

**Dr Ronald Firman Ph D, FGS May 6<sup>th</sup> 1929- August 18<sup>th</sup> 2005**

I am sorry to report that Ron Firman died recently in Nottingham after a short illness. He was one of the S stream who joined the school in 1941 , stayed on in the 6<sup>th</sup> form and then read geology/geography at the University of Durham , obtaining a B.Sc and Ph. D. He subsequently became a lecturer in the Department of Geography at the University of Nottingham and when the department closed had a fellowship in the Department of Archaeology.

He was a man of great courage and perseverance, having been born with cerebral palsy, such that he walked with difficulty and spoke with even more difficulty. You can imagine that he had no ability to speak French, and Bill Haddon, our French master nicknamed him “ spuffleguts “ ( nowadays such verbal abuse could surely not take place at the CNS! )

He took this in his stride with good humour ,and ended up being one of the most popular boys in the school. Not only did he play for the school in goal in the CNS and college hockey teams but also as wicketkeeper in cricket. He was determined that his disability was not going to deter him from taking part in all school and college activities.

We became great friends and he often invited me for a swim at the river at Harford Bridges, where his parents lived in a converted railway carriages ( a quite common dwelling in the Norwich area after the first world war ) beside a busy railtrack .Later on he came as a guest to my wedding at Cottenham Cambridge in 1952.

We then lost track of each other for more than 40 years, although I met the head of his department at several European conferences on atherosclerosis ( for some curious reason these were his research interests ), and he told me that Ron was a successful and able lecturer in the Department of Geography. I was astounded that he was able to take up such a post because of his severe speech disability. Also he said Ron had done some excellent work on the geology of the Lake District.

Then about 10 years ago whilst visiting the University of Nottingham I tracked him down to his curators desk in the archaeology museum where he employed his talents identifying specimens sent to him from various parts of the world. It was a difficult meeting because Ron’s speech had deteriorated even more and I could not understand much of what he said. However I found out that his success as a lecturer was due to the extensive notes he handed out.

When as President of the CNSU I organised a trip to Downing College Cambridge, I was delighted that he came together with another of our artist school friends Eric Dix. We all had lunch together at my table. It was a very special day.

The news of his death came in a letter from his wife Pat . Donations were requested to be sent to the Nottingham ’62 club, in which Ron was very much involved This was a social club run by and for physically disabled which encouraged members to be more independent and to help each other. In subsequent correspondence I learned that he met Pat when he was briefly a research assistant at the University of Manchester where she worked as a graduate technician. They had three children

What an incredible career for one so severely disabled.Ron was an inspiration to those of us more fortunate than him. I salute his memory!

**Alan Howard** CNS 1941-8

