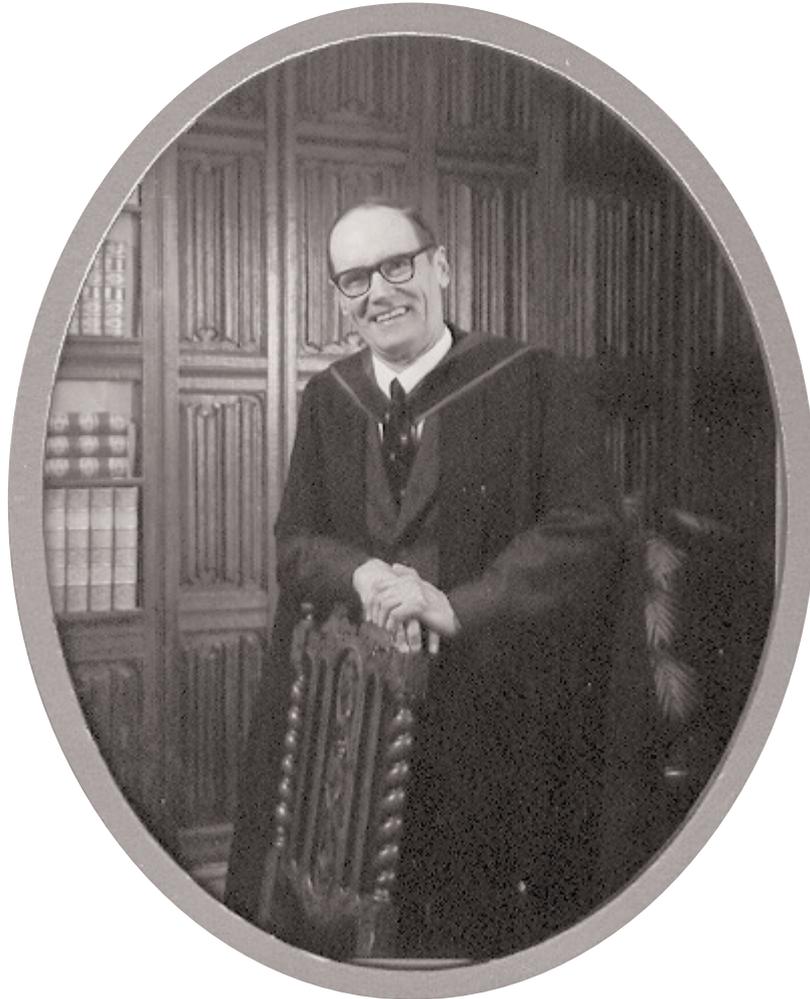


Richard Milward

20 April 1924 – 7 December 2006



Richard as a Master of Arts, Oxford

On 20 December 2006, the Requiem Mass for Richard Milward was celebrated in the Church of the Sacred Heart, Edge Hill, by his brother, Fr. Peter Milward S.J. and concelebrated by Fr. Gerard Mitchell and the Jesuit Fathers of the Parish of Wimbledon and of Wimbledon College. The Very Revd Fr. Michael Holman S.J., Provincial (national head) of the Jesuits in Britain gave the tribute to Richard; Wimbledon's unique and beloved school master whose goodness inspired generations.

Mourners of all denominations and of none made up the very large congregation, joining John and Gervaise Milward in thanksgiving for the grace and blessings of their brother's life. Father Peter, who had flown from Tokyo, welcomed and addressed the congregation.

Richard, he told us, had been the leader and first of the Milward boys, academically, athletically, even sartorially, since he well remembered wearing Richard's 'hand-me-downs'. Then at the age of 16 he had been cruelly afflicted by polio. His desire to become a Jesuit thus came to an end; a role that he, Peter, had finally been able to fulfil. As familiar Milward tones filled the church, those gathered were starkly reminded of Richard, absent from his usual pew.

The choir sang a Gregorian plainsong Latin mass for the time of Advent. The chosen motet, *Justorum Animae*, was composed by the Roman Catholic musician at the court of Elizabeth I, William Byrd, who throughout difficult times remained true both to his Faith and to his Queen.

**Tribute by
The Very Revd
Fr. Michael Holman S.J.**



Father Holman has given us permission to reprint his Tribute. This has had to be slightly shortened. However, the complete text is available in the Museum.

Do you, I wonder, remember that point in Fred Zinnemann's masterful film presentation of Robert Bolt's play *A Man for all Seasons*, when Sir Thomas More ascends the steps from his Thames river barge to his home in Chelsea? There he finds the ambitious Richard Rich, an acquaintance from Cambridge, waiting by the dock for his return. Rich pleads for a position at Court but citing the various corruptions Sir Thomas advises Rich to become a teacher instead. "Why not be a teacher? You'd be a fine teacher, perhaps a great one." "If I was," replies Rich, "who would know it?" "You, your pupils, your friends, God. Not a bad public that.'

Perhaps you knew Richard Milward as the President of the Wimbledon Society for six years, as chairman of the local history group for 25 years, or as the author of 28 books or from his estimated 650 lectures. These were mostly delivered in that whirlwind of activity that was his retirement (he gave 47 in 1993 alone) on any topic related to his home town, from Caesar's Camp to Centre Court and all things in between. If so, you will know that Richard was indeed the very best of teachers.

Others of you will want to thank him for his support of this church and this parish to which he belonged all his life. You may want to thank him, still more, for his boundless enthusiasm, for his abiding interest in all whom he knew and for what he taught so many by his example of

prayer and of fortitude and patience in enduring the increasingly crippling and no doubt painful effects of the polio attack he suffered more than 60 years ago, with hardly more than a word of complaint.

For my part, I came here as provincial superior of the Jesuits wanting not only to thank his brothers, Peter, Gervaise and John for all the good Richard did but to thank Richard too. I want to thank him above all for dedicating his entire working life of 40 years, from 1945 to 1985, to the welfare of countless generations of pupils at our school, Wimbledon College, of whom I count myself fortunate to have been one. Being taught by him was one of the best things that happened to us. He made an impact upon us that will last a lifetime and I only hope he knew just how grateful we are.

At the beginning of any new school year, if we found ourselves in a History class not taught by him, we would be envious of those who were. When as headmaster of the College I would welcome former pupils back to the school, invariably they would ask after him, and then would come the almost customary acknowledgement that Richard had been the finest teacher they had ever had. In the two weeks since his death, I have been contacted by those who taught with him as well as those who were taught by him. He was indeed 82 and we do not underestimate his suffering, yet there is great regret at his passing. Not so much because it's another sign, if such were needed, that our own youth has long passed into history but far more because we would not want either who Richard was or what he stood for to become history, too.

For so many of his many pupils there was a magic about this man and in the fortnight since his death I have been wondering just what that magic was.

We certainly respected and admired him as a fine teacher of his subject. He was technically expert. Books and essays were marked by return. In the days long before overhead projectors, let alone interactive whiteboards, he was the master of the audiovisual aid as multi-coloured map after multi-coloured map illustrated the advance of Henry VII's army across Bosworth Field.

He cared about our success and taught us what made for success. Every point you make,

he would say, needs an example. He would go on: "When they opened up Mary Tudor after her death" (the pictorial imagination of teenage boys at that point dutifully swung into action) "they found 'Calais' engraved on her heart. When I die they'll find 'significant detail' engraved on mine!"

We knew, though, that Richard was about more than short-term success: he was evidently concerned about our long term education. He taught us to ask questions: there were no accidents in history and for everything that happened there was always a 'Why?' There were no short cuts to the answers and truth could only come from the hard work of looking into the primary sources. When we had completed our A-level course on the English Revolution it was as though we knew our way around the Public Record Office in Kew as well as he. For Richard, it was people who made history: their personalities and what shaped their character was the stuff of history. Not for him impersonal economic or social forces: it was about the frightening freedom of human choice.

And all the while there were his notes, models of lucidity. As we saw the most complex historical argument reduced to 1, 2, 3, 4 down the purple page, we all got high on the spirit that filled the room as his sheets were handed round. If he produced the same notes two years running, it was not without an apology for as he remarked to one colleague tempting him to short cuts: "Michael, history is always changing".

In his 40 years the school changed out of all recognition from a small independent school through to a voluntary-aided grammar school and so to the large comprehensive school it is today. We suspected, we knew, that there was much he regretted in those changes. Yet that same commitment attended his teaching of the educationally-challenged 13 year-old as much as it ever accompanied his preparation of candidates for Oxford and Cambridge and even then that spoke to us of quality.

There was still more to his magic than this high professionalism that commanded our respect: we could be fond of him. He could lose his cool over cricket. By the time I encountered him he was already in his third decade of teaching at the College and the affectionate nickname 'Sid' had long since stuck. We would ask older boys and even the more approachable teachers "Why is Sir called Sid?" We were left bemused by the

explanation. How could it be that the revered Mr Milward became associated with 'Sid Millward and the Nitwits', the 1950s jazz band from Las Vegas.

For Richard, the finest chronicler of the English Revolution was without question the authoress of his oft quoted *The King's Peace* and *The King's War*, C.V. Wedgwood. Such indeed, was the evident affection in which he held these books, that he surely had a fast thing going for Dame Veronica! And his secret with the lower forms, those who had a closer affinity with Chelsea than Charles I? Blood! The goriest details were recounted in full Technicolor. Whether we were taken to the scaffold of Mary, Queen of Scots at Fotheringay or to Nelson's demise at Trafalgar, there was blood, buckets of blood.



With a favourite volume

More than all else he let his humanity shine through and what we saw of that we liked. Even in our younger days, at an age not marked for its sensitivity, we speculated sympathetically on the hours of work he must have put in at home marking and preparing those maps and notes. He had a remarkably broad understanding of the human condition for someone who spent his entire life living and working in SW19 and SW20. This was born, no doubt, of his acute powers of observation, his extensive reading and from his own experience of suffering which involved the acceptance of the limitations placed upon him by his disability, not least his inability to join the Society of Jesus, as he had wished, after finishing school.

He was ever interested in us, in who we were, in what we were doing, in what we hoped to do. It was natural that he should have been one of the first I told about my plans to join the Jesuits. In later life that kind of interest mattered still more. Every month he delivered *The Gramophone* and *Cricketer* magazines for the library in the College that bore his name and time and time again we would meet in the entrance hall of the school in those days located next to my office. The words of encouragement he gave me (along with the odd word about the behaviour of boys as they passed his house on the way home from Coombe Lane) were words he had for many. We will long be able to picture him in recent years, sitting hunched in a chair at the annual Old Wimbledonian dinner in the College hall, surrounded by former pupils, where he was eager to know their news. Like all the finest teachers, he seemed to transform effortlessly from master to mentor and from mentor to friend.

Which is perhaps why not a few wanted to imitate him: that was also the magic he worked. He was one of that rare breed with the capacity to inspire in his pupils the same passion for his subject that inspired him. A number of us became teachers because of him and if it is true that teachers teach as their best teacher taught them we can be sure his influence lives on.

Just the other evening his brother John told me of the last meeting he and his brother had with Richard in Kingston Hospital. They wanted to leave him money for a newspaper. How much did he want? With his thumb and index finger, he made a circle: he wanted nothing. Richard died shortly afterwards on the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. For his family, and for the many of us who knew something of the magic of Richard's life, there was a fittingness about that.

From his earliest days as a boy at school, at Donhead and then across the road at Wimbledon College, to his last days at school, Richard was a member of the Sodality of Our Lady. Founded by the first Jesuits in the mid 16th century, its members seek to model their lives after Mary as Mary modelled her life on Jesus her son.

What did we hear in the gospel reading from St. Luke just a few moments ago? We heard about faith and we heard about love. We heard

how Mary responded freely and willingly, with generosity, holding nothing back to what at that moment the Lord was asking of her. In her 'Yes', all life was transformed and what a favour that did for us, what good news that is for us.

Many of us would see Richard here in this church every day and twice on Sundays. As boys we'd see him at prayer here and in the school chapel and we'd take note. He would not hide his faith. His was an evidently Catholic way of life: his faith shaped his every day and all he did. In his daily attentiveness to the call of the Lord, in his generous response of 'Yes' to what the Lord asked of him, what a favour Richard did for us, what good news he was for us.

On the novelist George Eliot's headstone in Highgate Cemetery there runs the inscription: 'Her life lives on in minds made better by her presence'. Would that also be true for Richard Milward? But most certainly! Is it sufficient? Not at all! Richard lived his life in the confidence that death was the doorway to the fullness of life with Jesus his Lord, the light of his life. And in that same confidence, we his public, his pupils and his friends, now entrust this good man to the open arms of the Lord who loves him, with so much gratitude and just as much affection

May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of our good God, rest in peace. Amen!

The Very Revd Fr. Michael Holman S.J.



Photo: John Ellison

The Milward Centre at Wimbledon College

The Daily Telegraph published a half page obituary on 30 December 2006 devoted to Richard, his life and his work. The coverage contained material from Fr. Holman's Tribute, but the Daily Telegraph obituarist, Christopher Howse, included some attractive vignettes of his own. Not necessarily in order of publication, a selection of such passages follows:

A familiar sight in Wimbledon in the years after the war, was that of Richard Milward, despite his disabling back condition, riding his old black bicycle up the steep hill to the Ridgway towards Wimbledon College; or, in the afternoon, cycling down for cricket coaching. On a freezing April day he might be seen wrapped up in coat, scarf, gloves and hat, remarking with a smile "Isn't it grand? The start of another cricket season."

In class, dressed in patched tweed coat, or linen jacket on a hot summer's day, he would stride briskly to the blackboard over the old floorboards in his crepe-soled shoes, and begin to chalk up line after line of neat even script, tabulating the causes of the First World War or the threats to the stability of Henry VII's kingdom.

Richard Milward was born on Vancouver Island, Canada, on 20 April 1924, the son of English parents who had emigrated to Canada but returned when he was still very young. The family lived in Wimbledon and in 1931 Richard was sent to Donhead, the preparatory school for Wimbledon College, the school with which he was to be associated for the rest of his life.

He was made head boy in 1941, two years after the attack of polio that was to have such an effect in changing his desired career. He became the first pupil from the school to win a state scholarship to Oxford, where he read Modern History at New College, taking his degree in 1945.

Richard then wrote to the headmaster, Fr. John Sinnott, asking for a reference. Instead, he was offered a post as a history teacher. Having accepted, he stayed for the rest of his working life, becoming, in time, Head of the History Department. He took charge of the College Library, and developed it to the great benefit of all pupils. The library in a newly converted building now bears his name.

Sir John Keegan, the military historian, came to him as a teenager for A-level History and was



Teaching a History class

struck by his painstaking methods and detailed notes. He left the College with a good History A-level and a place at Balliol.

Richard stayed on for a year after his retirement date to see pupils through their examinations, effectively working for nothing. Some pupils went on to become teachers because of him, some became priests. Many simply discovered through him that study could be rewarding. Countless people will have been touched by the example of his ascetic but cheerful life.

Condolences from Merton Library and Heritage Service

To everyone at the Wimbledon Society Museum,

Please accept my condolences. I have just heard that Richard Milward has passed away. I am not sure if you have already been contacted by any of my colleagues but on behalf of Merton Library and Heritage Service, I would like to say how sorry we were to hear the news.

Richard was such a mine of knowledge on local history and we have greatly appreciated his help with events, lectures and information for exhibitions. His books have proven enduringly popular and I know that many Library staff make use of them each week when answering enquiries, helping with school homework queries, or raising public awareness of local heritage.

I am sure Richard will be sadly missed and his contribution to preserving and recording Merton's heritage has and will continue to be appreciated by generations of local history enthusiasts.

Sarah Gould

The Wimbledon Society Years

Richard Milward is probably best known as the author of numerous books on the history of Wimbledon. This came about when in 1964 he decided to use local history as a project for his senior boys at Wimbledon College. In pursuit of material for them he talked to William Myson, the Borough Librarian, who at the time was also Hon Secretary of the John Evelyn Society. 'Bill' pointed out that there had been no proper history of Wimbledon since Bartlett's in 1865, and thereupon persuaded Richard to write one.

Starting with church records and the Spencer archives, Richard began his researches. In 1969 he published a booklet called *Early Wimbledon* intending it to be the first of a three-part history. By the time he reached the Tudor period he had discovered so much new material that it became obvious that more than three booklets would be needed. In fact the chronological series of histories eventually ran to five parts – even then



The Local History Group in 1979

only reaching 1826. Richard admitted that he was less interested in the Victorian and 20th century eras, though he covered these periods later in his general histories.

The very first booklets were published by Richard out of his own pocket as Milward Press, but later the Wimbledon Society shared publishing costs. There appear to have been five booklets, notably: *The Spencers in Wimbledon*, *Wimbledon Two Hundred Years Ago* and *Wimbledon in the Time of Civil War*.

However, there was still no general history of Wimbledon in a single volume, until Richard

Heath of Fielder's bookshop asked Richard to write one. The result, *Historic Wimbledon* was published in 1989. It is still a bestseller.

Subsequently, commercial publishers entered the market, favouring picture books on local history containing period photos and little text. Richard was commissioned to do several of these. There were four of them: *Wimbledon: a Pictorial History* (1994). *Wimbledon 1865–1965* (1997) which was reprinted recently, *Wimbledon Past* (1998) and ransacking the Museum's collection of old picture postcards, *Wimbledon Then and Now* (1995). Richard also received special commissions to write the history of houses or even locations. These included his books on Eagle House, The Rectory, and Two Wimbledon Roads.

When first asked to consider Richard's prodigious legacy, I believed that he had written some 22 books, but since I have found more, for publications such as those produced for the Key Facts series or 'cribs' as we called them, had not been included. Richard himself said that he had lost count of his publications, a fact that is not at all surprising.

Not only has Richard left the Society a large legacy of material, he also donated the royalties he received from his books to the Society's Museum. This generosity included payment fees for his talks to outside groups which he also contributed and these too were of great importance in funding the Museum.

Important as they are, books and money are material things. Most of all we will remember Richard's courtesy and generosity as a person; his willingness to advise anyone seeking his help and his immense generosity both with his time and attention when speaking to groups large or small.

The Local History Group as first set up by his predecessor Guy Parsloe was the preserve of a few researchers. Under Richard it became much more inclusive and remains so today. Finally one thing the Group learned from Richard was to put things into context. He made us realise that we should be aware of the broader pattern into which the minutiae of our research would fit – a maxim as important for life as it is for history.

Charles Toase

The Museum

Richard Milward joined the Museum Committee when he retired in 1984. His familiarity with Wimbledon and its history, as well as his knowledge of local families and the properties they had owned was of immense help in many areas such as the identification of old photographs, postcards and portraits.

As his publications increased and he became well known in the community, people wrote to him sending him interesting queries and on occasions items for the Museum collection. Always courteous and patient with those with less knowledge than himself, he was a regular Saturday afternoon duty officer. Many visitors came specifically to see him, often armed with one of his books which they were anxious to get signed.

When it was decided to refurbish the Museum in 1993, a special committee was formed and Richard was an obvious choice for inclusion. While the displays had to be built round the items held in the collection, there was a wider choice with some of the panels and he helped select the subjects for these and wrote much of the information they provided.

He was extremely generous with his royalties, donating all those from his historical books to the Museum Fund. Richard retired in 2004 after serving for 20 years on the Committee. His wide experience was and still is greatly missed

Prudence C. Hartopp

'Imaginative Reconstruction'

In 2003 the Society's Centenary Committee needed a theme for the celebratory dinner which was to be held at the All England Lawn Tennis Club. Quite fortuitously I learned from the Wimbledon School of Art that their Theatre Costume Department was in the throes of preparing Elizabethan costumes for the Greenwich exhibition commemorating the 400th anniversary of the death of Queen Elizabeth I. The germ of an idea was born, but I needed historical material linking these events in order to 'sell' the idea to all concerned. Naturally I turned to Richard Milward for inspiration. By return came an enthusiastic response and an exemplary piece of copy called *A Royal Progress*:

"Here is my attempt to answer your request..." he wrote. "It is largely a straight account of the Queen's visit to Wimbledon House in 1599, though laced with some 'imaginative reconstruction' based on other progresses. Frankly very little is recorded about her visit. Let me know what you think of it – or better still improve it..."

Not only was I mightily struck by Richard's humility and diffidence, and the note of gentle chiding in the hint that perhaps I might do some of the work myself, most of all I was taken with Richard's phrase 'imaginative reconstruction'. It struck a chord then proving to be just what was required to bring everyone happily on board for the dinner. But those two words epitomise that marvellous talent for animation that suffused all Richard's work, breathing life into his teaching, his writings and his talks. In his Tribute Fr. Michael Holman told us that as a result of Richard's teaching, the words 'significant detail' would be forever engraved on his heart. As a result of Richard's letter 'imaginative reconstruction' will be engraved on mine.

Monica Ellison

The Lectures

Richard was as well known for the many lectures that he gave as for the many books he wrote on local history. These talks were not only given to the Wimbledon Society but also to many local groups and charities.

The thorough research that went into his writing meant that he had a very deep knowledge of his subjects and he was able to exploit this knowledge to give depth to his lectures. His talks would not be just an overview of a particular period in academic terms but would be much more human orientated. He would talk not only about the Lord of the Manor or the politics behind great events but would introduce details of local people such as tradesmen and shopkeepers and explain the ways that their lives were affected by those events.

His lectures were never boring or tedious. He was able to introduce human interest into every subject and his depth of knowledge meant that his presentation was enthusiastic and without hesitation. He would often approach his subject

Richard Milward Publications Currently Available in the Museum

from several different angles so that you saw the same historical facts from different viewpoints or he would select different events from a particular period so that you could see how they related to an overall picture. He was also very good at tailoring his lectures to his audience. I suppose that his years of teaching children must have helped with this. He was certainly remembered by many of his pupils for his teaching ability.

There was also a strong sense of enthusiasm for his subject. You felt that he derived so much enjoyment from his discoveries that he could not wait to pass them on but he did so in a calm and measured way so that you were left with a clear picture of the subject.

Richard was due to give a lecture to the Society this month. His untimely death has left us with a gap that it would be difficult to fill. I was asked if I could give the lecture in his place and I read through the copious notes that he had left. But they were clearly written as reminders of points to be made in a lecture that he had already envisaged in his head and to simply read them out would be an anti-climax that would not do justice to his memory. It would be better to remember him by all the lectures he has given in the past and the pleasure that we had in hearing them.

Norman Plastow
President

- Cannizaro House and its Park* (£1.50)
- Eagle House* (£4)
- Early & Medieval Wimbledon* (£2)
- A Georgian Village: Wimbledon 1724–1765* (£2)
- Historic Wimbledon* (£10)
- The Lull before the Storm: The Last Years of Rural Wimbledon* (£4.95)
- A New Short History of Wimbledon* (£2)
- A Parish Church Since Domesday: St. Mary's Wimbledon* (£10)
- Portrait of a Church: The Sacred Heart, Wimbledon 1887–1987* (£2)
- The Rectory: Wimbledon's Oldest House* (£9.50)
- Triumph over Tragedy: the Life of Edith Arendrup* (£3.95)
- Two Wimbledon Roads: The Story of Edge Hill and Darlaston Road* (£1.95)
- Wimbledon 1865–1965* (£9.99)
- Wimbledon: a Surrey Village in Maps* (£5.95)
- Wimbledon in the Time of the Civil War* (£2.25)
- Wimbledon's Manor Houses* (£1.50)
- Wimbledon Past* (£14.95)
- The Wimbledon Society 1903–2003* (£10)
- Wimbledon Two Hundred Years Ago* (£9.95)

Richard also wrote a new foreword to the reprint of *Bartlett's History of Wimbledon* (£9.99)

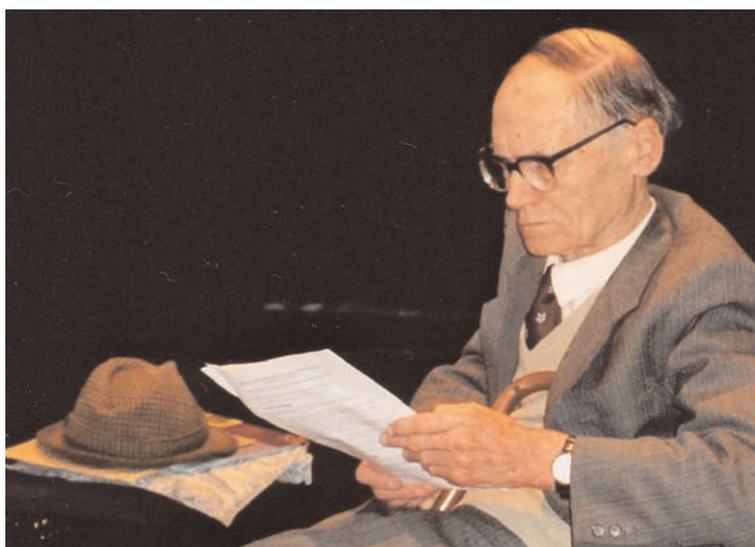


Photo: David Morris

Richard at the AGM in 2003

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