

Transactions of the Burgon Society

Volume 20


Article 2

10-20-2021

In Memoriam: Robin L. D. Rees

Nicholas Groves
drnicholasgroves@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/burgonsociety>

 Part of the [Fashion Design Commons](#), [Fiber, Textile, and Weaving Arts Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License](#)

Recommended Citation

Groves, Nicholas (2021) "In Memoriam: Robin L. D. Rees," *Transactions of the Burgon Society*. Vol. 20.
<https://doi.org/10.4148/2475-7799.1176>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Transactions of the Burgon Society* by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

In Memoriam
Robin L. D. Rees, BSc, MPhil (Lond), PhD (Sheff),
MAstatus (Oxf), MInstP, CPhys, ACertCM, FBS

25 September 1946–7 June 2021

I forget exactly how and when I came into contact with Robin: it was long before the internet and emails, but sometime around 1990. It may have been when I wrote to ask for back numbers of *Hoodata*, or it may have been via Robin Richardson of Wippell: in those days when we all worked independently, the robemakers were quite good at putting us in touch with each other.

Born at Clevedon in Somerset, Robin attended Westminster School, and read physics at Bedford College, London (of which he was a Governor for ten years), and followed his BSc with an MPhil. He worked with computers for many years for the University of Oxford. When it became clear that Oxford would allow him to work part-time, he undertook a PhD at Sheffield, researching the often fraught relationship between clergy and church musicians; it went behind the C of E's official 1992 report 'In Tune with Heaven'. A book based on his research was published by Gracewing in 1993 as *Weary and Ill at Ease: a survey of clergy and organists*. He was granted the status of MA by Oxford, something he much enjoyed, and I recall that he had the hood made up in the Edinburgh shape, as an attested historical variant.

His achievements in terms of academic dress were several. Possibly the major one was persuading the Institute of Physics in 1977 to introduce a set of robes, and then to design them. The scheme used violet, combined with Oxford MA shot crimson. The colours (violet and red) are the extremes of the spectrum; that the length is one metre—the SI standard; and the shot red signifies the phenomenon of interference. Alas, the robes, while not actually decommissioned, are not now promoted.

His next project was the design of the original hood for the award of Archbishop's Certificate in Church Music (ACertCM). He held the award himself, and had an active career as a church musician—always ensuring that members of his choir were suitably hooded! Holders initially wore a medal on a ribbon, but cost and other considerations made a hood more practical. Robin used a hood in a modified simple shape, somewhat like a reduced Burgon shape; bearing in mind the 1882 restrictions on theological hoods, and the level at which the Certificate was examined, he came up with a black hood lined with black Italian cloth, bordered inside the cowl for 0.5" with royal blue, and bound on all edges with terra-cotta cord—blue and terra-cotta being the colours of the Guild of Church Musicians which administer the award. He was much annoyed when the hood was changed to full shape without being consulted; I don't know what he thought of its current form.

His final piece of input was the addition of a 1" strip of claret ribbon to the gowns of MPhils of the University of London so as to mark its status as being something more de-



Dr David Woolf

Institute of Physics, Members' and Fellows' hood.



Dr Nicholas Groves

Archbishop's Certificate in Church Music, original hood.

manding than a taught master's degree. One has to wonder what Dr Franklyn might have said.

He took on the editorship of *Hoodata* when Alan Birt relinquished it. It ran to four editions under his care, and then ceased in December 1981.

He also worked with Hugh Smith on the never-to-be-completed second edition of his great work, and indeed introduced me to him (via surface mail). He was also an active contributor to the old Yahoo! AD group. He was thus an obvious person to ask along to the initial meetings that became the Burgon Society, and he was on Council for several years.

He had been unwell for some time, and spent the last year in and out of hospital undergoing various procedures. He died peacefully on 7 June 2021.

Helen, his widow, wrote to me that 'Academic dress was one of Robin's passions, and he enjoyed your gatherings. It was enormous fun to go to Encaenia with him, as he could identify all the UK robes and hoods for me.' Let that stand for his memorial.

—*Nick Groves*