

# Peter Johnson

R. I. P.

1922 - 2009

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE DOVER SOCIETY



## A Personal Reflection by Fr. Peter Sherred

It was a great privilege to know Peter Johnson. As I recall the many facets of his life and the various ways in which we interacted over the years I am reminded of Christ's comments when He saw Nathanael approaching Him and He said "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false" (John 1: 47).

If we substitute *Englishman* for *Israelite* this is a fair summary of the Peter I was privileged to know and call a friend. I knew him over three decades when we were both members of Dover Rotary club, he a chairman of the R V Coleman Trust and I the clerk (at his invitation) and members of this Society. He was on the bench as a JP as I was an advocate before him and then there was our common allegiance to church - just some of the many areas where our paths crossed or ran together. Peter was a person for whom the words 'Service above Self' were not simply a statement or a philosophy but an act of faith to be lived out in his life and that is what he did in his quiet, professional and honest way.

From his arrival in Dover, in 1953, he was deeply involved in many aspects of Dover life. He was also a member of Dover Film Society.

I had the privilege of ministering at his wife Pauline's funeral, at Peter's express request, so I know just how blessed they were in their marriage of over 50 years before Pauline

died. Peter, the quintessential Englishman always looked dapper in his trademark grey flannels and blazer, a man whose standards provide a benchmark for others. There was no side or guile, nothing false. It was a great privilege to minister to him in his last weeks and months. In all the home masses, despite a clear decline in his mental capacity and faculties, he remembered the words of his prayers. He was not simply a 'church' person as with so many others but a true Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, a person willing and able to serve others less fortunate than himself, a man who eschewed status or recognition and who had faith in the promises of Christ and the resurrection heritage offered by Him.

His compassionate nature was often on display and shown in his work as a J. P. where, as a chairman, he would listen carefully to all aspects of a case and then, where circumstances demanded, make clear and firm decisions. He also understood the frailty of human nature which enabled him to make those judgements that gave people a chance to pick up their lives and to mend their ways. He was to serve as a magistrate for more than twenty years, chairing the juvenile panel in addition to sitting often as a Chairman of the Bench of magistrates. He was also on the Board of Visitors at Dover Borstal so could be aware from his own experience of the conditions that juveniles

would experience when sentenced to a period or periods of custody.

His amazing strength of character was demonstrated by his recovery from the severe stroke he experienced in the early 1990's which, he confided, laid him out for a year and which nearly laid him out, period. With the support of Kate, his daughter, Pauline and his own quiet determination, he was to recover sufficiently to have a good quality of life for well over a decade. In the first stages of recovery he could be seen taking little walks from his home in Castle Avenue going just a little further each day aided by his stick. This was an example of true grit. Dogged by the onset of dementia in recent years he retained his calm and

placid persona. He is re-united with Pauline, his earthly companion for so many years. We should extend our sympathies to Kate, his son Matthew and extended family in the loss of such a decent good person. He spent his final days in Kearsney Manor nursing home where he died on Tuesday 4th August.

Peter, it was a real privilege to have known you and to be a friend - you have enriched our lives immeasurably and we will try to uphold your standards of life and belief. Thank you for the example.

***"Here is a true [Englishman] in  
whom there is nothing false"***

***May he rest in peace***

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### **A Tribute by Jack Woolford**

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It was during the early 1960's that I first came to know Peter Johnson, because as an adult-educational advisory member of Dover Borough Council's Library and Museum Committee I became involved in a number of projects and invariably found that he, too, was a participant - quietly-spoken, friendly, cooperative, very well-informed on all matters Dovorian, widely connected and quintessentially professional. A chartered quantity surveyor, he ran the firm of Bristow Johnson and Partners in Folkestone Road. His campaigns included moving Dover Museum from the basement of the Town Hall to purpose-built accommodation (now in Market Square) and the establishment of the Community Centre, now Cleary House in Maison Dieu Road.

Consequently, when invited, in 1988, to chair the newly formed Dover Society I was delighted, but not surprised, to find that Peter Johnson was already quietly but deeply involved. He was Chairman of the

Magistrates and of the Governors of Dover College, hence the Society's Christmas Feast link with the College and the use of the Menzies Hall for our Inaugural Public Meeting. There he set the tone by firmly stressing that the Society was not nimbly and negative but as committed to Dover's future as to its past, an undertaking we have done our utmost to follow.

Until his unfortunate illness, he never missed a committee meeting and was the author and director of our successful appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman to rebuke the Home Office for erecting an obtrusive building on the Citadel skyline. He was also responsible for the happy presidential invitations to the Countess of Guilford and to her successor, Brigadier Maurice Atherton. He also continued to grace our public meetings for as long as possible.

***Monumentally we are indeed  
his debtors***