

## OBITUARY

Donovan Cole Purcell, T.D., M.A., F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A., F.I.I.C., 1913-1973

President 1973

I little thought in that Summer of 1924, when collaborating with Purcell minor on a joint 'holiday task' from Norwich School, that we should still be working together nearly 50 years later. The project was the breeding of guinea-pigs in the small back garden of his home in Queen's Road, including building and maintaining their accommodation.

Donovan Purcell was, in fact, to spend his life in the sphere of buildings and their maintenance, graduating from those simple hutches to his final great unfinished assignment in the restoration of the tower of Ely Cathedral, to which glorious building he had been appointed Surveyor in 1960. He would have been happy to know that his sound planning is helping towards the completion of that task, which among many other major restorations will surely be his finest memorial.

His early training in architecture was also in Norwich, and I guess from A. G. Berry came his initial knowledge and life-long love of brickwork, and of stone. Both in his writing and superb lecturing, as well as in his practice, he was regarded as an authority, yet he was always a 'learner', whether in the problems of the brick Tower of Layer Marney and the mullions of Coggleshall Abbey gatehouse, or the fine monuments of churches like Oxburgh and Ashwellthorpe, not forgetting the experience gained during the restoration of his own college of Corpus Christi, Cambridge.

He applied a scholarly enthusiasm to his contacts with carving in wood, stone, and alabaster, to heraldic panel and wall painting, especially his discoveries at the Priory of Horsham St. Faith.

Craftsmen enjoyed working under his direction — he was exacting, but he knew his job. It was always a treat to be in his company, whether seeking his confirmation on the final lay-out of the medieval glass for Long Melford or Ely, in the studio, or exploring the architectural marvels of Rheims, debating the problems of restoration high up in the spires of Strasbourg Cathedral, or admiring the Renaissance carving under the 'Gros Horloge' at Rouen. He was a member of the Franco-British Union of Architects and many similar organisations.

As a Roman Catholic he served well his own Church of St. John the Baptist which, with its Presbytery and in spite of its date, demanded skillful conservation and modifications. In this, and all his work, Donovan was blessed with the support of a devoted wife and a splendid family.

He also rendered great service to our Society, contributing much as a member of Council since 1962, and leaving us all too early in what promised to be an outstanding term of office as our President. His place will be impossible to fill and we shall miss very much his sound counsel and his gracious chairing of our gatherings.

D. G. K.