

Roger Rigby (1922 – 2019)



Roger Macbeth Rigby died on 19th January aged 96.

He always said he was a lucky man. Gifted with charm, wit and good looks, he was a wonderful raconteur, story-teller, gifted artist/craftsman and business director, he was adored by everyone he met and had many devoted friends and admirers.

Born in London in 1922, the third of four children to Sir Hugh Rigby, Surgeon, knighted for saving the life of King George V in 1928 for an operation performed in Buckingham Palace and Flora Macbeth, champion golfer and talented artist.

Roger was educated at Winchester College and then Magdalene College, Cambridge where he read History. But only for a year, as he was called up for WWII and served on the North West Frontier Province of India, as an Adjutant of the 18th Cavalry, a tank regiment of the Indian Army. He said he never applied for a job after this, being head hunted for each subsequent post. Back in England, he worked for some years for Guest Keen & Nettlefolds (GKN) setting up factories for them in Pakistan (using his Urdu learnt during the war) and then Canada. Back in London, he worked for various architects, including Sir Basil Spence (Coventry Cathedral) whose practice he ran and, for the major part of his career until he retired (1962-1985) as Partnership Director for Ove Arup & Partners, consulting engineers.

He worked closely with Ove and was responsible for setting up their innovative partnership scheme (similar to John Lewis partnership) and was pivotal in allowing the company to flourish and become internationally renowned. He sorted out many of their legal problems, e.g. with Sydney Opera House and The Pompidou Centre. Many of Roger's friends were architects and it was working with a group of them building a small modernist house over several summers in the South of France that he fell in love with his childhood friend Patricia Tufnell whom he married in 1957. They were happily married until her death in 1996.

One of his major achievements was designing and building Ansty Plum, in Ansty, Wiltshire in 1964. The garage/studio and ramp were added later and were the only completed domestic building project designed by his friend, the Brutalist architect, Peter Smithson. In 2016 it received an RIBA House of the Year Award under the auspices of the current architect owner.

Roger loved Ansty and was a devoted worshipper in Ansty church. He gave generously to its upkeep and made many practical contributions, including an engraved window, new lighting, the cloth behind the altar (from the 1953 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, designed by his cousin's husband Robert Goodden), embroidered kneelers and numerous fund-raising concerts and recitals.

He is sorely missed by his beloved daughters Melissa and Tanya; his four devoted grandchildren India and Iona Wills, and Amber and William Lole.



Reflecting on the memorial service for Roger Rigby held at St. James' Church, Ansty on Saturday 6th April 2019

At midday on Saturday, April 6th 2019, St James' Church, beautifully decorated with greenery and spring flowers, was packed with people of all ages and from far and wide. They were all there to join in a memorial service to celebrate the illustrious life of Roger Rigby who had lived in Ansty for well over 40 years.

After the ceremony, an Ansty villager kindly submitted his reflections on what was a fitting tribute in every way to the great man that Roger Rigby was.

In its 800 - 900 year history there can have been few occasions when St James Ansty was so full to witness a service of thanksgiving and celebration for such a long and remarkable life of one local man. Roger Rigby.

We started late due to the difficulties of seating nearly 170 people with a few left standing. This required some stamina as the service lasted for over an hour and a half, but no-one noticed as the eulogies and stories about Roger's long and fascinating life made the time fly by.

Graham Southgate paraphrased Christopher Wren's response in St Paul's cathedral when asked where his memorial was: "just look around."

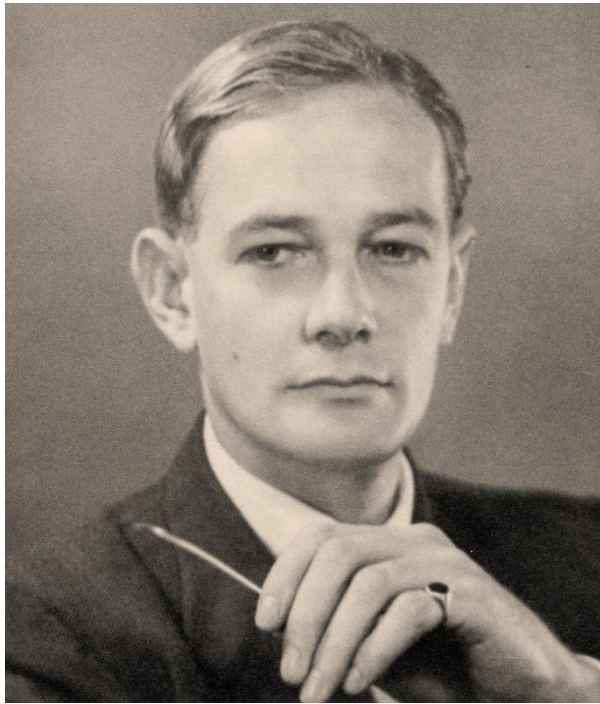
Graham pointed out the numerous ways in which Roger had embellished and enriched St. James' church where he had worshipped with his wife Patricia for decades: the "coronation" altar cloth, the lighting system, the engravings in three of the windows, the designs for the prayer kneelers and the centennial arch he had designed over the entrance to the churchyard; and as if that were not enough, his generous financial donations.

The facts of his many achievements as a soldier, administrator and artist are already well outlined in his obituary, but do not highlight his imagination and artistry or his mischievous joie de vivre evident throughout his life from the very personal memories of his family and godchildren. These also illustrated what a devoted and conscientious parent, grandfather and godparent he was, how greatly loved and what a deep and positive influence on all their lives.

His mantra, according to one of the many contributors was: "creativity, generosity and love". Living true to this he evidently shed sunlight around him wherever he went: so much so that one could feel it and it was still palpable at this uplifting service.

We concluded with Fauré's Pie Jesu Requiem, hauntingly beautiful, before pouring out into the sunlit churchyard, just a stone's throw from Ansty Plum. Then on to Ashley Wood Farm where we were well refreshed and where the family encouraged us to pick one of Roger's many paintings in exchange for a contribution to Cancer Research. So our last tangible memory of him was his paintings, as surely he would have wished.

Tim Plumptre



ROGER RIGBY

1922 -2019



After the Ashley Wood buffet lunch at Fonthill Gifford the family encouraged those who had attended the memorial service at St James' church to pick one of Roger's many paintings on display in exchange for a contribution to Cancer Research.

A magnificent sum of £1080 for Cancer Research was raised. Even after death, Roger's simple lifelong philosophy was still very evident.

