

We have gathered here this afternoon to say goodbye to Robert; to express our sense of grief and sadness at his death, acknowledging the world is now a different place for his absence – and to share with Joan, with his children and all the family in their deep sense of loss.

But we have also come together to give thanks for Robert, for the ways in which he enriched so many people's lives as a husband, father, a scientific leader of influence, teacher, a Master of St John's College, a campaigner for peace, friend and neighbour; and to remember and celebrate a very full life. We have heard the wonderful tributes of his children witnessing to the warmth and kindness of a man who was 'always there for them', a person with the gift of making others feel secure. Something that many will recognize - not least those who worked with, and alongside him.

Robert was an outstanding scientist and leader in his field, widely recognized for his pioneering work in ethology; bringing coherence to the emerging field of animal behavior in the 1950s and 60s. That work was rooted in his childhood – and indeed, lifelong - passion for birdwatching but it was wide-ranging with significant contributions to the study of primates and he was, of course, profoundly interested in the implications for human behavior, cooperative and conflictual. Much of that work took place right here in Madingley.

The e-mails and letters and conversations of the last couple of weeks have brought afresh to Joan and others what they and many of us knew or suspected: That Robert's work ethic and critical thinking was exemplary and inspiring. His was a restless, questing intellect, for ever engaging and seeking to go further – getting understanding – as our reading puts it. Doubtless there were moments when in his desire to get to the real nub of the matter a fierceness of intellect could intimidate, that is unsurprising, but the two words that stand out in these responses to Robert's death above all else are mentor ('excellent, extraordinary') and friend (wonderful).

Robert was one of those people prepared to take a risk with others, he invested in people as students, he helped them to launch their own careers, supported them in their work. And alongside Joan their house was a place of hospitality and support. His lab was then a place endowed with a mutually supportive and noncompetitive spirit in which camaraderie, pride and joy in work could be experienced. As one former student put it, 'Most of all, we felt supported, encouraged and appreciated not only for our work, but also for ourselves. He gave us his full attention as we guided us intellectually, but also listened, encouraged, teased (always important) and empathized.'

All of these things will be recognized by those of us at St John's College as well, where he was a Fellow for well over sixty years. Robert engaged with his colleagues widely across all disciplines. His books, especially those of the second half of his career are peppered with ideas and references that flowed from conversations over lunch. He took people and their ideas seriously, even some of the more humble contributions, like the odd sermon, found its way into his bibliographies. And of course he was deeply committed to the College, to continually trying to improve the life of individuals and the community as a whole. I happened to sit next to the former College nurse, Maggie, just last week. She simply said: 'Robert was **great** as a Master!' adding: 'He would frequently burst into the surgery, unannounced, saying Maggie I've got an idea, what if we...'

Although Robert was one of those who knew the importance of making time for people, giving them attention; he was also an extraordinarily productive person, a man who could genuinely fill the 'unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run' – a habit engrained, perhaps, by a deep acquaintance with Rudyard Kipling's poem, IF, learnt, rehearsed and reflected upon in his family of upbringing but also passed on to his own children.

Robert was not of course a Christian believer in adulthood. Indeed he was a patron of the British Humanist Association. But he was not doctrinaire. As a professed agnostic or atheist he was an active participant in the marking of Remembrance Day in Chapel each year and was involved in a number of anti-war groups dominated by Christians. Indeed he was profoundly interested in religion and engaged intensively in its study, through a number of books considering its role as a source of social solidarity and psychological comfort to people, and as an expression of morality. At a personal level Robert was certainly disinclined towards any form of mysticism or indeed the impulse to great introspection, and yet, in seeking to capture something of the quality of Robert's engagement with the world, of his moral seriousness, people, would not infrequently, albeit wryly, and aware of the irony, say that he was a 'religious man'.

Such language sought to capture the fact that there was a seriousness about Robert; about his engagement with life. That was clear from his commitments to the practical business of supporting and nurturing others and building up the common life of community.

But it also showed itself in a sustained and profound engagement with the peace movement, most notably as Chairperson of the British Pugwash Group, the international scientists' peace movement, concerned with reducing the danger of armed conflict and seeking cooperative solutions for global solutions. This deep and sustained commitment to the pursuit of peace was sparked in no small measure by his Wartime experience and the tragic loss of his elder brother,

which was deeply inscribed on him as a person. And in the drive to make a contribution, to serve society, to seek to make the world a better place in the face of stubborn resistance, indifference and complacency which was a key dimension to Robert as a person, there is little doubt that he drew on the strong and distinctive ethos of his family upbringing, from his father, a very busy GP who had once contemplated life as a medical missionary and his three clerical uncles. That deeply ingrained belief that the purpose of life was to make a contribution was a golden thread weaving its way throughout all his intellectual and moral pursuits, not least his scientific work.

So in this service, in the context of Christian faith, which some, but all of us here will share, we commend Robert to the loving care of God, commend a man, a brother, a friend whose life was shaped and informed by moral commitments to non-violence, social justice, equality, universalism as well as to the service of the community, in short someone who to the best of his ability sought to love his neighbour as himself – commitments which, of course, resonate powerfully with the radical call of Jesus within the New Testament.

Robert's smile, the twinkle in his eye, the sight of him arriving on his bike, a characteristic phrase: We will all have our personal memories. Before our more formal prayers, let us take a moment of silence to reflect, mediate, pray and to call to mind such treasured moments and to give thanks and cherish all that he has meant to each one of us.

Duncan Dormor