stylish batting earned him the nickname of "The Don" after Don Bradman! He was a lifelong fan of Arsenal football team and, in his prime, a single figure handicap golfer. He supported England at anything and his last years were cheered by seeing England not only win the world cup at



rugby but also beat Australia's cricket team to win back the Ashes.

"The Don" late 1940s

When he was 19 life changed forever, as War broke out and he joined the Royal navy. A broken nose at rugby prevented him from joining the RAF in which many of his close school friends had enlisted. Most of those were killed in action. He served on fleet destroyers, protecting the convoys of ships taking supplies on the dangerous and freezing Arctic route to Russia - work so vital to the final outcome of the War, yet unrewarded by the



*Medal ceremony
April 2003*

British government. He had to wait until April 2003 to receive formal recognition for this when Russia decided to award a medal (and a few glasses of neat vodka) to the British Arctic convoy sailors. Thank goodness he was still in good enough health to travel to the Russian Embassy in London and receive this.

After the war he went to Cambridge University, emerging with a degree in Economics and a beautiful wife, Jean Pat Harman (nee Harrison). He then worked in industry, first for Shell then for BOC for 30 years. During this time he moved with the job and his family - three children: Deborah (born 1951), Melissa (born 1952) and Richard (born 1959) - from Buckinghamshire to Glasgow to Kidderminster, to Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) to Chester Le Street, co Durham, and back to Kidderminster in 1964 where he remained for the rest of his life.

In his professional life and particularly in his long career with BOC he was very highly rated as a colleague and as a boss. Early retirement from BOC led him to a spell as a County Councillor and to running his own business consultancy. One of his clients, an American firm called

Greenwich Associates, once sent him a certificate with the status of "Best in Universe"!

Don loved his family, he loved playing and watching sport, he loved beach holidays, particularly in the family's holiday cottage Bwythn Grug, near Nefyn, North Wales. He was a keen bridge player and enjoyed listening to music, particularly light opera, (Lesley Garrett was a particular favourite), reading, solving the Telegraph crossword puzzle and watching Coronation Street on TV whilst holding hands with his wife.



Don and Pat (Feb 1993)

Most of these things he managed to continue doing till very near the end of his life. He was holding hands with Pat as he took his last breath.

He leaves his wife Pat, his children Deborah, Melissa and Richard and his grandchildren, Annie, Heather, Christopher and Livvy. We will all miss him and be forever grateful for the example he has passed on to us and the memories of good times spent in his company.

To every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

A time to be born and a time to die ... A time to weep and a time to laugh;

A time to mourn and a time to dance.... A time to love and a time to hate;

A time of war and a time of peace (Ecclesiastes 3 verses 1- 8)