

## **HORACE JAMES "JIM" SMITH (G24-27)**

He was born on 29 September 1909 and became a solicitor after leaving the College. During WW2 he became a Squadron Leader in the Fighter Command of the RAF and was mentioned in dispatches in 1942.

The following is taken from the Autumn 1997 OF Magazine :-

A celebration of the Life of Jim was held at the Town Hall Centre, Braintree on 21 March 1997 attended by a very large number of family, friends and acquaintances, local and far afield, demonstrating the respect and admiration of a truly great man. Tributes paid included His Honour Judge Richard Groves, Jim's partner for many years and our Head, Gwen Randall and Jeremy Smith. The Reading was given by Robert Smith. The following other OFs were present: C Bellamy, L S Bellamy, V N Bromage, Maj-Gen Jack Dye (Hon.), J W & Mrs. Edwards, K K Knight, Lt. Col. & Mrs A C Newson, G C D Osborne, J A Saul, T G Saul, John & Mrs. Sheldrake.

In the Summer of '79 Jim Smith, Vice Chairman of the Governing Body of the College, was invited to distribute prizes at the Brandeston Hall Speech Day. At the outset of his address he assured parents that there was little for them in what he was going to say and gave them leave to doze off while he spoke to their children. Needless to say, no one did. They were rewarded by

observations not only profoundly wise but digestible by the whole company - illuminated, of course, by engaging good humour and one of the funniest (and most instructive) stories heard on any like occasion. From this single instance there is much to be learned about the man he was. There was a good measure of shyness about him; he did not wish to thrust his views on anyone; what he said was based on the sure foundation of experience and wisdom guided by understanding - and an almost mischievous twinkle. It could almost be said that even his silences were wonderful to listen to. Jim was a boy at the College, Garrett House, from '24 to '27. He was what in those days was called a sub-prefect; he was a member of the 1st XV, and, as he wistfully recalled, a representative of the School in Athletic competitions - High jump and Long jump. He had Colours for Hockey and was undeterred by the contemporary critic's 'he centres well, but frequently misses the ball entirely'. His contemporaries included boys who in due course, with other honours and achievements, were to become stalwarts of the Society of Old Framlinghamians - Bromage, Howard, Seale, Guttridge, McIntyre, Bellamy, Sheldrake - and his own devotion to that Society was marked when, in '61 with justice and acclamation he was chosen as President.

### **Served with Distinction**

On leaving school Jim trained to be a solicitor, qualifying in '33 and eventually opening his own practice in Braintree. Came the war, he joined the RAF Reserve and was assigned to Intelligence in Fighter Command in which Branch he served with distinction, receiving a mention in Despatches in '42 and rising to the rank of Squadron Leader. In his service at RAF Manston, he had the sad duty of recording the departure but not the return of Richard Lane, OF (32-36) who was lost on a Hurricane operation. Jim never spoke much of his war, though he did delight in Service reunions afterwards. The loss in combat of close friends were wide and never shallow and they touched him deeply.



In 1940 he married the much-loved Joan. His devotion to the SOF and to the College was never in doubt and it was not long before his accumulated knowledge could be drawn upon to address the perplexities and problems of the day through his appointment as a Governor in '62. When in '67 there were fears that the School leavers' interest in the Society was waning, he (and E J Guttridge) so vigorously opposed the College Debating Society motion, "This House considers Old Boys' Societies an anachronism" that it was roundly defeated. A founder member of the Essex branch, he was, if diffident, proud to speak at its 40th anniversary celebration in 1969. He became a trustee of the full Society in '74 when Mark Liell resigned; he was ('78) the pioneer editor of the *OF Newsletter* (later to become the *OF Magazine*) when this independent vehicle for the Society's news was introduced.

In College matters he may be best remembered for his dealing in two great projects, both apparently simple but both in fact immensely intricate and difficult - independence and the admission of girls.

In '71 the East Suffolk Education Committee was urging the enlargement of the VIth Form to take in County nominees. This virtually meant security but entailed the abandonment of the Direct Grant benefit, the disqualification of boys sponsored by the Local Education Authority and a forced diminution in aspiration for expansion and independence for the School. Jim's approach to the situation was characteristic, simple and effective. Involving the College Charter of 1864 he recalled the aims of the founders and their pledge that the School was 'for the better education of

the middle classes'. He successfully urged the rejection of the proposal and presented the case for further consideration of expansion and independence.

In '73 he accepted the office of Vice Chairman of the Governing Body, and in the following year he was appointed Chairman of a committee to explore the possibilities of independence. This involved, among other things, the ridiculous examination of the legal implications of the Direct Grant Scheme, but after some months of close deliberation and the following up of Laurie Rimmer's comprehensive paper, 'Girls and Out-Boarders' it was determined that the College should indeed adopt independence.

In '75 (the year of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the SOF). Jim's proposal that the College should seriously consider the admission of girls was accepted. Chairman of a sub-committee, he and his colleagues entered upon the demanding business of elucidation the legal aspects and revealing the academic and social merits and drawbacks of the project. It was not until '77 that the matter could be put to the vote of the Governors.

When all was settled it was Jim who suggested that the girls' boarding house, 'Pembroke' should be known as 'Victoria', thus bringing Albert and the Queen together.

To embark upon independence and co-education had demanded intricate negotiation with the Charity Commission and hence the drawing-up of a revised Charter and new Articles of Management. Jim's real acumen and patient attention were called for. His setting out of the 'Framlingham College Constitution' is lucid exposition of a difficult composition and bears testimony to his application of professional skills and devotion to the College. He relinquished his Vice Chairmanship in '85 and retired as a Governor in '87 after 25 years service.

## Leslie Bellamy Writes:

I have known Jim Smith for many a year, even before our days at Framlingham together in Garrett House. He was a quiet and likeable friend and took an active part in all school activities. We played together in House and School Rugby and Hockey matches.

He played Theseus, Duke of Athens in 'Pyramus and Thisbe', the Interlude to the "Midsummer Night's Dream" in October 1926. The account in "The Framlinghamian" reads "He was majestic and sonorous as the Duke of Athens and he spoke his lines very clearly". Another quote from the Garrett house notes on leaving school in 1927: "He is a great loss indeed, some people we regret because of their services to the House, some for their own sakes, but we rarely find one who fits both categories as well as Smith".

Jim was a great rugby man and joined Chelmsford RF Club on leaving school. I also became a member. He soon became involved and made his mark as Vice Captain in 1930-31 at the age of 20 years, also in 1931 he became Hon. Secretary, now 21 years and virtually took charge of the club and arranged games when on leave from the RAF. After the war he returned to his profession as a Solicitor in Braintree (he was elected to the Law Society in 1932) and was involved with Local Rotary and ATC. He was also a President of the Mid-Essex Law Society.

Jim was Chelmsford's Rugby Hon. Secretary for 37 years and steered it through six changes of grounds, wrote match reports, recruited many members and arranged finances for a new Club House. When he resigned on 1976 he received a Silver Salver at a Testimonial Dinner for him with over 200 present and then made an Hon-Life Member for his excellent services to the Club. He was

President 1974-77.

He suffered severe injuries when he fell on a railway level crossing as he was attending my brother Norman's ('25-'31) funeral in February 1988. His interest in the Club continued although virtually housebound. He suffered much pain in his latter years and was hardly able to walk but he bore his disability with bravery and fortitude.

He was the father of a loving, devoted and united family. He was quiet, kind, considerate, witty and to the point, a deep thinker with a wicked sense of humour. I knew him as a shrewd, able and helpful professional man and friend.