

# DR JAMES HALL *Times* 18.2.75

p.16  
Issue  
59323

Winton Dean writes:

Dr Frederick James Simkin Hall, OBE, who died on February 10, won distinction in two totally unrelated fields.

Born on March 20, 1899, a descendant of Sir George Rooke, the admiral who captured Gibraltar in 1704 (from whom perhaps he inherited an engaging touch of saltiness), he was trained in London and Edinburgh and joined a surgical and general practice at Deal in 1924. In 1939 he found himself suddenly called upon to organize an emergency casualty service for shipping forced by war conditions to anchor in the Downs. This involved going out in an open boat, at all hours and states of the weather, to treat sailors of many nationalities stricken by every kind of illness or accident. In conditions of discomfort and often great danger, when only the Walmer lifeboat could put to sea, James Hall brought personal aid to more than 700 seamen, many of whom had to be conveyed laboriously ashore if their lives were to be saved, as they nearly always were. For his services he was made OBE in 1946, and given the Freedom of Deal in 1966.

An enthusiastic amateur conductor, after the war he founded the Deal and Walmer Handelian Society, with which he performed many works, familiar and unfamiliar, not all of them by Handel. This led him into the world of scholarship and collecting. He published the fruits of important research on Handel's early Latin church music, and with his son Martin edited *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* for the Hallé complete edition. In 1959 he took his choir to Halle and

Leipzig for the festival celebrating the bicentenary of the composer's death. His Handel collection was both antiquarian and practical. He acquired nearly all the early editions and some contemporary manuscripts (these are now in the university library at Princeton, New Jersey) and a large number of out-of-print Novello vocal scores, which he lent free of charge to anyone wishing to perform the music. This generosity was characteristic; no request for information or the loan of valuable material from his fellow Handelians ever went without an immediate answer, even though until his last years he was an immensely busy man.

His conversation, like the memorable book *Sea Surgeon* (1960), in which he recounted his wartime experiences, was a compound of outspokenness, modesty, deadpan humour and impatience of red tape very appropriate in a student of Handel. He delighted in the unexpected. After showing me over his surgery, whose contents seemed to be as much musicological as medical, he ushered me into an inner sanctum lined with Handel first editions; it proved to be a closet in the ancient and modern senses. He then demonstrated the remarkable keyboard instrument on which he accompanied the oratorios, and declared that the composer he really loved was Wagner.

He leaves a widow, Cynthia (née Seed), three sons, a daughter and eleven grandchildren, to whom the sympathy of his many friends will go out. Few men can in their time have refreshed so wide a variety of bodies and minds.