In the remote North Devon cottage where I am writing this sketch of the late Nigel Spottiswoode the image of him appears frequently in my imagination (this place is full of memories). Also, day in, day out and especially in the country silence of the nights, I fancy I hear him speak. Within the sounding box of my study the voice is a rumble of notes which change pitch and rhythm as randomly as a conversation. Like the chattering of a stream rushing over pebbles, one hears the voice but never can quite make out what is said; some syllables are loud and clear, others are almost out of earshot and all run into each other just beyond the edge of sense. This voice I think of as Nigel's reverberating endlessly betweem the thick stone walls of this ancient building - our records of it go back as far as the year 1249 - is the noise of a machine which he made. It is an old, eccentric machine which unlike your contemporary robotic engines is marked distinctly with the handprints of Nigel who assembled it in the early days of the last war.

It is just two days ago that Jane rang up and asked me to write about Nigel. She said that her book about his last adventure - the despatch of his ashes to join all the other particles of the universe from which he believed he came - needed a preface 'from the life' to tell the reader who he was and what he was like. Who was Nigel Spottiswoode? It is a hard enough question to answer about anyone and there are few things one can say about Nigel to compare him to the man next door. But Nigel did have a way of putting down markers to himself and his unceasing voice in this house reminds me that hereabouts in the remote parish of Hartland there are many.

If I open my window I hear the chuffing sound of the waterwheel outside which drives the machinery. It also bears many marks of Nigel's handiwork. But by contrast with the voice which rumbles through the house, this great, five-ton wheel has a rhythm of marvellous precision. That is a special reminder of Nigel. I can see him now with scribbling pad and slide-rule predicting that when the day came for me to set that wheel turning again (Nigel's work had long since rotted away and collapsed) and running at its optimum speed and power it would chuff 396 times a minute as each of its 48 buckets flashed past the driving water chute.

Nigel the mathematician and engineer scorned my enthusiasm for his getting this sum so right; of course to him it was simply a question of mechanics and as certain as the time of the next high tide. But then, I think, not quite, because Nigel was a rare, civilised kind of engineer who bestrode centuries with his lore; from the geometry of Euclid tothe mechanics of Isaac Newton to the latest thing (up to 1987 when he died) in electronic controls to make his latest gadget work. He got his formula for waterwheels from a treatise by the 18th Century engineer Smeaton which he found in the Science Museum in South Kensington. Smeaton was one of the founding fathers of the industrial revolution and it delighted Nigel to apply his holy writ and see it work.

Now, before we get too serious and carried away about all this let's also get the record straight and say that Nigel was an amateur, All his life he applied his science and his spanners where the sun shone for him; for daily bread, of course, more and more as he grew older but still, wherever possible, to pursue some attraction, A girl? Sometimes, yes, as we shall see. But he also loved machines and telling something of what I know about Nigel in this context tells a lot about him, Like any man really taken with that passion he knew that the good machines - those rare survivors which are hand-crafted like mine in this house - do have a spirit in them; a unique character which make them as different as one man from another, So when I hear the regular beat of the wheel outside and the eccentric, human voice of Nigel's machine within I remember how much he was intrigued by that paradox; the waterwheel's precision and the lumping of the machinery it drives,

A waterwheel is a device much older than clockwork, One has been running, in various forms, on the wall of this building for about 800 years, The iron machinery within dates only from late Victorian times, The various parts were assembled here by Nigel in 1940, The diagnosis of its random, grumbling behavour was a challenge which he came back to time and again, He watched and listened, timed and measured but failed ever to find a definite answer between this or that reason, He would emerge from the gloomy, dripping basement of the Mill Room with its man-eating train of giant pit-wheel, meshing gears and chain and belt drives and tell me with a wry smile that its wayward motions and conversational noises were indeed caused by ghosts in the machine; long-gone local folk called Tardrew & Son, ironfounders of Bideford who cast the gears and pulleys, pouring molten metal into sand moulds with craft but not precision, He would say; "It is a wonderful piece of work - marvellous,,,,but not quite right! " Nigel liked the word 'marvellous' and used it with great fervour when his enthusiasm was aroused, , "Not quite right" was another favourite expression which he would repeat at intervals while doing some job, He was a perfectionist; he would spend hours, days to get something running true or to soldering an electrical circuit with the finesse of a jeweller, Now that Nigel has gone I suppose nobody else will ever try to find out why my machinery lumps and rumbles and has a human voice which speaks to anyone with time to stop and listen, I must put up a little plate somewhere to explain - and to remember Nigel,

Aother marker to Nigel, strange but true; the day before Jane called a completely new and unexpected image of him suddenly appeared to me, You would believe he leaned out of the clouds to give me this especially colourful lead into his history, It was a young Nigel, aged about 23, with long fair hair and a pink, upper-class English face flitting along the lanes here in old clothes, carelessly larded with black grease, and,,,, no shoes!

That is what the old man who told me this anecdote especially remembered; Nigel was an oily mechanic - a distinct mark of an educated outsider in those days when all the farm work here was still done by horses - and he went about barefoot.

In fact Nigel was at that time working on the restoration of this mill. It had been idle since the last working corn miller here retired in about 1912 and was totally derelict. Even the iron hoops of the wheel were shattered and buried 14 feet deep in rubble and rubbish.

Life was primitive hereabouts in those days (little changed in many respects since the turn of the century), Nigel was living here because he was a rebel; a drop-out, a hippy a generation before his time. But....barefoot! You had to be as hard as a gipsy to do that on stony tracks - as the lanes were then - along the route which Nigel took; a good four miles from the Marsland Valley on the Cornish border to Speke's Valley here, just south of Hartland Quay. Nigel did live like a gypsy then. Sometimes he stayed away for days on end lodging in with an old couple in a primitive cottage at Lymebridge nearby and sometimes trudging home again same day, in the late evening. A friend of those days told me; "Nigel and soap-and-water did not connect from one month to the next!" Those of us who knew the sybarite of later years who adored a hot bath in the evening before dinner find that description quite incredible but....so it was!

From my witness's description it appears that Nigel made his barefoot way across Hartland parish in an abstracted, self-absorbed style. That rings true because I have seen him do that, 40 years on. Nigel's version of cat-napping was having something to think about; preferably a project to be solved the hard way with the utmost improvisation. "He never said nothing to nobody; head down, talking to he's-self. Us threw stones at he once from behind the hedge and he took no notice. Us thought he was mazed."

Nigel in Hartland in summer 1940 certainly was a conspicuous outsider. People who scorned him striding by thought they had good reason. It was a memorably - and perversely - glorious summer and, while France fell and fighters trailed in the blue overhead, it was reasonable to assume Nigel was simply sunning himself and dodging the column. Well, in a manner of speaking, at that time, so he was. A key element in Nigel's youthful rebellion was pacifism. That was fashionable enough when he came down from Cambridge in the mid-thirties (we now know that a number of his contemporaries took up much more traiterous creeds) but when war came at last most bit the bullet. Not Nigel. He was a registered conscientious objector and an escapee from the real world here in this wilderness with a bohemian friend, the poet Ronald Duncan. Local gossip about the community they set up still goes on in this district. But that is due almost entirely to Ronald Duncan's autobiographies in which he seemed compelled to colour himself scandalously livid.

In truth Ronnie tells us little of substance about Nigel who appears fleetingly - like most other characters - with no face and no voice as a kind of stage-prop. It all reads today rather like a cry for notoriety and, perhaps, that way to be recognised as a poet, Nigel was making no special claims to justify his rebellion and he was working, labouring heroically in fact on the near-impossible project of restoring this mill while Ronnie, on his own confesssion, was not even writing but endlessly beach-combing, day after day with each low tide. I see now, from the perspective of 50 years on, irony heaped upon irony in the relationship between these two.

Ronnie and Nigel met at Cambridge....that is a fact; nearly all else about their relationship is speculative and I can only set out here my stab at that. Nigel was reading mathematics and Ronnie read Eng. Lit. I do not believe either of them did much work although Ronnie made much in later life of having sat at the feet of the legendary English don, F R Leavis. Both came down without their degrees, Nigel claimed fame for the juvenile stunt of attending the Examination Halls to write across his papers; "I don't know," Ronnie just came down - almost slunk away - but then made much grander gestures by travelling first to Italy to pay court to Ezra Pound and then to India to sit at the feet of the Mahatma Gandhi. Both moves were building blocks for his subsequent career and he made much of them that way.

No two close friends can have been more unlike in appearance and temperament than Nigel and Ronnie. Our hero was of fair complexion with a powerful injection of aristocratic Scottish blood to add zest to an upper middle class English public school upbringing. Ronnie suffered the anonimity and suffocation of an impoverished upbringing in Clapham; he was small, dark and swarthy - the true gipsy of the two - and his patronym was not Duncan but Dunkelsbuhler. We can scorn snobbery about that now but Cambridge in the early 'thirties certainly did not. So Ronnie was one down and Nigel was blissfully confident, the typical gilded idler.

After Cambridge, Nigel scored once more; he picked up the beautiful and talented Rose Marie in a cafe in Leicester Square. She was then a drama student (Nigel once told me; "I was the original stage-door johnny") but within a year she was married to Ronnie and they started their menage in North Devon with Nigel - among others - attending but on the sidelines. Rose Marie is still here and a good friend and recently I asked her; why? Why Ronnie rather than Nigel? "Well Nigel kept on boasting about his great friend who was in India with Gandhi - which really was quite sensational - and then one day Ronnie came home and Nigel brought him along and it was all so romantic; he was dark and intelligent and sensitive and, well....there you are!"

Nigel has indeed protested since that he was in love with Rose Marie and Ronnie pinched her from him....but with little conviction.

He was conspicuously a man blissfully content to be himself and do his own thing - a talent which remained with him all his life and must have qualified all his relationships except perhaps his second marriage and last great love affair with Jane, Although even she, it must be said, was often enough seen to stamp her foot and yell at "this maddening man."

What, then, attracted Ronnie, the poet, to Nigel the amateur technician and why did he invite him to join the commune in North Devon? Rose Marie explains pragmatically that Nigel had by this time been working with a film unit in London and Ronnie needed his knowhow to make a film, (So they did and it still lies in an archive in Wardour Street). Then why did Nigel stay on in the wilderness here after the film and leaving the great pond in which he swam so cheerfully in London? The theory that he was still pursuing Rose Marie hardly holds water because soon she was a mother of one and then two and all the realities of family life closed in. Her answer to me recently was that Ronnie had money - a private income - and Nigel by then had none. Well, maybe, but Ronnie never in all his life spent a penny more than needs be and Nigel was not the sort to notice he was broke and let that consideration rule his days. He told me once about the two years he spent here working on this mill: "We didn't seem to need any money in those days.....just pennies for fags. Then people put you up."

My theory is that Ronnie was attracted to Nigel then as many others were later and throughout his life - and I do not exclude myself - because he was good to have around; he had a very exclusive brand of charm; it arose from his talent for personal freedom which he used in such an enviable way - not selfishly for he was kind and generous (if not sometimes too busy to notice) and, untainted by any hint of ancestral presbyterian guilt - to work on projects which interested him and to indulge his curiosity about the way things worked; things which ranged happily from this old mill to the universe itself. Perhaps we all hoped something of this happy man would rub off on us.

Nigel seems to have been conditioned to personal freedom from early childhood in a way which is supposed to gravely damage human infants but does not seem to have affected him at all; he had no parents - a father killed in the war and a mother who died soon after. Given that he was well-treated in his holidays and at school, why should he feel any deprivation? It is not fashionable now to suppose that kind of upbringing works but I am not so sure.

Parents were a particular problem for many of Nigel's generation. .
They were people who remembered the ordered world before 1914 and experienced the terrible war fought to defend and, they hoped, restore it. They were a rearguard, indeed, and Nigel and his friends the vanguard of a wholly new world in which the prvilege to feel free to make social and moral choices, to think, believe and say what you liked was suddenly opening out to everybody in all classes and the barriers were down. .
All of Nigel's generation felt impatient to grasp and establish this new freedom; he was one of the few who did not feel restrained.

One day not long before he died Nigel told me this extraordiary story about his childhood; he was left in charge of two aunts who lived in the most rose-tinted of all Never-Never-Lands; the Isle of Capri, So there he went in the school holidays, despatched at Victoria Station by a uniformed representative of Thomas Cook and handed on at every change by an equally resplendent officer of their Continental cousins, the Compagnie des Wagons Lits, I guess now that it was on Capri that he first began to run barefoot!

Nigel gave me a tragic twist to the tale of his aunts, When war came they evacuated to Switzerland where they soon ran out of funds and eventual died in penury, So while the aunts struggled in Switzerland, marooned by the war, Nigel set himself to reconstruct this Mill, He could just have easily tackled West Mill in the Marsland Valley where Ronnie and Rose Marie now lived, Or could he? Docton Mill, here, was owned by Ronnie Duncan's sister and their mother, two somewhat strange ladies known to all around as Bunny and Mole, They had money; they had shared the same legacy which gave Ronnie independence and they lived very simply here, Nigel promised them electricity from the mill and it was a promise triiumphantly achieved, This house became a beacon in the valley for 15 years until the poles carrying the mains service eventually marched over the hill,

Nigel's barefoot treks across Hartland parish to work on this mill and his long days, sometimes weeks away from Ronnie set him apart and, I believe now, on discovery of his own road to follow for the rest of his life, Duncan has always described their community as a farm; he was busy creating an image of free, self-sufficient and beautiful people a generation before his time, I can imagine Nigel being touched with the glamour of that idea but also sure that it would hold him only fleetingly, I have heard him gasp with scorn - and he had an expressive, world-weary way of doing that - ● about time wasted on such things; vegetables were be bought, not grown, Moreover he would have known very well that Ronnie was the last man to dig and delve for himself, Clearly, Nigel had to shake hiself out and find a project to consume his energies, Docton Mill became an obsession for the best part of two years, The scale and weight of the physical work he did here amazes me; the skill and patience required to solve mechanical problems with crude, heavy machinery and primitive tools dismisses from my mind any idea that Nigel was idle,

The mill became mine nearly 40 years on and my diary tells me that it was on 26 June 1980 that we first met here, My notes at that time are full of anxious detail about the massive job of rebuilding and renovation we were doing to turn what had become a damp, rotting ruin into a livable home, But suddenly on this day the story brightens up as Nigel breezed in upon my sea of troubles, It was our first meeting and I felt at once that my own life had taken a new turn, Nigel was infectious,

There was chaos here when Nigel arrived. The diary tells it all: the kitchen fitters were here but the tiler had not turned up; the carpet men had arrived two weeks early before painting was finished and the architect was meeting the builder and me about a horrendous problem of a stair with one step too few and no room to fit it in! I remember well that Nigel seemed totally unaware that I had problems and that all the other people present also had problems which they were queuing up to unload onto me. I remember too that I found his insouciance quite charming; I was soothed and walked away from it all to talk with this marvellous man who bubbled with enthusiasm from the moment I told him yes, most certainly, I wanted to get the mill going again. He also took command. I told him of some project I had in mind to modernise the machinery, to make it lighter and more efficient. Nigel folded his arms, put one hand up to hold his chin and bent his head forward to think. Speaking slowly and as if it was a great effort to be patient he spelled out a list of pros and cons, energy gains and losses, savings and costs until it was quite clear to me that I would remove Nigel's beautiful old machinery at my peril. But, oh what great gains I would enjoy if this man, this spirit of the machinery, joined hands with me to breath life into it again! So, for the next seven years - the last of Nigel's life - we became friends. It was a friendship which outlasted and outreached the remaking of the mill.

Now this story must bridge a gap of 35 years and record that Nigel did reform his pacifist conscience and go to war and did perforce, at the same time, begin to wash. I asked Rose Marie, again, why? She replied: "Oh, it must have been a girl." A girl - what girl? Well, a girl! So Nigel slipped away from Hartland into the real world - you could say he grew up - but in many, many ways he did not change. I have plenty of evidence that, some troubles apart - like a painfully broken first marriage - he remained the essential free man. Immediately after the war he applied for and - to his own utter astonishment - got a splendid job as chief engineer and later, technical director, of a famous firm which specialised in navigational lighting; everything from channel buoys to lighthouses, including many of the great lights which stand at the tip of continents, on historic capes and headlands at the crossroads of the world. Nigel was in his element because every job here was different, stacked with technical obstacles and crying out for special solutions and improvisations. At the same time the engineering had to be of Rolls Royce quality; the equipment had to work with unfailing reliability, year in and year out, in icy storms or blazing sun. The question which must occur to every reader in this age of career ladders and multi-lettered qualifications is; how did Nigel, the archetypal amateur, get the job? I asked him outright; how did he climb over the monumental obstacle of having scrawled "I don't know" on his finals papers at Cambridge? "Well, it was different in those days. People were more interested in your ability to do the job and they wanted the right sort of chap. I was very, very lucky; I liked the job and they liked me."

The other stroke of luck for Nigel was that the job lasted out his lifetime. It was by all accounts a stolidly British engineering job in the highest, most respected and, nowadays, most vulnerable traditions of that craft. Perhaps 'craft' is the key word; something Nigel was well able to keep up with while others were getting ever more specialised in their sciences and technologies.

I do not know how many of Nigel's lighthouses still shine out from his makings but there are two splended mechanical and electrical examples of his handiwork which visitors - and especially engineers - love to see and which show every sign of running on now, in this conservation-minded age, for generations. Both are working museums and I am sure they will be guarded as such.

One, of course, is here at Docton Mill, where the overshot waterwheel drives an alternator to heat the water and the ground floor by buried cables; a Roman luxury underfoot. The other is at Melin Meloch ("The Mill on the Meloch") near Bala in North Wales where Nigel retired. A new owner now has taken over the magnificent house converted from the old mill building and, alongside, Nigel's turbine room; a gleaming laboratory where a humming machine and a rush of water under the floor produce a steady seven kilowatts of power to heat the water and the house.

Melin Meloch has another link with Docton Mill of which I am a little jealous. There is a great iron lump of an elecric cooker there which works on the heat store principle, rather like a farmhouse Aga - but much less elegant. That cooker came from here where Nigel first installed it for Bunny Duncan 50 years ago. I was just too late on the scene to stake my claim. The only other example is in the Science Museum in South Kensington. It works on only 500W power input (the equivalent of half-a-dozen lamps) and that explains its history and why, probably, only two still exist. They were made by one of the pre-war electricity companies in an early attempt to compete economically with gas in the kitchen.

Nigel returned to Hartland fairly regularly over the years to visit Rose Marie and Ronnie and other friends. For a long time he had half an eye on this place as his retirement mill but so did others and especially Ronnie's daughter Briony. In the end, Ronnie just sold it; he became obsessed with building up a literary trust fund to promote his work after his death. But Nigel's homing instinct for homing instinct for Hartland had deeper reasons and those lay in his nearly life-long friendship with Ronnie and attachment to the family, especially Briony. He was close enough to make outrageous comments (which could, just possibly, one day prove true) such as; "Rose Marie is a much better artist than Ronnie is a poet!" Well, her portrait drawings of Benjamin Brittain (a frequent visitor) and Ronnie himself could one day find a place in the National Portrait Gallery whereas the poetry, if not the rumbustious autobiography is, at present, in limbo.

A powerful image of Nigel's place in the family stems from Briony's wedding day at the lovely little church at Welcombe. It is also a mememto of Nigel, the technocrat because he, quite literally, created this image. He had a camera, the like of which I have not seen before or since, which took two 35mm colour slides simultaneously through two lenses at the same convergence as our eyes. He also had a viewer to match. The three-dimensional effect of colour slides is, we all know, good but of Nigel's it is remarkable; in depth to the life, you might say. So he got somebody to take slides of the procession through the churchyard and what do we see? Well, Ronnie was scornful of church weddings and such mummery and certainly was not prepared to dress up (a curiously exclusive and narrow view for a dramatist, I thought). Thus Nigel - also not inclined to dress up very often either but certainly pleased to rise to the occasion for Briony - took the bride on his immaculately- suited arm to church and followed the happy couple out with the families. His 3-D colour pictures show all this scene in depth all the way back through the sunny churchyard to the dark, saturnine, shy and stalking figure of Ronnie bringing up the tail. If St Peter has a copy, the poet is doomed.

Nigel made a four-square "Englishman's" point of not being an intellectual, especially in the context of his association with Ronnie. He would wave his hands in a world-weary manner and say things like: "Oh, I know it's all very good and he's a clever little bugger but it's all over my head. I go to the theatre to be entertained and fancy the actresses." At the risk of being earnest myself I must say that to leave it there would be, to say the least, an incomplete record of the relationship between two men who left more footprints side by side than most in their time. Virtually since the early 19th Century - after the great "age of enlightenment" - we have tended to ascribe intellectual "depth" (in the humanities; philosophy, religion, literature and suchlike) to the arts and relegated skills - a way with spanners, mathematics or even sometimes (in our confusion) with paint or clay or words - to the non-intellectual sciences. But Nigel was, I think, more naturally and surely aware than Ronnie from birth, as it were, that such knowledge and understanding as we can achieve of ourselves and our place in "the scheme of things" comes more from trying to think it through than from poetic or mystical intuition. He understood very well, for example, and thoroughly enjoyed with me more than once exploring the point to the bottom of a bottle of wine that all our science and all our mechanics are only concepts or descriptions which may be spoken in English or, maybe at some risk of change, in Chinese and may put a man on the moon with spectacular accuracy and applomb but then will, most certainly, change beyond recognition as tomorrow's thinker succeeds Einstein who succeeded Newton etc. Nigel found all this very exciting and had no doubt that the destiny of human intellect was to unravel all the mysteries.

The academic literary critics will search in vain for evidence of Nigel's influence on Ronnie but it is there, They worked together and were friends for many years and Ronnie greatly admired Nigel's abilities, Many of the poet's perceptions of the world must have come from his scientist friend, Later in life Ronnie launched a great project to close "the breach" between science and poetry in his epic poem "Man", He made a great point of being the poet who studied science to achieve this epic and thus of making the great leap across the divide between science and the arts,

Ronnie claimed authenticity for "Man" by dedicating his poem to an establishment scientist - a great name now slipping rapidly from memory - and sprinkling notes with other famous names to persuade us that his poetry - his music - had been tested by their ears (true or deaf we know not) for verification, But this is also the point where I see Nigel come in, Page after page of "Man" struggles to make music with concepts which only ever were shadows; equations, mathematical and chemical formulae and the like, Yet, suddenly, I find lines like these which Nigel the scientist would have recognised at once as his own life-long faith;

"Clay was our past, clay is our future;
A fossil sandwiched between ignorance and oblivion,

Yet for all that, all this and this, the Universe
Can only speak, or sing, or weep through us,
May night which knows no mercy
Find compassion, and kneel down to Man in stars,"

Nigel Spottiswoode, my charming, thoughtful friend - and Ronnie's friend long before - was a happy polymath inspired by reason which enabled him to see our clay as clay, buoyed by his faith in the long march of human progress - we have already come so very, very far from that "night which knows no mercy" - and inspired by the challenge, fresh every morning, of trying to find new pathways through chaos ".....the Universe can only speak, or sing, or weep through us," Ronald Duncan, like me, must have drawn something from Nigel's optimistic perception that mankind, of which we all are privileged to be one, has the unique gift of reason which has taken us so far in only 180,000 years - to our first, godlike overview of the universe - and has the power to take us on even beyond the eventual death of the sun, Nigel told me once that our most civilised social institution was the standard coroner's verdict which insists that suicide is committed only "when balance of mind is disturbed,"

My last meeting with Nigel shortly before he died was an evening given over to talk about such things and it turned out to be one of the most memorable evenings of my life and I am sure it was for Nigel, too, He had been very weak for days, drugged and sad - not frightened, just very sad - at the knowledge that he soon had to go,

But suddenly, this evening, he was better and there was hope....hope because if he did gain sufficient strength there was promise of a further operation to prolong his days for maybe another precious year or even two. Also his nephew James Spottiswoode had flown in from California to see him and that was a tonic because James is as much a chip off Nigel as if he had been his son. Moreover, James had sat through his maths degree; like Nigel, he had dropped out but then went back aged 28, got the First that could so easily have been Nigel's and now he was doing great things with it.

Jane gave us a splendid dinner and we opened bottles of wine and Nigel said to hell with his drugs and joined in and James introduced us both to the so-called "new science" of Chaos. He is one of the truly privileged people these days who has a generous US Government grant for pure research; a salary simply to sit in the Californian sun and think about pretty well anything he chooses. Nigel was delighted with James' good fortune and brimming with curiosity to hear what he was doing with his [redacted] golden days.

The answer came in a new word for both of us; Fractal. If you look at the random rainbow pattern of oil spilled on the surface of a puddle or shapes of the clouds you see fractals. Sometimes fractals have a characteristic shape like an oak leaf, sea shell or a fingerprint but, when you look closely, no two are alike. The order we have imposed on nature with our science to date has had such precise boundaries and made such clear-cut descriptions that we have dismissed fractals as chaotic systems, abandoned to chance, like leaves blowing in the wind. But James and a rapidly growing army of colleages in the United States was working on a great exploration of these phenomena which, although they dominate our own nature and the world around us, have so far escaped our understanding. Of course the ever-increasing power of modern computers has provided a key to unlock this latest magic box and what lies inside - what we now call "Chaos" - promises to be as exciting as all other explorations of science up to the present day.

Nigel went to bed that night a very, very happy man. He had learned something new, something "marvellous" from a new generation and, as it were, out of his own flesh and blood. So his ashes would all too soon be blowing out into chaos but the hands of men who were like him and part of him would be there too searching and sifting and making things work.

Next morning Nigel felt so much better that we went up to the Mill Pond to check the sluices and discuss how the leat from the river could be improved for the winter. Then down to the turbine house where he said he had something to give me for Docton Mill. It was a pair of worm-screw rods for raising sluice gates but of course they were superb, glittering like jewels and machined out of a rare, virtually ever-lasting steel alloy. It was a parting gift.

N. Stevenson Pugh