C. P. D. FRANKLIN (O.S. 1914-16)

Even the youngest alumnus of the Oratory solely in its Edgbaston days must now be touching eighty; this small and fast dwindling band of survivors was further reduced by the death of Charles Peter Damian Franklin, on 31st January 1984, a month before his 84th birthday.

Born in Kensington on 28th February 1900, he was the son of a stockbroker, Harry Walter Franklin and his wife, formerly Lady Edith Cecilia Curzon, daughter of 3rd Earl Howe of Penn. After preparatory schooling at St Anthony's, Eastbourne, the naval connections of his mother's family prompted Peter Franklin to seek entry to Dartmouth, but this was refused because of defective eyesight. His two-year stay at the Oratory was to end prematurely in December 1916 due to family misfortunes; a crash on the Stock Exchange in 1915 brought early death to his father, at the age of 48; conversion to Catholicism and marriage to one of its adherents had spelt disinheritance for his mother.

Among Peter Franklin's possessions was an O.S. Soccer Fixture Card for 1916 with all the results recorded; the names and positions of the 1st XI written by the owner on the back of the card show that he customarily played as left full-back and had been awarded his colours. Of that team only two would see the next season - H. V. Gough (O.S. 1911-17) and E. O. W. Laycock (O.S. 1912-17); but R. F. Stratford (O.S. 1913-17) may still be alive. An exact contemporary of Peter Franklin at the Oratory was his first cousin Raymond de Trafford (O.S. 1914-16, d. 1971); his elder brother Sir Humphrey de Trafford (O.S. 1906-10) also died in 1971.

Immediately after leaving the Oratory, Peter Franklin began an apprenticeship with Vickers at Erith, in Kent, and here for just over four years, including a year's service in the Army, he gained experience in various branches of mechanical engineering. In February 1919, he had been commissioned in the Coldstream Guards Special Reserve of Officers, but relinquished his commission in April 1920. In 1938, he was to join the T.A. 67th (York and Lancaster Regiment) Anti-Aircraft Brigade Royal Artillery; called to the Colours in August 1939, he served until 1943, attaining the rank of major.

He left Vickers in 1921 and worked briefly in Newark before moving to Wakefield with Craddocks, later to be taken over by British Ropes; 1939 saw his transfer to Head Office in Doncaster, where, apart from war service, he remained until his retirement in 1962; he had been concerned with the sales side of wire rope and ended his time as Export Sales Director.

In 1928, Peter Franklin married Olive, daughter of Mr and Mrs Robert Rowand of Sandal, near Wakefield; she survives him, together with their younger son and two daughters. Their elder son, David, a naval officer, died in 1958, at the age of 29, of bone marrow disease contracted during the atomic explosion on Christmas Island.

In 1973, he and his wife left the Doncaster area to live at Staveley, near Knaresborough, in close proximity to their elder married daughter. By 1980 failing health dictated that they should enter a nursing home in Harrogate. Progressively deprived of sight and memory, Peter was taken into hospital in Harrogate, where he died of pneumonia a few days later.

M. H. R. TOLKIEN (O.S. 1934-39)

The author of those English classics The Hobbit, Farmer Giles of Ham and The Fellowship of the Ring Trilogy, Professor J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973), suffered the misfortune of being orphaned in boyhood; by the time he was 10, his father, Arthur Reuel Tolkien of Birmingham and Bloemfontein had died in South Africa, while his mother, who had been converted to Catholicism, made arrangements before her death, for Fr Francis Morgan of the Birmingham Oratory to assume the guardianship of both her sons, in order to safeguard their faith. Although neither of them found his way to the Oratory School, Professor Tolkien made a promise that any son of his would be educated there.

In the event, his marriage in 1916 to Edith Mary Bratt produced three sons, John (O.S. 1931-36), a priest of the Archdiocese of Birmingham; Michael (O.S. 1934-39), who died on
27th February 1984; Christopher (O.S. 1937-41), formerly an Oxford don and now his father's literary executor, and a daughter, Priscilla.

After a post-war appointment at Oxford, followed by academic posts at the University of Leeds from 1921 to 1929, Professor Tolkien returned permanently to Oxford to assume the Chair of Anglo-Saxon 1925-45 and the Merton Professorship of English Language and Literature 1945-59. It was in Oxford on 22nd October 1920 that his second child and second son, Michael Hilary Reuel Tolkien was born. A thorough grounding at The Dragon School in that city preceded his entry to Norris House at the Oratory in 1934; here his academic and sporting achievements soon distinguished him: he played rugby for the Colts, for his House and regularly for the 1st XV; from 1937 to 1939 he represented the School at swimming, participated in the Shooting VIII 1938-39 and turned out for his House Cricket XI for four years; he also took part in the O.S. Dramatic Society productions; in 1937 he was appointed a House Prefect and in his final year, 1939, Captain of Norris.

His academic success placed Michael Tolkien at the top of the non-award entry to Trinity College, Oxford, in 1939. Here he spent one year reading History before war service intervened; it was not until 1943, when his war ended, that he was able to resume his studies and take his degree in 1945.

Commissioned at Sandhurst in 1941 with the war-time rank of captain, Michael Tolkien was attached to R.A.F. Aircrew (R.A. Intelligence) Combined Operations. Initially, he had served in the ranks with the Battle of Britain Light Anti-Aircraft; during the Battle of Britain he and nine companions were each awarded the G.M. for their part in the defence of Bomber Command H.Q. at Uxbridge; after the Dieppe Raid he was invalided out of the War in 1943. Throughout his military service he continued to play rugby—with the Aldershot Services, with Sandhurst 1st XV, with the Devonport Services and with Army Representative XV's.

Although he was trained as an historian, Michael Tolkien spent much of his life teaching Classics at a number of public schools. He taught for two years at The Dragon School, before Fr Tomlinson invited him to join the staff of his old school in 1947, where for nine years he was well regarded as an able and competent master, teaching at various times English, History and Latin to O-level, History and Group II Latin to A-level; throughout this time he was a keen and successful rugby coach.

For two years from 1954 he served the O.S. Society as its Secretary and, as a result of his lengthy and painstaking researches, the School was able to publish in 1960 two volumes of the Magazine the Universal Roll-Call, 1859-1929 (Vol. 124) and 1930-56 (Vol. 126). This has subsequently been kept up to date. Michael Tolkien's devotion to the Oratory and its history also resulted in the compilation of the list of Head Boys from 1859 for the Honours Boards.

In 1956, he moved briefly to Solihull School to teach Classics and coach the 1st XV; the year 1958 found him at Ampleforth, where the distinguished classicist Laurence Eyres (1892-1966), once loaned to the Oratory for the academic year 1931-32, had retired. The intervening year between his departure from Ampleforth in 1964 and his final appointment to Stonyhurst in 1965 was spent at Rossall School. In 1976, partly because of ill health, he retired, from his Classics post at Stonyhurst to live in Waddington, near Clitheroe, a picturesque village, once a stronghold of the Yorkists, but since 1974 compelled to show allegiance to the red rose of its traditional rival.

For a long time, Michael Tolkien had suffered from leukaemia, which caused his death in hospital in Manchester, on 27th February 1984, at the age of 63. By his marriage in 1941 he had one son, Michael (O.S. 1955-59), currently Head of English at Uppingham, and two daughters. His wife predeceased him in 1982. He was a man of enormous charm who retained a deep and abiding affection for the Oratory and never ceased to be glad that he had spent his schooldays there.

D. P. ROBERTS (O.S. 1968-73)

After retiring for the night in cheerful spirits, David Peter Roberts died peacefully in his sleep at home in Mombasa, on 10th May 1984, the victim of a viral infection from which his recovery seemed imminent. He was only 29 years of age.