

16. LATER MEMORIES OF SOME OLD (AND NOT SO OLD) MEMBERS 1958 - 1990

Reading through the copy of my short history of the first 90 years, I realise that there is, perhaps, rather too much emphasis on facts and figures, rather than upon the Members of the Club themselves, so perhaps a few notes on some of the more notable "characters" of the Club since my election in 1958, will not come amiss.

At that time I was a very junior member, and those on the top table were much the high and mighty, though when it came to lunch at the round table, that was always a very different occasion. The Master of the Household always carved the joint, and the President always had his particular place at table, but, that apart, friendship and equality was the keynote, and that has always since remained.

Walter Lionel Murray Brooks was then the Recorder in ordinary. Of course I knew him well, as he was my late father's Managing Clerk, and he brought me into the Club, not long after my father died in 1955. Murray Brooks is always remembered for his 10 gallon hat, his stentorious renderings of Kipling and Gilbert & Sullivan, and he gave a very good likeness of Sherlock Holmes. Despite his call to the supper table, and "how many blacks?" for coffee, he was a shy man, and always declined holding office, although he would fill in whenever requested.

Arthur Milner was Master of the Music, and held in great awe, particularly because he had previously been my Form Master at the RGS. His diction was always so precise, as was his piano playing - but brilliant too.

Jack Caygill was Master of the Household for three years, and introduced the snooker tournament, and presented a tankard for it, alongside the Billiards tankard. In those days there was always snooker played after lunch, and he was no mean exponent, as I am sure Leonard Evetts will confirm. I doubt if I ever saw him without a cigarette, except at table.

It was in 1961 that Harold Kirby first became Secretary. He held

that post right through till 1983, and for those services was elected a Life Member, and he is still one of the most regular faces at Higham Place. After 22 years as Secretary, he still thinks that he has the stage throughout the Prose & Poetry Evenings.

Austin Child was Recorder in ordinary, and he was a most warm and welcoming man. He was an Architect and did a lot of work in the harmonious development of the village of Stamfordham, which the Artists much appreciated on a recent painting out there.

Dixon Scott was the owner (I think) of what was then the Newcastle News Theatre, and which became the Tyneside Film Theatre, and always brought discussions on films to the lunch table, probably when others wanted to talk about the Theatre or the Art Galleries.

I see from the records that Joe Chapman has been Master of the Music now for 26 years since 1964, which is, I think, a record. He can play everything and anything at little notice. I wonder how many times he has played for the loyal toast!

Harry Outhwaite, who was Treasurer from 1967 till 1972 had a marvellous base voice, seemingly going down through his boots into the basement below. His mantle has been taken over by Bob Natrass, who has been singing at the Club now for more years than I dare say he cares to remember. What would we do without "Cullercoats Bay" and the "Waters of Tyne" without Bob - even if he does talk far too much on the Golf Course!

The President's chair was occupied by Robert Clayton, until his sad death in 1972. He was on the point of preparing a history of the Club, but that was not to be. He was a most gentle and friendly man, with a great knowledge of almost everything of everything, or so it seemed. He was a local Solicitor of the old School, and English Prose was his great love, that is, apart from his roses. He had a different and fresh rose in his buttonhole every day.

Victor Reid had emigrated to Tyneside from Glasgow. He was a bachelor, and the Club was very much his home. We have a tankard which he presented to the Club, although it remained his own property during his lifetime, and was filled with his favourite ale to

accompany his lunch every day.

The presidency of Stephen Dracup was a memorable one, and Stephen is still one of the most active members of the Club. How on earth does he continue to make up those songs, for which he is famous, and his rendering of goodness knows how many Gilbert & Sullivan patter songs off by heart, is a revelation. He has been the mainspring of the Christmas Supper entertainment for many years.

His main accomplices at the Christmas Supper have been Ron Scott and Harold Tavroges. It's a pity that Harold was not also call Ronald and that Scott does not usually wear glasses, otherwise they would long ago have eclipsed those two TV Entertainers - the two Ronnies.

At Christmas, and on other occasions, Len Coyle continues to surprise us with his Irish tenor voice. Does he go over there surreptitiously for lessons?

Peter Hacking was President during the troubled times of the reorganisation of the Club, and our temporary evacuation, before returning to Higham Place at the beginning of the present arrangements with C.J's Restaurant. How well that was accomplished with the great assistance from Roger Harvey and Reg Ibison. What a talker he was, but full of interest, and indeed a man always full of praise for others, however well he did anything himself.

Now there are further improvements to the building, to be commenced shortly, and the business-like partnership of Stan Watson, Clem Clark and Roger Harvey will see that through.

Of course there are many other members both past and present who have made the Club what it is, all in their own way, but I cannot close without particular mention again of Leonard Evetts, who first became Master of the Pictures in 1949. Others took it over between 1958 and 1972, but he has held that office again since 1973, and certainly is the longest standing member of the Club in regular attendance. He is an expert in stained glass and calligraphy, and his painting is not too bad either, if you like that sort of thing! His knowledge of artistic things is boundless. He organises the present Painting Outings, and his criticism of the Artist Members' efforts is a lesson in itself. Does he

know a good thing when he sees one? That is answered by his recent happy remarriage, and that is just the sort of spirit we need.

I shall be ever grateful to All the members who make up the Pen & Palette Club, and to the friendship which we all find there.

A.G.M.S.

