

Account of Purley on Thames

Obituary - Hugh Duncan

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Article in the November 1981 Purley Parish News by Chris Wilcox

We record with great sadness the passing of Hugh Duncan who died aged 85 at the Sue Ryder Home, Nettlebed on 19th October and we extend our deep sympathy to Elizabeth and his family. In our sorrow we rejoice that he has at last found that true rest he so longed for in the dark months of illness.

He will be greatly missed by the many who knew him, particularly by all at St Mary's Church where he was a regular worshipper, by the boys and staff of Purley Park and by the members of the Caversham Rotary Club of which he was the Founder President. Joan and I have known Hugh for 20 years after a chance meeting on the day we moved to Purley. We shall remember him with deep affection for the warmth of his friendship, the pleasure of his company, his integrity and unfailing courtesy and not least for the quiet courage with which he endured illness.

Hugh was born at Wenvoe in South Wales and always retained a trace of his native accent but his three rugby caps were for England in 1922 before injury cut short his playing career. "I wasn't available to play Wales - just as well, they'd have scragged me!" He was immensely proud too of having followed his father as a Barbarian.

His Varied and eventful life included a spell of cattle ranching in Canada and service throughout both wars. He joined the Welch Regiment in 1914 and was one of the very few of his battalion to survive.

He came to Purley in 1948 to establish, with a partner, Purley Park as a home for handicapped men. In doing so he was able in some measure to bring to fruition a long held medical interest. He devoted himself to the welfare of his Boys and on his retirement in 1972 set up a charitable trust to ensure continuance of the work which I know he regarded as his life's greatest achievement

Hugh's friend's filled every corner of St Mary's at a memorial service on 23 October for a wonderful tribute to, in the Rector's words, "this lovely man."