

Mr James Hugh Macdonald

Colleagues will be sorry to learn of the death on 7 November 2020 of James Macdonald, former Lecturer in the School of Politics. The following tribute has been contributed by friend and former colleague Jeff Gleisner.

James was born in Coventry on the 23 August 1926. Son of a Master Coppersmith, at the age of 11 he won a scholarship to King Henry VIII Grammar School, which also brought him the benefit of free school uniform and books. On the 14 November 1940, with many other 'Coventarians', he experienced the 'Coventry Blitz'. Home and school were damaged and the aftermath for James and many of his schoolmates, was evacuation until the Autumn of 1942. He left school in 1944 as retiring Rugby Captain and Deputy Head boy. After six months working as a reporter on the Coventry Telegraph, James was called up to the Army, eventually becoming a Captain in the Royal Scots Fusiliers, retaining this title to the end of his life. Following his demob, James went up to Queen's College, Oxford, to read Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE).

Leaving Oxford in 1951, James passed the examination for entry to the Diplomatic Service. Thereafter he studied in the School of Oriental and African Studies and the University of Hong Kong, where he became engaged to his Chinese language tutor, Hsiu Suo, later a founding Lecturer at the Centre for Chinese Studies at the University. After a further year in service, as 3rd Secretary at the British Embassy in Bangkok, James returned to England with Susan (as Hsiu Suo became known), transferring to the Home Civil Service at the Scottish Office 1955-59 before becoming a University administrator, first at Edinburgh and then at Cambridge.

From his time in the Civil Service in sensitive Private Office work as the Secretary to the 'Thurso Boy' Tribunal of Inquiry, James acquired a detailed understanding of the working of British Government and politics. While at the Scottish Office, he spent a particularly rewarding year on secondment to the House of Commons. Thus when James joined the staff in 1964, the University gained a teacher who could bring all his past experience to bear in a creative manner.

As a teacher he had overwhelming impact on the undergraduate and doctoral students who profited from his devoted care in ensuring that they were clear in what they thought, and equally clear in written expression. In addition to his teaching a special course on British Government and politics, James brought his fluency in Chinese and diplomatic training to bear on his preparation for teaching a special on the Politics of China. James also undertook heavy burdens of departmental administration and was always ready with practical solutions to any problem. Invariably cheerful, courteous and sympathetic, he became a repository of wisdom in the Department. When he retired in 1991, the Department missed his warmth, his very personal encouragement in times of difficulty and, above all, in a discipline which had a very grim aspect, his humour and liveliness.

The intellectual and personal qualities James had displayed throughout his career were never more in evidence than in the contribution he now made to a series of symposia on parliamentary democracy for elected members of the emerging Russian and Ukrainian parliaments held at the University and the Palace of Westminster. Whether negotiating with busy officials and MPs at Westminster for a share of their valuable time, or chairing study sessions with both wit and high seriousness, or facilitating conversation with skill and charm - James was in his element. He made an indelible impression on the visiting parliamentarians.

James' wife Susan died in 1998 and after a few years he moved to London. There he found and developed new contacts and in a remarkable late flowering began writing for the theatre. His debut play *Happy Warriors* received its premiere at the Gatehouse Theatre (Highgate) in April 2018, where it ran for three weeks, and was well received by audiences and critics alike. *Happy Warriors* is based on a true story set in the Second World War about Winston Churchill's son Randolph and Evelyn Waugh going to the aid of Marshall Tito and his supporters in Yugoslavia. When interviewed and asked whether the play held any lessons for today, as we appear to be descending into another Cold War, James replied: 'Yes. Be clear-headed. Don't be dogmatic. Always seek out facts and make decisions from fact. And while you are doing it be of good cheer. Be young and enjoy yourself with friends. Be glad to be alive.'

The funeral for James was held in Leeds on 27 November 2020.