

# RFA Handbook 1998-99

## DAVID MICHAEL OWEN (1942-1999)

*David Owen, for many years master-in-charge of Fives at Rossall, died suddenly last winter shortly after taking early retirement from the school. He was a Rossallian through and through, having attended the school in the 1950s as a boy. He returned there to teach after graduating from Cambridge and spent the rest of his life in the service of Rossall, first as assistant master and gifted teacher of maths, then as housemaster for fifteen years, and latterly as Senior Master. A keen sportsman, he was passionately involved with rugby football, Rossall hockey and cricket as well as the unique version of Fives played at the school. He entertained many visiting Fives teams over the years, including frequent RFA Club touring sides led by Tom and Joan Wood. As our tribute to David, we asked Joan to recall those visits.*

### Memories of David Owen and Rossall School

There were always some schools and places Tom and I particularly looked forward to visiting on our "Round The Country" Fives Tours of yesteryear, and Rossall was definitely among that number. Before the advent of David on the controlling scene, his predecessor had welcomed us with enthusiasm and some amazement. He was an Old Blue and didn't really expect anyone south of Watford to know of Rossall's existence, but there we were with a whole team to take on any opposition. Staff and a motley collection of assorted boys - some present-day, some old boys - joined in, and a hilarious engagement followed, with a particularly apposite system of scoring which inevitably ensured, with David's nudging, that there were never any losers!

It's true. The local Winchester Rossall scoring, the low wall separating watchers and players - it's a grand place to sit in the car to watch when the biting wind howls across from the sea only a few hundred yards away - and over all the deep tones, edged with bonhomie and laughter, of that dark-haired, square-cut, Rugby-playing Fives master who loved cricket and steam-trains. David was probably little taller than I am, but his personality and love of Fives and Rossall simply engulfed one. His clear enunciation and ringing tones of encouragement and amusement at the more unauthorised forms of play from his motley collection of players was pure fun, and his generous hospitality over the years towards the stalwarts like Geoff Smith and his merry men from Derby Mercia was legendary. Lunch for all-comers in the hall, coffee and a little extra in the staff-room, and of course the banter and chat. David was a vivid personality of great charm towards me especially, and I shall miss him and his lovely sloppy dog.

If you haven't visited Rossall, I think you should. Few schools, red-brick and imposing, stand so close to the sea-front, where at suitable tides David and others organised Rossall hockey on the sand. And do you know of any other place that holds up pedestrians along the sea-walk to enable the cadets to practise firing guns towards the sea? It has all the marks of slight eccentricity, and David fitted into the place like a hand in a glove and was so thrilled to have been given accommodation in the Old Bakehouse, to remain as close as possible to his place of dreams. A lovely man, who gave joy to many.

Joan Wood