

testifies to his contribution as an archaeologist. He gave generously of his time, his knowledge and his experience to anyone whom he felt would benefit, and he gave everyone a chance to do so. It didn't take him long to sum you up, and if he was happy with you, then you had whatever he could offer. Many people passed through Southampton in the '60s, '70s and '80s and went on to greater things thanks to the opportunities Bob gave them. Thomson was also a popular figure at conferences, never hesitant in expressing his opinions, and if necessary, deflating arguments. For me, Bob is exemplary of that post-war generation from whom further education was denied (although I'm not sure it would have appealed to him anyway). He got on with the job, which everyone was faced with, of rebuilding our society, and taught himself along the way. He didn't much care for laziness, either of thought or deed, and he had no time for pomposity. The imperatives of archaeology were clear to him, and without his generation much would have been lost to the frantic redevelopment programmes of the '50s and '60s. When we assess his contribution we cannot separate him from the times in which he grew up and worked.

There were many other interests, especially gardening, wine, jazz, shooting, ale and motor racing, but his insatiable curiosity led him into plenty of other areas. The emphasis was always on discovering more, on improving his knowledge and understanding. As his fitness dwindled his reading increased, and he was always talking about new books he'd found. In his final years he rarely strayed far from his own table or his customary seat in the local. In either location we'd engage in long conversations that started and ended nowhere in particular, but were always instructive ... if only I could remember them. He would probably not have characterised himself as the world's best husband, but his family and home were important to him. The death of his son Robert, early in 2005, was a severe blow, and his last few months were spent trying to avoid hospital. Eventually he had to admit defeat, which was uncharacteristic of him. Even then, he only died when he was ready to do so. Many people miss him, not least his wife Patricia and son Jeremy. There are many colleagues and friends who miss him too, and we all salute an indomitable presence in the field of medieval ceramics.

Duncan H Brown

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