

Brian Gant (joined 1948)

Brian had a passion for learning and sharing knowledge from an early age, being the older brother, his sister, Christine, looked to him for help with homework - which she got, plus some extra questions to make sure she had learned it! Having taken full advantage of his scholarship to Southern Grammar, he moved on to University College London (becoming President in his final year). His love of physics then became his career as he settled in London and took up teaching at Wandsworth Secondary School where he also had the honour of talking about their work with the Queen when she visited.

In 1958 he married Margaret and over the following few years produced two sons and a daughter.

Towards the end of the 1960s Brian moved his teaching up a notch and joined the staff of St Mark and St John's ('Marjons', now the University College of St Mark and St John) a teacher training college in Chelsea. In 1973, the College moved to Derriford, just outside Plymouth in Devon. He enjoyed the work so much (he became Head of the Physics Department) that he packed up the family and moved to Devon too. He took to country life very easily, installing a large vegetable patch almost immediately and made full use of his now sufficiently grown sons when it came to doing the digging. In typical Brian style, whilst moving across country, dealing with local builders (at least that is what they claimed to be whilst spending over a year extensively remodelling the new family home!) and finding his way around a completely new campus, he attained a Masters Degree. The long academic summer holidays were anything but, Brian undertook the marking of A-Level exam papers and preparing the college timetable for the following year - by hand - no computers then to help. Living in Devon also afforded him the opportunity to indulge in another hobby, that of sailing. He would strap his MiniSail (an overgrown canoe with a sail) to the top of the car, pour the family inside and off to the beach for a pleasant day's lessons in how to right a capsized boat. Brian also took up beekeeping, producing some very fine honey along the way.

The end of the 1980s opened up two new chapters in Brian's life. He was fortunate to be able to take early retirement and also to marry Jan and become step-father to her three children. They moved to a large house in Buckfast where Brian planted his bee hives securely in the garden and Jan installed her ducks - although they refused to go the whole hog and "knit vegetables" (à la "The Good Life") - with maturity comes a desire for a little comfort.

Retirement for Brian was never destined to be a relaxing time. He studied beekeeping thoroughly, attaining Master Beekeeper status and whose knowledge and advice became highly sought after. He contributed many articles and talks for fellow beekeepers extending far beyond Devon's borders. In 2009 he was honoured with a Lifetime Membership Award from the Devon Beekeepers Association, he also became a trustee of the C B Denis British Beekeepers' Research Trust, a charity that funds research into beekeeping and bee diseases.

Throughout Brian's life, he retained strong ties with the church, performing various duties along the way. He became especially closely involved with his 'last' church, St Luke's in Buckfastleigh. The church was built from scratch, Brian was treasurer at the time, keeping a firm grip on the cheque book and ensuring that contractors' work was up-to-scratch before settling accounts. His work here was also hands-on; Brian has always been practical (even his late father-in-law conceded that Brian had more tools than he did!) and set to crafting fittings for the new building. As with everything he undertook, it was well planned and meticulously executed.

In between these 'jobs', Brian and Jan often undertook long country walks either on their own or with some of the many friends they shared. They also travelled to various corners of the world filling a photo album with many memorable photos (including such things as Brian in full scuba gear - thus putting the younger members of the family to shame!).

Over the last five years or so of his life, Brian suffered from Multiple System Atrophy (MSA), a degenerative and incurable disease that seems to affect all but the mind. Despite this, he remained constantly positive and continued to partake in as many activities as he could. Throughout this time, he never complained or showed signs of bitterness and his unique sense of humour never left him. He died, peacefully in his sleep, on February 4th 2012.

Brian was a quiet, unassuming man of considerable intelligence and a source of much love, wisdom, knowledge and inspiration. He is deeply loved and sorely missed by his wife Jan, sister Christine, six children and seven grandchildren.

Robin Roberts-Gant (son) February 2012