

ANTHONY CAVENDISH
1927-2013

Intelligence agent, journalist, merchant banker, author and, like his wife and two children, a devoted member of the St Moritz Tobogganing Club, Tony Cavendish was not a man to let life pass him idly by. His mosaic of unlikely friends made him a formidable operator in the world of espionage, whose adventurous spirit led him to break his back twice – first in a racing car accident and then at Shuttlecock.

In 1987 he produced a slim volume of memoirs in order to restore the damaged reputation of an old friend, Sir Maurice Oldfield, who had been unjustly criticized when the Chief of the British Secret Intelligence Service. Oldfield had recruited Tony some years before, and he subsequently described him as the cleverest intelligence officer he had ever known.



Tony Cavendish

Born in London but raised in Switzerland, Tony grew up speaking English, German, French, and, rare for an Englishman, fluent Swiss-German. He volunteered for the British Army at the earliest opportunity, in 1944 and, singled out as a linguist, he was posted to Secret Intelligence Middle East in Cairo - a place then regarded as the Paris of the East, and the perfect entrée to the intelligence world. Soon after he arrived in the Middle East, terrorists blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, killing 91 people. Tony, who was close to the explosion, said later it was the moment at which he “ceased to be a boy and became a man at the centre of events.”

So began a decade of high adventure, in which he narrowly escaped a violent death on several occasions and in which, as the Secret Intelligence Service’s youngest ever officer, he ran a group of agents behind the Iron Curtain. Well might a senior member of the British Government remark that “James Bond was a rather dull weakling by comparison.”

After exchanging espionage for journalism Tony covered several of the world’s hotspots, filing many acclaimed eye witness dispatches. He then launched himself into a series of business ventures and stood fleetingly as a Tory candidate in an unwinnable parliamentary constituency. He joined the SMTC in 1975 but, an unapologetic lover of good food, he inevitably acquired a gentlemanly body shape which precluded the full development of his talents as a Cresta rider. He did, however, palpably to his own surprise, win the Seniors Cup in 1984.

He was an immensely clubbable man who loved to entertain, beckoning people, cigar in hand, to join him in lively conversation in the Cavalry and Guards Club or the Cresta Clubhouse or the Sunny Bar.

Anthony Cavendish died on January 12th 2013 aged 85. He is survived by his wife Elspeth, his daughter Charlotte and his son Julius, who many Members will remember as a popular Tower Boy in 2000/01.

During its long history the Club has produced a number of exceptional Members with ability, charisma, and a sense of fun. Tony was certainly one of them.