

OBITUARY NOTICE: DAVID HERBERT

We regret to announce the death of David Herbert, Headmaster of Ashby Grammar School between 1981 and 1990.

David Herbert came to Ashby from the headship of Mundella in Leicester. He had previously been Deputy Head at King Edward VII in Coalville and thus arrived with an excellent local knowledge. At the same time his wife Elizabeth came to Ashby to teach at Ashby C of E Primary School on Burton Road.

David was an English scholar with a degree from Leeds. A native of Portsmouth he was a life long (and stoical) fan of their often lamentable football club, Portsmouth United. He also persevered with his loyalty to the game of cricket and maintained an equally stoical support of our national team in its errant progress through the 80's.

He was essentially a scholarly man, sociable and affable with an intuitive and deceptively relaxed approach to the tidal wave of educational reform which was beginning to break over us all in the 80's. It was a time when the national educational debate was focussed on Local Management of schools, inspection and evolution and curriculum reforms. David oversaw the arrival of a succession of these new initiatives with a sanguine and patient stoicism, maintaining his good humour, sound common sense and calm bearing.

To find relaxation from the pressures of his professional duties David found comfort in his family life and in bird watching – a hobby about which he could be defensive, informative and often very amusing. The untimely death of Elizabeth in 1987 after a period of illness required him to find much deeper reserves of professionalism. He had to dig very deep but carried himself with even more dignity and human concern. Nevertheless the shock of Elizabeth's death clearly marked him.

Those who knew him outside his professional role will remember him as a compassionate civilised and warmly receptive man with a clear mind and gentle manners. His love of the English pub for its conviviality, cricket and football gossip and bonhomie was further evidence of his sociable instincts.

He chose to take retirement in 1990 and made no secret of his wish to immerse himself in the quiet and contemplative pleasures often denied him by his demanding professional life.

He left Ashby as a school better fitted for its role in the 21st Century. He had managed the school successfully through a time of great change and his legacy was the abiding affection for his memory which remains on those staff and students who knew him. He was that well-worn cliché, a gentleman and a scholar.

John Williams