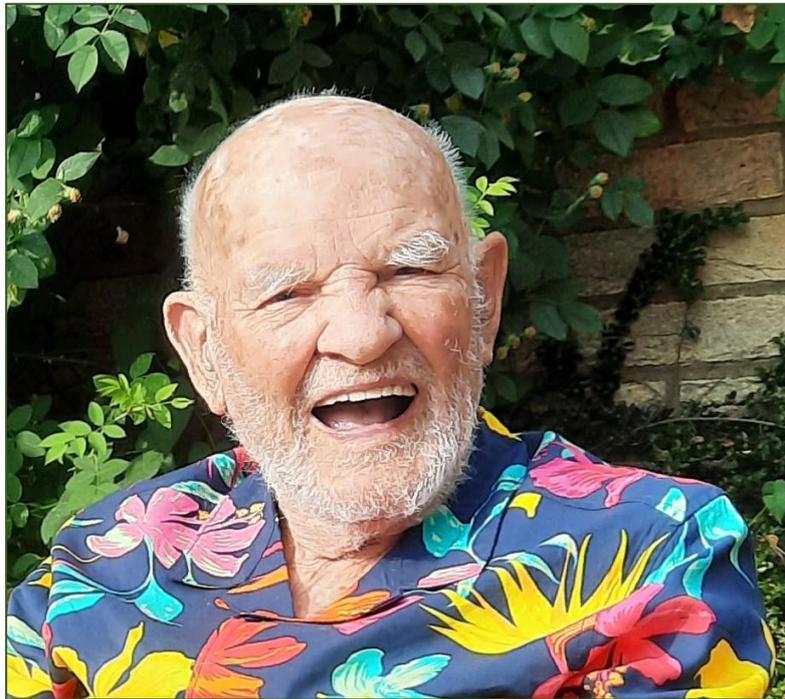


A Celebration
of the life of
David Anderson Smart

6th August 1927 – 13th February 2024



West Norwood Crematorium

21st March 2024

1.15pm

Celebrant: Trevor Moore

Music to Enter

Moonlight Sonata (Sonata No 14, First Movement) - Beethoven

Opening Words

We are here today to say a sad but fond farewell to David Smart. And of course we are here as well to celebrate the life of a much-loved character, who made us all smile with his determination to have his voice heard.

To David's extended family and many loyal friends we offer comfort and support in their grief. Of course, *you* are all here because David touched your life in some way, too.

As David knew I worked as a humanist celebrant, fitting with his world view, during our friendship of twenty years or more he often mentioned that he would like me to help his cousin Jackie with this very occasion. David felt very much part of the wider human community and retained an optimism that sometimes belied the bleak times in which we live. That optimistic take on life was infectious, and I'm honoured to join in commemorating David's life today.

In the course of today's ceremony, after tributes to David, we will have some time for reflection as we listen to *Moonlight Serenade* by Glenn Miller & his orchestra, accompanied by a photomontage to remind us of David's life and times down the years. At that time, those with different beliefs might like to remember David in their own way.

Thoughts on Life and Legacy

Feelings of sadness cannot overshadow the complete picture of David, because you all have your own unique, fond memories of him that cannot be taken away. More than that, your lives are different and enriched *because* David lived – so he leaves you each with a powerful personal legacy in that sense too.

Dying itself is simply part of the continuous turning of the natural cycle in which we are all engaged. We all know we shall die, but no-one need be afraid of it. David will live on not only through that personal legacy he leaves, but because you will always remember him.

Reading

Before we hear all about David and his life his neighbour of twelve years, Robert Hancock, has chosen a poem he would like to read by Emily Dickinson – *The Chariot*:

The Chariot

Because I could not stop for Death
He kindly stopped for me
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality

We slowly drove, he knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too
For his civility

We passed the school where children played
Their lessons scarcely done
We passed the fields of gazing grain
We passed the setting sun

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground
The roof was scarcely visible
The cornice but a mound

Since then 't is centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity

Tributes to David

Bernard Newmarch and his siblings Nick and Patrick all have fond memories of 'Dave', as they knew him. Here's Bernard to share some of those.

Bernard

I first met Dave Smart when I was a young boy. My father after leaving the army in the early 1950's taught at Friern Barnet Grammar School in north London. Dave came to the school as a teacher and soon became firm friends with my father and mother and my two brothers. Although very different characters, there was a strong friendship between them. Dave and Diana were living in Cheshunt at the time. We used to go on many trips together and enjoyed their company.

When my father died in 1967, I was ten. Dave became a close friend, father figure and benevolent uncle all rolled into one. We used to go on youth hosteling weekend trips to the countryside in south England and occasional weeks to Wales and the Lake District. These were always fun if not challenging in every sense. Dave was a determined man who was not prepared to put up with poor service without a comment or more. He had a lively sense of humour and a challenging, thoughtful approach to life. We had many long discussions about politics, religion and community service in its broadest sense.

My brother Nick, here today, wrote:

"I had a similar story except I was fifteen when Dad died, so very quickly I was bicycling from Winchmore Hill, north London to Dave and Diana's flat in Thurlow Park Road, Dulwich for the occasional weekend, an adventure in itself negotiating through central London. It was a little easier once I graduated to a little Honda 50cc motorbike. That sense of life being an adventure is one I owe in large part to Dave's encouragement. Why else drive alone on the Honda 200 miles at 40 mph max, across rural Britain to their little cottage in very remote Montgomeryshire and enjoy sliding off the pillion seat while Dave tried out wheelies on it?"

"On another occasion hurtling around Enfield in the snow crammed into the back of their little green minivan to find the cinema showing Dr Zhivago whilst watching the sparks from the loose exhaust through the rusty floor. Or wandering around Soho and stumbling into a club with a late-night showing of the infamous Todd Browning classic film "Freaks" still then on highly restricted distribution. Or being taught the elements of golf swings on a Dulwich College rugby pitch, and later those of snooker on the table near the teacher's common room.

"Later on, Dave told the story of his time before teaching as a junior army officer in West Africa. He was appalled by the condition of the local children and started a little school for them in his spare time. This, being an activity regarded as subversive in the colonial prevailing atmosphere, is something that sums up his deep-seated humanistic and dogged approach to life."

He was always ready to act on his beliefs and not accept conventional arguments without further debate. Throughout the years he has always remained interested in our careers and family. Many times he visited me and my family in Somerset and I in turn visited Dave and Diana in Dulwich. I always tried to avoid any opportunity to sit with him in the car as he had a rather robust road sense, giving a good impression of a roller coaster ride. His belief being that it was better to drive down the middle of the road unless challenged by an oncoming vehicle at the last second.

Thank you Dave for it all.

I'd like to share some of my own memories of my friendship with David, if I may:

Given David's green credentials, it's not surprising I first met him on a volunteer planting session in Dulwich Park. We soon worked out that we were both humanists and that led to his joining SELHuG, where he became – as he would tease – 'Teamaker, 2nd Class'. David also took part in the local group known as Agnostics Anonymous, never especially tactful when it came to his incredulity at religious beliefs.

David loved to write and would often send me short essays he had written with provocative titles like *The Diana Emotional Orgy* and *Snobs v Plebs*. In the latter he grappled with having benefited from a private education, while ruing the disproportionate number of public school boys who went on to privileged positions. He detested entitlement.

David wrote a loving memoir, *My Canny Shields*, in homage to his younger life in South Shields, where he spent several stints as a child living with his grandparents. His father travelled the world in the Navy and his mother felt that returning to her home roots with David to stay with family, while he was away, was the best option.

As an only child, David felt the burden of expectation of his parents, his father in particular hoping that his son would follow him into the Navy. Although he did train in the Army at Sandhurst, David never felt he quite matched their hopes. Yet he forged a long career in teaching geography – culminating in around twenty years at Dulwich College.

Always one to fly the flag of critical thinking and humanist values, David boasted that he had been told both at the College and at his alma mater Sherborne that he would never be allowed to speak to the pupils again, after he told the pupils at both schools that although they were in a Church of England environment, they must feel free to make up their own minds.

One of his former pupils from the 1980s, Richard Madge – who can't be here today - got in touch with a couple of vivid memories of David:

“I knew David in the 1980s as a long-suffering pupil of Dulwich College, when David taught me Geography. He was known as a loveable eccentric who sometimes (often) went off-piste with the syllabus and had to be hauled back into line by his superiors.

He espoused Green politics long before they became fashionable and mainstream, standing for the old Ecology Party in the 1979 General Election, and losing his deposit. Many contemporaries will recall him driving round in the ‘Ecovan’, a large vehicle of uncertain heritage, painted with bright sunflowers and other assorted foliage..... and the most polluting thing imaginable.”

Hester Brown of SELHuG wrote:

“David was passionate about his causes, most pressingly the need to tackle climate change but also the idiocy of the BBC broadcasting 'Thought for the Day' without including non-religious thought or representing the half of the population whose philosophy and ethics are not religious. David led our monthly demonstrations outside Broadcasting House for two years and would have carried on if covid and his own mortality hadn't intervened.”

By his own admission David could be intransigent if not infuriating at times, because he was difficult to budge from his own ideas. But he exuded an infectious *joie de vivre*. A man with a very human heart.

To end these tributes we'll hear now from Gardner Thompson, who first met David when he joined the teaching staff at Dulwich College in 1973. But as he puts it, “it is only in the last few years that I got to know him really well”.

Gardner

Dear David: such a delightful friend.

David and I were *colleagues* at Dulwich College from 1973 to 1987. Our *friendship* grew thereafter; and I came to know him well only in the last 5 years or so (primarily over coffee, somewhere in the village, pretty much once a week). And came to respect him, too: so it is something of a privilege to be asked to say a few words about him today.

David was a man of principle. He was a radical, and an activist. He was ‘Green’ before the Green Party. In 1979 he stood in Dulwich as the Ecology candidate. This was a serious gesture, but in those days, it risked a degree of ridicule as well as loss of the £150 deposit. David picked up just 1.1% of the votes cast. But others followed: an Ecology party candidate stood in 1983; and a Green in 1987 and since.

There was more, enterprising, conservation activity. Amazingly he negotiated a sizeable patch of land for use as an allotment, behind no.5 Roseway. And at the College he started a Wednesday afternoon option for senior boys who preferred Conservation to

organised games. He persuaded the College to buy its first minibus ... soon to be seen weighed down by newspapers collected by boys for recycling.

There were *other* matters, in which David's views were ... less consistent. Public schools, for one. Often – most weeks? – he would bemoan the influence of the public schools and their products. But with some pride he attended Old Boy reunions at Sherborne, most recently at the age of 95 - and he had intended to go this year as well.

And he taught at one, of course. The framework of Dulwich and the many bright boys attending it gave him a chance to teach his subject, Geography, with unashamed passion and, I suspect, some ... independence. Because he was inclined to question 'authority', in whatever form, David - as our colleague Jan Piggott put it - 'was always at an angle to Dulwich'. He was never minded to impress a Master for his own advancement.

David at Dulwich may in this sense have been an echo of a previous David in the army. I used to tease him about being an anti-imperialist, despite his having maintained the British Empire in the Gold Coast in the later 1940s. But for him that experience brought back the happiest memories ... of teaching young African recruits.

I came to admire his verve. When he acquired a mobility scooter, electric of course, he thought nothing of travelling to an event across the Thames in Red Lion Square; or, one evening last year, setting off in the dark to Kingswood House to see Macbeth ... with a copy of the play in his pocket, but no ticket.

Here was strength of character. Devoted to Diana, he would push her in her wheelchair in the park, when he was himself over 90. He was loyal – to his family and friends and his dogs (dear Jango) and - any misgivings discarded – to institutions too (Sherborne, Sandhurst, Dulwich College). He had an endearing honesty and openness: an undimmed, almost boyish, curiosity about the world and – somehow without being judgemental - what we humans did in it and to it. He read widely – almost always turning up to coffee with a new book to recommend.

Such vitality. Built to represent Sherborne and Sandhurst at boxing and rugby, he appeared indestructible. He didn't take himself too seriously. Jan recalls: 'his affirming flame, his bright and cheery eye'. Yes, the impish smile, and infectious laugh.

That, I suspect, is how friends will remember him.

It is fitting to mention that David appreciated the help he received from so many, more than he probably articulated – his carers Peris and Yvonne; his kind neighbours and friends; and of course his wider family, spearheaded by his ever-giving cousin Jackie. He was fortunate indeed in having such a supportive circle.

The life of the loveable rogue David Smart came to an end on 13th February. He will be sadly missed but always fondly remembered by you all.

Reflection

While David's life is vivid in your minds, you might now like to take some time to reflect on it and recall not only your own fond memories of him, but also the influence that he had on your lives. While we do that we will listen to Glenn Miller's *Moonlight Serenade* as we see some vivid images of David's life and times. And whatever your beliefs, you might like to take the opportunity at this time to remember David in your own way.

Moonlight Serenade – Glenn Miller & his orchestra

Reading

Before we say a final farewell to David, Jackie's daughter Laura Brannan has chosen one of David's own poems to share with us, a thought-provoking piece called *Contemplation*:

Contemplation

Somewhere is that strange world
Which you and I can enter but never talk about
It lies beyond words, beyond meaning
It binds us; it is there as the true essence of life.
It is higher than the petty problems that beset us
The trivial irritations that raise my anger and my scorn
And make me realise I am a lesser person
Than I would be.

When I am thus
I am joined to the universe of being
Which cannot be undone
Only endured.
But consider that endurance
Look well at it.
At its very base
Discover hope and not despair.
If you can.
Is it there?

No; not in the law of supply and demand
The making of profit
The calculation of my success
(I am not successful)

We are bringing things to an end
It is inevitable.
You are intelligent and honest
You will believe that.

Before
I did not want to believe it.
I thought I might do something.
Now I know I cannot.
I am too confined
Do I regret the marching?

So now
I must learn something else
Something new
That place where we can go together
Yet never meet
But I am strengthened
I know you are there
Shall I meet death hopefully?

Farewell to David

Please stand everyone if you can as we say a final farewell to David, who lies here cradling the ashes of his beloved dog, Jango, who died shortly after David. We have shared memories of this feisty man with affection, and everyone will have a different relationship and perspective from which to remember him. Now, love and affection will drown out any fear as we commit his body to its natural end in the cycle of life. Please join me if you would like in saying the following farewell words to David, printed on your order of service:

David:

We cherish that we shared life's path with you
We thank you for your irresistible enthusiasm and lust for life
We treasure our fond memories of you
We will always remember you, smiling
With love we leave you in peace
With respect and admiration we bid you farewell

Closing words

David is at peace. A part of *your* life is gone, but it is richer for having known him. Your own evergreen memories of David will doubtless revive from time to time, reminding you of special moments with David and bringing a smile. And do remember him next time you listen to, or switch off, *Thought for the Day*.

Life still holds much in store. Of course the greatest honour you can pay David is to follow his example by living life joyfully and to the full, and helping others to do the same, so far as it is within your power to do so.

David loved Mozart above all other composers, so it is fitting as we prepare to leave that we will hear an extract from Mozart's Clarinet Concerto. Everyone is welcome to join the family to continue remembering David at The Alley'n's Head in West Dulwich.

Parting Music

Clarinet Concerto in A Major, Adagio - Mozart