

LESLIE "BOB" GILLETT (HON OF)

He was a much loved schoolmaster at the College for many years and wrote "Framlingham College: The Second Sixty Years (1992)", "Remembered Days: The S.O.F. Centenary Book (2000)" and "The Apprentice (1978)"

Here is the obituary written by Bob Williams (Hon OF)

I abhor cliches but, try as I might, I find it extremely difficult to elicit a more appropriate response to the news of Bob Gillett's death than to fall back on the well used 'instant epitaph'- that we are the poorer for his passing but so much richer for having known him. The words could indeed have been written with Bob in mind.



The lack of a ready smile did nothing to disguise a sense of humour and sparkling wit that was difficult to match. His way with words made him the natural choice to deliver the perfectly rounded tribute to friends and colleagues as occasion demanded – including both funeral services for Doreen and Stanley Porter, in the College Chapel. After a lifetime of teaching English and Drama and a long retirement largely devoted to various important literary works there was no perceptible dimming of this extraordinary gift and faculty even in his 90th year.....I had the temerity to send Bob a short poem, conceived in celebration of National Poetry Day 2001. Within 24 hours he had penned and despatched a response: 40 lines of peerless poetic wit, which really rather put me in my place – and is now a rather treasured possession, together with a copy of his excellent novel 'The Apprentice' which he presented to me only a matter of a couple of months ago and was reluctantly persuaded to sign.

Throughout their Framlingham years both Bob and Margery unfailingly showed interest in, and concern for, others. Even in more recent years they were invariably dismissive of enquiries as to their own well-being. They were far more interested in the happenings within one's own family – and, in particular, what the young were up to.

Bob was, of course, a walking encyclopaedia as regards the on-going evolution of Framlingham College. A visit to 5a Fore St. was never complete unless you had been invited to scrutinise some newly acquired archive treasure...a faded sepia print or perhaps the hand-written minutes of an epoch-making Governors' Meeting from the century before last! His work on behalf of the S.O.F., for a period in excess of two decades, is legendary and some measure of the esteem in which he was held is clearly evident in the fact that Bob was the first of only two Honorary Members ever to have been appointed a Life Vice-President of the Society of Old Framlinghamians, his former colleague John Whipp being the other. How very appropriate it was that he managed to complete his last written work 'The Albert Memorial College' only a matter of days before his final hospitalisation – and presented so movingly to the Head on September 27th. We are all certainly the beneficiaries of this final, herculean, effort. Together with 'Framlingham College: The Second Sixty Years' and 'Remembered Days: The S.O.F. Centenary Book' these unique works will serve as a lasting memorial to an incredible man.

His overview of The College always included a soft spot for Brandeston where Margery had such strong musical connections and where they enjoyed a personal friendship with David and Rachel Kittermaster. They both greatly enjoyed being included in the B.H. Jubilee celebrations and Nigel Johnson's Farewell gathering – and I was particularly touched that he was able to make my own retirement dinner, in fact his last appearance at Brandeston. He never failed to write to me, at length, acknowledging his appreciation of each and every invite.

To share his company was unfailingly stimulating. He and Margery always enjoyed a good pub lunch, happily a habit that Bob continued to take pleasure in over the last twelve months. In fact we had been taking lunch together when news broke of the appalling events of '9/11', twelve months to the day that I learnt of his death.

Schoolmaster, author, historian, raconteur, lover of good music; there are an abundance of good memories. Quoting from Gwen Randall's tribute at Bob's wonderful Memorial Service: •He was a fine teacher...and not only of the young. We have lost, at a great age, a true gentleman of Framlingham.

The following is taken from the Spring 2003 OF Magazine :-

Leslie ("Bob") Gillett (1913-2002)

Thirty-one years as a College master, twenty-four years as College archivist, historian, author and friend, Bob Gillett was part of the very fabric of Framlingham as indeed his humanity has been in the lives of the many hundreds of his pupils. For his tireless post retirement work on behalf of the Society of OFs he became its first honorary member to have been appointed a life Vice President.



Bob's own school days began at the Lower School of John Lyon in Harrow where he won his first XI colours for both football and cricket. In 1936 he went up to King's College, London to read English language and literature, philosophy and Latin. Teaching became an immediate career and his first appointments at two preparatory schools were interrupted in 1940 when he was commissioned in the RAF and served in Intelligence. Rising to the rank of Flight-Lieutenant, Bob had a distinguished career, first in West Africa, where he was mentioned in Despatches, and then serving in an operational flying boat squadron with special responsibilities in the Battle of the Atlantic at the height of the U-boat menace.

The first year after demob Bob taught at Newport Grammar School before moving to Framlingham in 1947, at about the same time as his life-long colleague and co-founder of the Common Room cricket team, Martin Irving.