

OBITUARY

NORMAN BRETT-JAMES

The writer was one of the oldest friends of Norman Brett-James, who died on May 24th, their friendship dating from a year long past when they were colleagues at Mill Hill School. In those days Nick, as everybody called him, was a very well dressed young man, with hair parted in the middle, a great interest in politics, an addiction to Rugby football, and a passionate devotion to Mill Hill School, which claimed his loyalty, not only as a master, but as an Old Boy. The Mill Hill staff was a delightful staff to serve on, young, vigorous and keen. At that time entertainment was not left to outside agencies, and in the evenings, when we met in one another's rooms, we used to sing Victorian ballads and the songs of Gilbert and Sullivan. In these activities Nick, with his pleasant tenor, took his full share.

His study was full, not only of books, but of pictures of the school and neighbourhood. Here was the first indication of that interest in local antiquities which led him to join our society in 1926, to take a leading part in the founding of the Mill Hill and Hendon Historical Society in 1929, and to write a book on Georgian London and a history of our county.

A short account of the foundation of the active and influential Mill Hill and Hendon Society will be of interest, as showing what the enthusiasm of a few men can do. A letter from Brett-James was printed in the *Hendon and Finchley Times* on January 4th, 1929, urging all who valued the natural beauty and features of antiquity in the district "to be up and doing in order to save what is still left." In the following week Mr. D. G. Denoon wrote to the paper suggesting the formation of a local society and a week later Brett-James wrote inviting all interested persons to a meeting at Ridgeway House. At this meeting the society was founded.

He served the London and Middlesex Society well, becoming a member of Council in 1928 and afterwards its chairman. He was editor of the *Transactions* from 1929 to 1948.

It is a great pleasure to the writer to know that he received a letter from Nick only a fortnight before he died. He was a man who took trouble to keep old friendships in good running order.

F.W.M.D.