

DENNIS GEORGE WASHINGTON

It doesn't matter whether you come to Hempton from Deddington or Chipping Norton – either way you enter the village through an avenue of horse-chestnut trees which Dennis Washington had specially planted there. Chairman Mao said 'let a thousand flowers bloom', but didn't do much about it; Dennis on the other hand, only this year, had one thousand daffodils planted in the grass verge of Hempton Road, for Dennis Loved flowers as much as he loved spring time and his pleasure was to share these joys with those around him.

Dennis was a true son of Hempton, born with an urge to succeed, impatient of delays. It was this impatience which led him, as a 14-year-old haymaker, to try and force an obstinate truss of straw into a steam-driven threshing machine with his foot. He lost this leg below the knee, and it would have been more if the man in charge had not leapt forward and shouldered the driving belt off the pulley wheel. But Dennis was not the man to let such a setback daunt him. With an artificial leg he soon learnt to walk, and indeed, to play cricket as well as the next man, and he made a valiant effort to join the RAF as a pilot. After the war when, with the shrewd help of his wife Grace, his business prospered, he was able to indulge his passion for exotic animals, birds in particular, and travel across the world to Northern Australia, Argentina and Chile, to watch them in their natural habitat.

But he stayed true to Hempton, and in later years he could be seen gliding along the Hempton Road on his daily visit to Deddington in his electric wheelchair. There are many tales to be told about Dennis, for he was a man to be reckoned with – and Hempton is the poorer for his passing.

John Temple-Smith, 1994