

Alumni remembered

Dr A. Trevor Churchman (13th March 1926-6th August 2014)

[Open all sections](#)

(BSc Metallurgy, 1946; PhD, 1949)

Trevor Churchman was born on 13th March 1926 in Birmingham, his father Arthur (MSc Biochemistry, 1921) also a Birmingham graduate.

Trevor was educated at King Edwards School, Birmingham. He went into the Science 6th form being influenced by Commander Langley, his chemistry master, who by coincidence had been Trevor's father's Commanding Officer in Naval research in WW1. Trevor's sights had been set on Dartmouth and a career in the Navy.

Trevor won a state scholarship and moved onto Birmingham to read Metallurgy. There Professor Alan Cottrell (later Sir Alan) became his mentor and friend. He was also one of Hugh's (eldest son) Godfather. Trevor took a 1st class Hons. Degree, then a PhD and was Research Fellow at the University for 2 years.

In 1950 he married June (BSc Mathematics, 1948). He joined Associated Electrical Industries (AEI) Research laboratory at Aldermaston Court. The Research Director was Dr. Edward Alibone who encouraged and befriended his young protégé. There Trevor started to unravel the structures and mechanical properties of Titanium and Rhenium. He 'grew' the first titanium single crystals; the report and discussion of which became the first of his papers published by the Royal Society. Developmental work at Cambridge by a husband and wife team followed.

Sir Alan asked Trevor to be one of this interdisciplinary research team out of Harwell (solving the problems of radiation damage in steel vessels) to help prepare and design experiments he felt needed to be done and so Trevor was seconded to Harwell from AEI. After some exciting developments, the cause of the problems was identified and Sir Alan produced the theoretical reasoning behind the phenomena.

Trevor was invited to join the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) as Head of Materials Division of the newly proposed Berkley Nuclear laboratories in Gloucestershire. Their task was to make civil nuclear energy economic.

Trevor became the Director of new research facility Electricity Council Research Centre (ECRC), having the task of looking at the wider and wiser uses of electricity.

Privatisation of power generation and distribution of electricity supply sounded the end of the visionary research centre in its original form; replaced by perceived monetary inducements and profit, but by then Trevor had retired at 62 for a Consultancy role having seen the Centre through 21+ years.

The move to ECRC meant a move to Wales for the family. Worship at St.Asaph Cathedral became the centre of Trevor's spiritual life and both June and Trevor were involved there. Trevor was a member of the Governing Body of the Church in Wales for 15 years.

He was tremendous support to June (who died in 2009) in her work in Guiding and the National Lottery Charities Board.

He was a generous and loving father, father-in-law, grandfather and great-grandfather and a generous supporter of the work of the Churches.

Died 6th August 2014

He will be much missed

Dr James Hugh Gordon, 25 February 1927- 14 August 2014

Although born in England, Jim Gordon's early years were spent in India, Burma and China where his father Captain Bryan Gordon (RIN) held a naval commission. After prep school in England he joined King Williams College on the Isle of Man, and later graduated in Aeronautical Engineering at Loughborough College, Leicestershire in 1948. He then joined AVROe and worked in aerodynamic research in wind tunnels. This specialist area of research saw him contributing significantly to the design and development of the remarkable range of advanced aircraft that were emerging from the dynamic aircraft industry of the 1950's and 1960's – working later with Handley Page Ltd, Armstrong-Whitworth and Rolls Royce Derby.

The reluctance of the government in the mid 1960's to continue backing aircraft production, so inherently costly, as fundamentally it was involved in pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge, led to the collapse of the national aerospace industry. Research teams were disbanded and many highly skilled engineers went overseas, however, Jim Gordon decided to re-direct his engineering skills into production engineering and joined the University of Birmingham in 1965. He completed a Masters Degree in Engineering Production and then joined the University's lecturing staff; in 1975 he was awarded a PhD for his research into Project Management, then emerging as an important production technique. In 1976-77 he became Visiting Professor at the University of North Carolina at Raleigh and subsequently lectured throughout the USA. Later he served as External Examiner at University of Cranfield (1994-98) and at University of Wales Aberystwyth (1999-2003).

Alongside his responsibilities in the University of Birmingham, as Director of Postgraduate Courses in the Department for Engineering Production, in 1969 Jim Gordon served with BSI (British Standards Institution). Here helped to set up, and chaired, the BSI Committee on Project Management MS/2, responsible for the *Standard BS 6079-1,2,3*. Subsequent to the success of this initiative, in 1989 he was invited to join the ISO (International Organisation for Standardization) and became Convenor of the ISO/TC 176/SC2 Working Group, charged with producing an *International Standard Guideline to Quality in Project Management*. This was published in 1997 as the *Standard ISO 10006*; revised and retitled *Quality Management in Projects*, published in 2003. In recognition of his international contribution to standards in Project Management he was invited to be the Principal Guest Speaker at the ProMAC Conference in 2010, in Tokyo.

A long-term collaborative association with Professor Keith Lockyer of Bradford University lead to the publication of *Critical Path Analysis and Project Management and Project Network Techniques*, now in its seventh edition and translated into Russian and Japanese. This classic text is recognised internationally as covering, with great clarity, the concepts and principles of project management, together with a range of detailed planning techniques.

Jim Gordon was one of a small group of six professionals involved in the emerging technique of Project Management who, in 1972, decided there was a need to set up an Association for Project Management, in which to share and develop skills amongst practitioners. It is now recognised as an accredited force in the world of project management with an individual membership of over 20,000 and corporate membership of over 500. Jim Gordon was a pivotal member of APM and was actively involved with the Board of Management until 2003.

Dr James Hugh Gordon was one of a rather rare genus of natural engineers. In lecturing to his students he would summarise the life of an engineer as basically 'problem solving' by employing thought to devise and apply practical solutions. Away from the academic world, boardrooms and international conferences, he liked nothing better than being in his workshop, operating a lathe and "making things". Always a car enthusiast, he re-built several classic models which he enjoyed driving until recently.

Dr Phyllis Evelyn Pease

BSc Bacteriology 1953; PhD Bacteriology 1956; DSc Medical Microbiology 1966

25th March 1931 - 1st April 2014

Dr Phyllis Pease devoted most of her working life to research in the Department of Medical Microbiology. Arriving in Birmingham as an eager undergraduate, she retired as senior lecturer, having published and contributed to over 70 papers on bacteriology and published her first book 'L-Forms, Episomes and Autoimmune Disease' (1965).

In 1993 she took semi-retirement and ventured from her beloved Birmingham to the foothills of the French Pyrenees. She continued her work in microbiology, forming new collaborations with colleagues at the University of Toulouse and the Pasteur Institute in Paris. Alongside her consultancy work, she collected her life's work on autoimmune disease in her last book 'Aids, Cancer and Arthritis - a New Perspective' (2006).

Phyllis never lost her love of show horses, and her prize-winning Haflinger, Inca, moved to France with her. She settled in well abroad, making many new friends and riding at the local stables, but as a microbiologist, she never quite reconciled with the local standards of bathroom hygiene. She also kept a jar of English mint sauce in her handbag, having been unable to persuade the local restaurateur that this was a suitable accompaniment to French lamb!

Following her partner's death in 2008 she found life on her own increasingly difficult, and after a brief attempt to settle back in England, she settled in a very nice French retirement home with stunning views of the mountains. She passed away quietly, having asked the nurse to bring her the morning papers; an academic to the last.

She is survived by her niece and family, and by her partner's children. Her ashes will be scattered at a private ceremony in the family graveyard in Nottingham.

Professor Kenneth Gilbert Stephens

BSc Chemistry 1952, PhD Physics 1956

Ken Stephens joined the Department of Electrical and Control Engineering of Battersea College of Technology (CAT) as a lecturer only months before it became the University of Surrey and the department's name became Electronic and Electrical Engineering. Ken spent the rest of his career at the University of Surrey, becoming dean of the Faculty of Engineering, a post that he held for 10 years before retiring in 1996.

He was very successful in these roles and led the department and faculty over a period of significant growth whereby engineering became a major strength of the university. It was his leadership and vision that established the department as a major strength both within the University and nationally, with major research strengths in ion implantation and satellite engineering.

Ken graduated from the University of Birmingham with a BSc in physics and a PhD in nuclear physics. He then spent several years in industry working on various aspects of the design and instrumentation of reactors, initially working for Associated Electrical Industries on the MERLIN 5 MW Reactor project and then Pye Labs in Cambridge on the design of the 100 KW PYE-AMF educator reactor. It was his excellence in industry that led him to be recruited to a lectureship at Battersea CAT in 1966 by Prof D R Chick, and a year later he was promoted to a readership, recognising his scientific excellence.

He established the Surrey University Ion Implantation Centre, which has continued to be funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) - formerly the Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC) - from 1971 to the present and is now an internationally leading research centre and a major national facility. This research centre has developed an excellent international reputation that has led to a number of key international scientists collaborating with Ken and his colleagues, specifically professors Brian Sealy and Peter Hemment. Ken was a key member of various international conference committees, including the International Committee of Ion Implantation Technology since 1978.

After an initial visit to the US, Ken visited Japan with professors Chick and Lovering, which resulted in Hideki Matsumura, now an eminent professor, coming to Surrey. He became a close collaborator and lifelong friend, as did many other colleagues from Japan. Ken also visited China and Eastern Europe, funded by the British Council, forging professional links with many other institutions that still continue today.

He was a frequent visitor to colleagues in the US, China, Japan and Europe. His leadership of the department and the Ion Beam Centre has established the University of Surrey as the UK centre and a major international centre for ion implantation and its applications. The centre has developed a number of applications involving electronic and optical devices, archaeology and biomedicine in collaboration with key industrial and academic research laboratories. In recognition of Ken's contributions to the development of ion implantation and the leadership of the department, the laboratory, newly refurbished in 2004, was named the Ken Stephens Laboratory.

Arising out of Ken's research excellence, he was a member of a number of SERC committees, including the Engineering and Nuclear Structure Board and the Alvey Committee for Very Large Scale Integration. He was also a keen and active member of the Institute of Physics, being chairman of the Atomic Collisions Group.

Under his leadership as head of the Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering, the department increased significantly the number of taught students and considerably grew and widened its research activities. Of particular note is his recognition of the importance of satellite engineering and the vision of Martin Sweeting for the development of low-cost satellite technology. Ken's support for, and recognition of, the importance of satellite engineering led to him being appointed one of the first directors of Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd, the spin-out company of the department that has built, launched and controlled satellites for a number of international organisations. This activity has become a major asset for the university and has contributed significantly to the international reputation of the university.

As a result of Ken's vision and leadership, the department developed into one of the top departments in the country, with excellent Research Assessment Exercise ratings. Ken's achievements laid the foundation for the recent award of a Regius Professorship in Electronic Engineering to Surrey by Her Majesty the Queen. This is the first ever Regius Chair in Electronic Engineering in the country. He continued his association with the university after his retirement as dean, engaging in consultancy work including monitoring probationary lecturers.

Ken contributed to the local community as a governor of the Royal Grammar School, Guildford, in 1977. He became chairman of the Academic Committee before becoming chairman of governors until he retired from the Board of Governors in 2004, having served in that capacity for eight years. His influence on the development of the school was recognised for his contributions to the curriculum, especially the introduction of electronics and technology, and for leading the continued development of the school in this increasingly competitive world.

Ken was a very sociable person who was well known for his election night parties. He felt that all staff were important and he was very keen for tutors to the undergraduate students to know their students well, and supported staff student social events. Cricket was one of his passions. He was a keen cricket player and a member of the renowned MCC for more than 20 years, a keen and active member of Blackheath Cricket Club since 1970, and was captain of the University of Surrey Cricket Club in the 1970s.

Ken was a very popular member of staff and somebody who would always see the best in people and be keen to support staff in the development of their research and their careers.

He is sorely missed by his family, friends in Guildford, the University of Surrey and the international ion implantation community. He is survived by a son and daughter and by his widow Carolynn.

Remembered by Prof Bernard L Weiss (Emeritus Professor Electronics at the University of Sussex)

Elfriede Therese Dubois (née Pichler)

Elfriede Therese Dubois (BA French, 1943) died on 24 October 2013, at the age of 97.

She first studied at the University of Birmingham from 1941 to 1943, graduating in 1943 in the Honours School of French with a first class degree. Her maiden name was Pichler.

She was subsequently awarded an MA in 1945 for her thesis on Leon Bloy. She shared the Constance Naden Medal prize for the best M.A. of the year.

Elfriede came to Birmingham University thanks to a group of Quakers who pooled money, in order to pay for all the costs for my mother attending university. Furthermore she was a Jewish refugee from Vienna, who came to the UK in 1939. She had been expelled from Vienna University in 1938, because she was Jewish, having completed three years of a four year degree in French and Classics. Her tutor was Miss Jane Milne, who became a lifelong friend and an inspiration as a teacher. She lived at Woodbrooke in her first year and received much help from the Quakers throughout, including lodgings during the holidays and opportunities for holiday work.

Elfriede went on to teach at Newcastle University from 1948 to 1978, being awarded a personal readership in 1973. She mainly taught and researched in 17th century French literature, though she also worked on 19th and 20th French literature.

She completed her degree in Vienna in 1952. She was awarded a doctorate from the University of Paris in 1970.

Elfriede last visited Birmingham University for the Alumni Reunion of the French Department on 6 May 2000.

My mother remained deeply grateful throughout her life for the opportunity that Birmingham University gave her to resume her student studies and allow her to subsequently work as university teacher, which she greatly cherished.

Dominique (her son)

Dr Edward Harry Wiseman 14 November 1934-13 September 2013

(BSc Chemistry 1956, PhD 1959)

Edward "Ted" Harry Wiseman, 78, died peacefully on Friday, Sept. 13, 2013, at Crescent Point, Niantic.

Ted was born Nov. 14, 1934, and married Jean Pigott on Aug. 10, 1957 in Portsmouth England. After graduating from Birmingham University, UK with his Ph.D in organic chemistry, he spent a year at Ohio State University. Ted joined Pfizer Central Research in Groton in 1961 and retired in 1998.

At Pfizer his career started as a chemist and then moved into biochemistry, then pharmacology. He later became director of pharmacology and then participated in merging all the Pfizer research sites in Sandwich, UK, Amboise, France, and Nagoya, Japan. Ted and his team of researchers discovered and developed Feldene, Pfizer's first billion dollar product.

He became executive director and was responsible for enlarging the Groton campus and providing security and fire services, health services, and providing construction and maintenance of some one million square feet of new laboratories and support elements.

After retiring in 1998, Ted spent four years as a consultant for Pfizer. Once his consultant days were over, he spent the majority of his time with Jean traveling, spending time with family, collecting stamps and gardening.

Ted in his early days enjoyed playing soccer and refereeing. For 10 years, he was in a barbershop chorus and sang most of the comic baritone roles in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas with the East Lyme Arts Council.

Ted is survived by his wife, Jean; and four sons, Karl Wiseman and wife, Mitzi, of Houston, Texas, Paul Wiseman and wife, Tracy, Neil Wiseman and wife, Debbie, and David Wiseman and wife, Kari, all of Waterford.

"Papa" as his grandchildren called him, loved spending time with Jordan, Taylor; Victoria, Jake; Taylor, Ryan, Derek, Nicola; Adyson and Brady.

There will be a "Celebration of Life" held from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 17, at the Thomas L. Neilan & Sons Funeral Home, 48 Grand St., Niantic. A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 18, at St. John's Episcopal Church, 400 Main St., Niantic.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the following organizations: Alzheimer's Association CT Chapter, 2075 Silas Deane Hwy., Rocky Hill, CT 06067, Vitas Hospice Services, 628 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury, CT or donate online www.vitas.com/community/Donate (<http://www.vitas.com/community/Donate>).

Condolence messages may be left on Mr. Wiseman's memorial page at www.neilanfuneralhome.com (<http://www.neilanfuneralhome.com>).

Ann Bennett, 28 June 1926- 4 May 2013

(BA, French Language & Literature, 1947)

She was incredibly proud of her time at the University of Birmingham and continued to enjoy receiving updates from the University over the years.

Sir Kenneth Murray, 30 December 1930-7 April 2013

(BSc Chemistry, 1956; PhD Chemistry, 1959; DSc Honorary Degree, 1995)

Sir Kenneth Murray was one of the most prominent scientists in the United Kingdom, a pioneer in scientific innovation. His contribution to science has and continues to save many lives worldwide, having developed the first vaccine against viral hepatitis B.

Ken was born in Yorkshire 30 December 1930, bought up in the West Midlands by his father a miner turned school caretaker. Leaving school at 16 to become a laboratory technician, he then studied part-time gaining a first class chemistry degree from the University of Birmingham, going onto further study, obtaining a PhD in microbiology in ()).

It was in Birmingham where he met wife Noreen Parker, then studying a PhD in Microbial Genetics, they married in 1958. Kenneth and Noreen would go on to be close scientific collaborators. Noreen passed away in 2011.

Ken returned to the UK in 1964 after researching at Stanford University, America. He worked at the Medical Research Council laboratory of molecular biology until 1967 when he joined the University of Edinburgh in what was the only department of molecular biology in the country. He and his colleagues went on to make the University a world leader in Molecular biology. Ken was head of biology in Edinburgh from 1976-1984 and Biogen Professor of Molecular Biology from 1984 to his retirement in 1988. It was in 1978 that Ken and colleagues created the vaccine that was effective in treating hepatitis.

Ken's scientific interests lay in methods for sequencing, or deciphering, strands of DNA code. He developed methods based on new ideas, to isolate specific genes, and so began genetic engineering.

Along with colleagues, he developed recombinant DNA technology, or gene cloning. This represented a revolution for scientists in terms of understanding how cells work, how genetics work and how the development of organisms is controlled and how it can go wrong.

Ken used these ideas as he looked create a vaccine for the liver disease, hepatitis B. He found a way to identify the hepatitis B virus and then produced a man-made vaccine. With genetic engineering being a completely new technology, much of the research was done under secure conditions.

Soon after he was involved in the establishment of Biogen, which commercially developed the vaccine for use. The vaccine is now used around the world. Murray used income from the commercialisation of the vaccine to found the Darwin Trust in 1983. The trust has supported the education of many young scientists, and helped to fund research and improved facilities at the University of Edinburgh. Following his retirement Murray dedicated himself increasingly to the trust's efforts.

He was knighted in 1993

More recently the Noreen and Kenneth Murray Library was built at the King's Buildings Science Campus at the University of Edinburgh, recognising the couple's distinguished careers and their commitment to the advancement of science and engineering.

Dr Malcolm Herbert Stroud 17 May 1920-15 March 2013

I first met Malcolm (MBCb, 1945) in a small group of Freshmen outside the Great Hall of Birmingham University, within moments I noticed his steady gaze and quiet demeanour, we talked a little. Later at the medical School, we shared confidences about school and home life. I was sure I had found a new friend. Malcolm went on to complete his qualification. M.B.ChB., in 1945 and later M.R.C.S., F.R.C.P. He was appointed as house surgeon at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (B'ham) and thence to Kidderminster in February 1946. Soon Malcolm was called into the Army to serve his period of National Service. Army life completed he joined Dudley Road Hospital, Birmingham. Further studies rewarded him with F.R.C.S. in 1952. Malcolm became first assistant to the Professor of E.N.T. Studies, University of London 1953-'55 and, later appointed Consultant Surgeon to Dudley Road Group of Hospitals, Birmingham. At about this time Malcolm identified opportunities for advancement in the United States. He was offered and accepted a position at Washington University school of medicine in st.Louis, Missouri, to commence on July 1, 1965 as assistant Professor. In July 1972 he was appointed Professor, Malcolm's bright and questioning mind took him deeply into the field of Otolaryngology, now supported by facilities which a few years ago were just a dream. With the feasibility of improved treatment in a number of procedures, Malcolm produced several papers which were published and benefitted the profession as a whole,

Malcolm's abiding concern was, will it work? His self effacing demeanour endeared him to all who knew him - a big ego had no place in his make up. He had a great sense of humour, it was just below the surface, one could generate a belly laugh at any time in his company. A friend I shall sorely miss, who's lost expertise will be felt both sides of the Atlantic.

Our deepest sympathy goes to Malcolm's lovely wife Barbara and their children Jane, Nigel and Honor.

Peter Goodwin

David J Arnold 17 May 1960-10 January 2013

David (BSc Minerals Engineering, 1981) spent most of his career in South Africa with Anglo American Corporation, De Beers, Impala Platinum, Bateman and Hatch. David was a respected metallurgist and led numerous successful projects during the course of his career. David was an outstanding sportsman and played cricket, soccer and rugby with great skill. David represented the University at rugby. He was also an avid Manchester City fan.

David is survived by his wife Bonny, his children Mel, Roxanne and Leane as well as his parents and family back in Manchester.

This obituary was provided by his former classmates from the School of Minerals Engineering in the memory of a great metallurgist, sportsman and friend.

Laurence Walter Keates 18th Jan 1929 - 27th May 2011

Laurence Keates, who was born in 1929, read Spanish at the University of Birmingham, from where he graduated in 1952, having obtained a Distinction for the spoken language element of his degree programme. Whilst at Birmingham, he also took an optional course in Portuguese and, after graduation, left for Portugal where, for two years, he immersed himself in intensive study of the language and literature of that country. Awarded a Portuguese government scholarship at the University of Lisbon during his second year, he also began work on an MA thesis on the major 16th-century Portuguese playwright and poet, Gil Vicente. In 1955, he took up a post at Queen's College, Guyana (at that time still known as British Guiana), where he taught French, Spanish and Portuguese to 'A' and 'S' level. He remained at the College until 1958, becoming head of the Modern Languages Faculty in his final year. During this period he also appeared regularly on Radio Demerara, the country's oldest radio station, presenting talks and book reviews and chairing discussion groups for the British Council.

Returning to Lisbon, Laurence Keates spent two years as an English Assistant at the University. He was awarded his MA by Birmingham in 1959. He came to Leeds as Assistant Lecturer in 1961. He was promoted to Lecturer in the following year and to Senior Lecturer in 1972. From the outset, Laurence Keates was prominently involved in enlarging the scope and reach of Portuguese studies within the University; one significant fruit of this was the introduction at the end of the 1960s of new two-subject degree schemes, combining Portuguese with one other subject (hitherto, Portuguese had been offered as part of the BA in General Studies and as an ancillary subject). The increasing popularity of Portuguese owed much to his character, temperament and enthusiasm. Teaching in a very friendly and human way, he enthused his students – his Head of Department once wrote that students of Portuguese at Leeds radiated a real excitement about their subject. He also regularly taught Spanish within the department. The annual Portuguese Weeks which he organised throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and which included films, exhibitions and lectures, gave a wider audience an insight into the riches of Portuguese culture. In very large measure as a result of his endeavours and achievements, Leeds became the largest and most active centre for Luso-Brazilian studies outside King's College, London. This status was borne out in the decision to make Leeds the venue for the second Congress of the International Association of Lusitanists in 1987. Reflecting his international standing, Laurence Keates was a vice-president of the Association.

Laurence Keates published a number of articles on Portuguese literary figures and texts. With financial support from the Portuguese Instituto de Alta Cultura, his MA thesis was published as *The Court Theatre of Gil Vicente* in 1962; later, he produced a Portuguese translation of this work: *O teatro de Gil Vicente na Corte* (1988). He also wrote several articles, including the main article on 'Portugal', in the *Cambridge Guide to World Theatre* (1988). His textbooks include a very well-received limited edition *First Course in Portuguese*.

Laurence Keates was a remarkable educator who encouraged his students to think beyond set questions and investigate in detail the many different aspects of global Portuguese language and culture. He was possessed of a dry, gentle wit and delivered anecdotes with a distinct twinkle in his eye and a quiet chuckle. He was always available for consultation and willingly shared with his students his extraordinarily wide range of knowledge.

Although he retired from his University post in 1989, Laurence Keates continued regularly to attend and support departmental events in both Portuguese and Spanish for many years afterwards.

Laurence Keates is survived by his wife, Sita, daughters, Clare and Antonia, son, Gawain, and six grandchildren. Another daughter, Berenice, died in 2001.

Peter Norman 26th Jul 1923 - 12th Feb 2012

In 1942, when Peter (BSc Physics, 1944) a first year student of maths and physics, received his callup papers he hoped to go into the RAF. However, the interviewing officer remarked that he looked very young and sent him back to Birmingham. He completed a wartime (two year) degree in 1943 and was directed, not into the armed forces, but to the Signals Research and Development Establishment in Christchurch. He was still there in 1945 when he contracted polio and spent several months in hospital. Left with a weakened leg but otherwise reasonably fit, he was eventually able to return to Birmingham to complete his honours degree in 1948.

Accepted on a graduate scheme by Standard Telephones and Cables (later Nortel), he remained with them until retirement in 1985. In 1968 a device he and a colleague had developed won for the firm a Queen's Award for technological innovation. He earned the respect of his colleagues for his expertise, quite hard work, encouragement of juniors and, when necessary, plain speaking.

Outside work his activities included politics, gardening and bee keeping. After retirement he added other hobbies including amateur radio, astronomy and computers, together with his lifelong interest in music and reading - usually science fiction.

In 1996 he began to suffer the late effects of polio (PPS, or post polio syndrome), bringing increased muscle weakness. He took to a mobility scooter, and remained cheerful and occupied. He suffered a stroke earlier this year, and gradually declined over the next few weeks.

Myrtle Day Matthews, (nee Leggett) 27 Oct 1920- 8 Nov 2011

(BA, History, 1942; Dip, Education, 1943)

Myrtle Leggett lived as a child in Portsmouth. She did very well at school, going to the local grammar school in Portsmouth.

Despite her good academic success, it was never good enough for her Mother who wanted her to be better, even though her own academic achievements were not great. Myrtle enjoyed some sports, tennis, netball and long jump, where she became Portsmouth junior champion. She hated cricket!

She went to Birmingham University during the war on a part scholarship to read history and it was here she blossomed and made more life long friends. Doris Rolley, of the same vintage is the only one left of this close knit friendship.

Despite the difficulties that the war caused it was said that the exam results were among the best achieved. Myrtle was told by her History tutor that she should have got a first had she worked a little harder, to which she replied "but I had fun!"

She told the story that most nights they had to sleep in air raid shelters. The German bombing was particularly heavy one night and she and her friends nervously chattered. A voice was heard above the bombing from a man "I say you girls could you keep the noise down some of us are trying to sleep!"

She attempted to be part of a fire watch team and the fireman laughed as the girls tried to control a hose.

She represented her university at netball and after gaining her degree stayed a further one year to train as a teacher.

During this time she became engaged to one of the boys at University.

She started a teaching job in Crewe and in 1946 she went home for half term and to bury her beloved Grandmother and was expecting a miserable time. Here she met Teddy. They had a whirlwind romance (she had broken off her previous engagement) and married in May 46. Teddy was economical with the truth about his work and his family, and Myrtle said if I had met your family first I would never have married you! To which he replied I know that's why we got married so quickly!

Teddy had a career in the diplomatic service and they were posted to Bucharest, then Klagenfurt where her daughter, Anne Louise was born in 1951, her son Christopher was born in 55 with her returning to Portsmouth to have him, then returning to Klagenfurt. Later they were posted to Munich. Along with spells back in the UK, they were in Berlin during the wall going up. Christopher as a very young boy thought it was great with all the tank movements going on. Myrtle had at last bought a Bendix washing machine which was huge. They wanted to evacuate all, but my she refused to leave her washing machine. The army typically suggested giving her a pram to wheel it! It must have weighed 150 lbs!

The family then went to Kuwait which Myrtle called "a living hell" it was very restrictive for women, but fortunately Myrtle made great friends with the ambassador's wife and so kept busy.

They returned to Caterham in 1966 and moved from a bungalow in Elgin Crescent to Whyteleafe Rd,. Unfortunately her husband became ill with cancer and died in 1970.

After the service the family followed the hearse to the burial site. The hearse speed up and it became a Benny Hill type moment with them trotting behind! Myrtle commented that we should win a medal which lightened the occasion for us, especially for her son, a bewildered 15 year old.

At the time of her husband's death she was working part time at Whyteleafe School, but needed a full time job, as her husband said he would never leave her a wealthy widow, which was true! She gained a full time job at Wallington High school for girls and eventually became Head of History.

Here she again made lifetime friends who have commented how she told lively stories always with humour but never malicious. In fact a colleague teacher Pauline recounts the story of Myrtle and her in the garden while her husband Roger was gardening with his shirt off. Myrtle quickly commented "A Poor woman's Chippendale" She loved her time at Wallington particularly teaching the 6th formers. She went on many trips with them always protecting and demanding high standards from "My girls".

After she retired often former pupils would meet her in the street and tell her how much her positive influence helped them in their future lives. This brought great comfort to her. She also was active in the school theatre performing soliloquies. She went on to volunteer for Save the Children and the Miller centre, knitted numerous squares to make blankets and enjoyed helping the community.

She was a most generous and kind woman who did not have a mean bone in her body. She was very intelligent, a Mensa member (score 155), but never belittled people with less. All that encountered her had their lives enriched by her compassion and ready wit. She was once asked many years ago why was it that men as they got older

became bad tempered and crotchety. She replied "That's because they were like it when they were younger!"

She looked after both her Mother and Mother in law, travelling often to see them, but never complained about these extra demands on her time. She helped with all her grand children enriching all their lives.

Her son moved to Phoenix Arizona in 2009. For the remainder of the time she spent as much of her life with them, making 9 trips, only inhibited with the short length of medical cover she could acquire for each trip.

She formed a very close 7 year relationship with Amy, Christopher's American wife, which was more than daughter in law to mother in law. to maximize her time with us. She loved Arizona and the climate and would sit in the garden and comment on the blue sky, with not a cloud in the sky. She would receive a poem (that we are so grateful for Doris Rolley her university friend, for being a non computer search engine to tell us where to find it.)

It is by Robert Southey and called After Blenheim.

Here is the first verse.

It was a summer evening
Old Kasper's work was done
And before his cottage door,
Was sitting in the sun
And by him sported on the Green,
His little grandchild Wilhemine.

She would then say that's the only time she had heard that name.

At the time she left Birmingham she had been asked to study further but she declined as it would have put too much of a financial burden on her parents. Just as well, as Myrtle had a very interesting and varied life. She lived in various European countries during the height of the "Cold War" and was often left alone for periods with her children.

She was resilient and resourceful and sited that her time at Birmingham during the war years formed the corner stone for her life both academically and socially. It was in fact the springboard for her fulfilled life and the hardships suffered during the war years, rather than make her bitter, lead to being a true humanitarian, passing on her values as a parent, a well loved teacher and a true friend to many.

Christopher Matthews (son) 25th November 2011

