

The Rev Professor DWD (Bill Shaw) 1928-2020



As a young lawyer



Addressing the Vatican Synod in 1991, as Fraternal Delegate of the Church of Scotland to the Special meeting of the Synod of the Bishops of Europe



Collecting his OBE in 2009

This tribute to Bill Shaw is composed of three parts. Firstly, the excellent tribute from Edinburgh University, secondly, interview notes from the meetings with Bill earlier this year to create an entry for the ESC digital history, and finally a small selection of photographs.

Bill Shaw was Scotland's most senior theologian. A gifted sportsman and professional solicitor who turned to the ministry of the Church of Scotland, he exercised leadership roles in the Divinity faculties of Edinburgh and St Andrews.

Born in Edinburgh in 1928, the youngest of six siblings, Bill was schooled at Edinburgh Academy. He graduated BD from New College in 1960, having earlier worked as a partner in the legal firm Davidson Syme WS following degrees in modern languages in Cambridge and law in Edinburgh. After serving as assistant minister at St George's West Church under Murdo Ewan MacDonald, he returned to New College in 1963 as a lecturer in Divinity, later becoming Dean of the Faculty and Principal. In 1979, he was appointed to the Chair of Divinity at the University of St Andrews, where he also served as Dean of the Faculty of Divinity and Principal of St Mary's College, thus completing a unique double.

A talented mountaineer, golfer, and squash player, Bill combined academic with athletic prowess. He was Scottish Amateur Squash Champion for three consecutive years (1950–52) and scaled the Matterhorn in 1958. He played golf regularly into his 80s and served as Chaplain to the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews. His academic achievements include publication of two fine and accessible volumes *Who is God?* (1963) and *The Dissuaders* (1978). He could communicate effectively without over-simplifying his subject, often displaying a quiet wisdom in his critical judgements. His readers, and perhaps Bill himself, regretted that he did not publish more. Awarded honorary degrees by the Universities of Glasgow (1991) and St Andrews (2005), he also received the OBE (2009). In retirement, he became the founding editor in 1994 of *Theology in Scotland*, a journal intended to bridge the gap between the academy and the church.

Bill spent some of his earlier years in Canada where he was evacuated during the war. He remained an intrepid traveller almost to the end of his life. While still an assistant minister, he was appointed by the World Presbyterian Alliance as their ecumenical observer at the opening session of the Second Vatican Council in 1962. An accomplished linguist, he learned some Italian and immersed himself in the business of the Council. With his gift for socialising, he came to know many of the leading figures around the Council and often spoke of the evenings they spent in a local hostelry. Since the owner had prohibited any nun from entering his premises, they named it the Bar Nun. Along with Hans Küng (an eminent theologian) and Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), Bill was one of the last survivors of the group.

Bill was interviewed in December last year for his entry in the forthcoming ESC digital History. These are notes of the questions specifically about squash and ESC (and sport), along with Bill's answers.

1. What brought you to squash rackets, and when did you first play?
 - a. *1945, aged 17, a couple of years after my return from Canada (Bill was evacuated to Canada with his sister in 1940, attending school in Ottawa while she studied in Vancouver). Bill related an account of his travelling for four days and nights to visit his sister (on four occasions), also the hair-raising journey back to Scotland in 1943.*
2. When did you join ESC?
 - a. *Probably 1945; I played there shortly after it reopened after the War - my brother was a member before and after the War*
3. Were you a member of other club(s)?
 - a. *Edin. Accies, Edin. Uni. Staff Club, Wimbledon Squash and Badminton Club, The Junior Carlton Club and the Jesters*
4. Who were among your most regular opponents?
 - a. *John Everett (and his brother Peter occasionally), Paul Harding-Edgar, Philip Snodgrass, (a master at Cargilfield) and Club coach Douglas McLaggan, who taught me a lot and remained a friend. I met him many times in USA when he moved there*
5. You won the Club Championship three times, 1952, 1954 and 1955. What are your recollections of those wins, and were you in other finals?
 - a. *I was in four finals, playing against the Everett brothers in two of them.*
6. You were capped 38 times for Scotland between 1950 and 1964. What are your memories of those occasions?
 - a. *I mainly played against the other three home countries, with the Dublin occasions being the most memorable. The matches were played on the Fridays before the Rugby Internationals, when we were always guests at the matches.*
 - b. *A particular memory is of a match versus Wales, when the team was moved to a drill hall ("inches deep in beer") containing many drunk Scots (just after the international rugby match at Cardiff Arms Park), and our youngest member Mike Oddy elected to take to the stage to deliver an impromptu solo rendition of a rugby song*
 - c. *I was at one time listed in The Guinness Book of Records as having the greatest number of international squash caps*
7. Best sporting achievement
 - a. *Winning the Scottish Squash Championship three times, 1949-1951*
8. What did ESC bring to your life?
 - a. *Friendship*
 - b. *I recollect the Saturday night games and socialising, followed by around 12 of us travelling to Gullane to play golf the next morning.*
9. You are an Honorary Member of the Club. Do you remember receiving the award?
 - a. *There was an informal lunch 1988, when the other recipient of the honour was Bob Munro*
10. When did you last play at ESC?
 - a. *When I was around 60 (i.e. around 1988) when I had the first of four different joint replacements (two hips, one knee, one shoulder)*
11. Are you happy with the progress the club is making, e.g. Padel, Table Tennis installations, and refurbishment in general?
 - a. *Yes, and I am impressed with the Management*
12. Other information
 - a. *Bill played Hashim Khan, the then World no 1 player at the Scottish Open at ESC: Hashim's brother Azam was due to play him but was injured, so Bill (and Ian la Terriere) played Hashim in a demonstration match. Hashim Kan was undisputed world no 1 for many years, winning the British Open on 7 of the 8 years from 1951*
 - b. *ESC Director for three years from 1955*
 - c. *SSRA (now Scottish Squash) President 1964-1966*
 - d. *Bill spoke at the 50th ESC anniversary dinner in 1968 at the Dragonara*
 - e. *Honorary Chaplain to the R&A, 1989-2005*
 - f. *Inducted into the St Andrews Sport Hall of Fame in 2007 – for Squash excellence*



Bill (second left) captaining the ESC team visiting Richmond Squash club in 1953



1965 – Scotland versus Wales. Bill is extreme right, and accompanied by many other top ESC players of that era.



In 1991, Bill addressed the Vatican Synod in the presence of Pope John Paul II



Bill, centre front row, with other distinguished ESC international players at the ESC 75th anniversary dinner in 2011

This report was constructed with input from Bill Shaw, Edinburgh University, Roy Cowper, Philip Mackenzie Ross, Alastair McIntosh, Colin McIntosh, ESC archives and Alastair Allanach

Herald Obituary, 21 July 2020

SHAW - Revd Prof D.W.D, (Bill) OBE (Edinburgh) Peacefully on 14th July 2020 in Edinburgh, the Reverend Bill Shaw, Emeritus Professor, University of St. Andrews. Much loved brother of the late Dorothy, Bobby, Honey and Moira; and lovingly remembered by his sister Kathleen, his nephews, nieces and very many friends. Due to the ongoing restrictions, a family funeral took place at Mortonhall Crematorium. A Memorial Service to celebrate Bill's life will take place in 2021.