

Ranulph Glanville (C '64)

Ranulph Glanville, coming in the early 1960s to Bryanston where I was his tutor, was a conformist in only one respect, namely that his life, which was alas recently ended by cancer, followed a pattern which was archetypical of so very many Bryanstonians: an astonishingly wide range of interests and expertise accompanied by frequent startling changes of direction. At school he focused on the sciences and shared with me a love of the history of science. He was also a talented artist and in the year of Shakespeare's quatercentenary, 1964, he designed a splendid set inspired by San Miniato al Monte in Florence for my production of *Much Ado* in the Greek Theatre. Various luminaries were involved, conductor Sir Mark Elder as Benedick, writer Jonathan Keates as Leonato, anaesthetist Sir Peter Simpson as one of Dogberry's watchmen, composer Anthony Beaumont provided the songs and Ranulph himself played the Sexton. Ranulph was very enthusiastic about Samuel Beckett, hunted him down for a chat in his flat in Paris, and put on a production of *Endgame* which inspired Wilf Cowley in the staff Christmas Pantomime to pen the line "So Ranulph leave your dustbin, And give us your fighting blonde" in a verse of the famous finale of "Give him alpha, give him beta, Give him red or give him blue. You may not care for him, and he won't care for you. So produce a nice lead pencil, Give him gamma to annoy, Then go and tutor a far nicer boy" The composition of pre-synthesiser electronic 'music' became an enthusiasm of Ranulph's and led him into friendship with Harrison Birtwhistle (who taught at Cranborne Chase School) and Peter Maxwell Davies. In the field of sport Ranulph was a powerful athlete, a fine high jumper, one of the Harold Tarraway Invincibles.

At the Architectural Association Ranulph gained a diploma in architecture and design, and he continued to teach there for a while before studying for three successive doctorates in cybernetics and design at Brunel University. Thereafter he spent some years teaching architecture and design at Portsmouth University, but for the last thirty years of his life he became freelance, holding long-term visiting professorships at University College London and at the Royal College of Art, at Australian universities in Melbourne and Newcastle, at Amsterdam and at Leuven in Belgium. Indeed, he spent a large part of his life in aeroplanes since all these places repeatedly sought his return to conduct seminars or to give courses. His theme throughout has been the application of second order cybernetics to design and to other social activities in a remarkably wide range of contexts. Whereas traditional (first order) cybernetics is concerned with the physics of control systems utilizing feedback and directed towards a particular goal, second order cybernetics is heavily philosophical and is concerned with how an external observer seeks and discerns patterns and analogies shared by different systems or structures. Indeed a different individual might perceive different patterns in the same system. Ranulph was a moving spirit in and for his last four years the President of the American Society for Cybernetics. Beat that !

Ranulph survived a phase of battling against alcohol and eventually conquered this demon totally. He was twice married, first to a Finnish architect. Their son Severi lives in Helsinki. His second wife Aartje is a Dutch physiotherapist. My wife and I had the pleasure of lunching with them at Plumber Manor a year or so ago. They appeared to be a couple in total sympathy. Ranulph was charming, calm, cultured and generous. A man we felt proud to have known.

Kenneth Greenwood (former staff)