

Sunnyside Allotment Society's Tribute to Ted

Ted was born in Sussex and moved to this area when he was about 8 or 9, when his father took up a job at the Norcott Hill estate, owned by the Claridge family. Daughter Peta Claridge still lives there and remembers Ted as a boy.

He went to the primary school in Northchurch, a quick bike ride down the hill from where he lived. He then went on to Ashlyns and sometimes fondly reminisced about his school days and teachers with fellow allotment holders who had attended the same school.

The family moved to Woodlands Avenue in the 70s when his father Frank retired. While he was still working he cared for his parents in their later years.

When Ted left school rather than work on the estate, he chose to work for the railways. His enthusiasm led to his encyclopaedic knowledge and love of the railway network and in the sixties he travelled the country taking photographs of lines which were being cut by Beeching.

While working on his allotments he would stop and watch the trains, and he made it his business to know when unusual trains, including steam, were passing through the town. Often there would be a group of us standing with Ted on the Ivy House Lane bridge expectantly waiting for the train to arrive.

When Ted retired, he took great pleasure in meeting up with his former colleagues. They would travel all over the country by train for lunch, including Oxenholme in the Lake District for a Christmas lunch!

A big steam enthusiast, until recently he owned his own Burrell traction engine. It was a common sight to see Ted driving it through the town at 5mph doing what he liked to call 'traffic calming'.

In his early years of ownership he took it to charity events in the town and further afield to steam rallies. He kept it a local farm and at weekends he would enjoy maintaining it. A couple of years ago Ted sold it back to the family of the original owners.

Today Bill has brought the engine back from Kent in tribute to Ted and it is now parked in Sunnyside New allotments just down the road.

Ted had a love of football, was a keen player at school and later, until an accident eventually led to him giving up playing and probably resulted in having what he called his 'knackered knees'.

He religiously followed the fortunes of Berkhamsted Football Club and was a keen supporter of Pompey.

On Saturday afternoons he could often be found listening to the football results in the Tea Hut and his regular Sunday morning routine was to buy the Non League paper from Bobby's on his way to the allotments. He would sit and read it under the awning and woe betide anyone who interrupted this, even Stripey cat.

Ted was well known locally, because he took such an interest in the town's affairs, to the benefit of the community. He would go to council meetings to keep the Town Council on their toes, especially regarding planning and allotment matters.

He believed strongly that local government should be non-party political and run in the best interests of the town, and he even once stood for election as an independent town councillor.

He was one of the founder members of CARAB (Conservation Area Residents Association of Berkhamsted) which was formed when plans were first drawn up to demolish the Coopers factory site in Manor Street and to ensure it was re-developed in keeping with its surroundings.

He was later its active chairman for several years, championing many causes in the conservation area.

Ted cared deeply about the environment and could often be seen litter picking in Woodlands Avenue and elsewhere. He was an enthusiastic member of the Crime Prevention Panel, and would help at their local events. Through this he developed close relationships with the local police, who used to often visit him on the allotments.

'You warmed us up with a brew and made us smile with your stories. Thank you for making us so welcome. We will miss you Ted.' was a heartfelt tribute from the local police.

All of the members of the Allotment Society knew Ted as an allotment gardener. Ted was Sunnyside Allotments.

He came first to help his dad on his allotment which he eventually inherited. His plots were easily recognised by his giant beanpoles and a wealth of hollyhocks and poppies in the summer. He was such a knowledgeable gardener that people would always go to him for advice, which he was happy to give. Apart from cultivating his own plots, Ted would spend an enormous amount of time on communal projects, helping people build sheds and compost bins and mowing paths for everyone.

Many Sunnyside tenants would not be gardening here now if it were not for Ted, who was instrumental in saving the allotments from development in the 1990s. As one tenant wrote *'Ted's vigilance and tenacity saved Sunnyside Allotments for all to enjoy. Without his input the site would be a housing estate.'*

He was the founder member and first chairman of the Sunnyside Allotment Society, known as the SAS and he was also our allotment rep for many years on the Town Council.

His commitment and enthusiasm could not be over estimated. He was particularly encouraging to new tenants.

One wrote of his kindness and help when they started, and spoke of, *'his love and passion for just seeing other people enjoy their allotments'*.

Ted never felt the need to go on holiday, when he could stay on Costa del Sunnyside. He didn't have a passport, he didn't 'do' abroad and he never ate foreign food! He was a traditional meat and two veg man!

On days out, he would eat a large breakfast, two dinners and even a sweet! He made a good recovery after knee replacement operations in recent years and showed typical grit and determination to get back to working his allotments. Latterly he hadn't been in the best of health, but put it down to anno domini and just carried on.

Ted inherited his love of animals from his father. He made friends with all the dogs (and their owners) walking through the allotments. He loved cats and had his own some years ago. More recently, he lavished a lot of TLC on the allotment cat, who lives in the TeaHut.

The TeaHut just grew like Topsy and became the social hub on Sunnyside Old, largely due to Ted. Many a social gathering was held there including Ted's own 70th birthday party and many impromptu fish and chip lunches. Ted would sound the hooter, which could be heard all over the town, every 2 hours without fail, summoning all to partake of tea and cake.

To sum up, Ted was very caring, helpful and friendly, always willing to stop and have a chat with anyone, be it on the allotments or on the local streets. He was generous with his time, knowledge and his vegetables. He had an amazing memory for details such as phone numbers, car registrations and engine numbers and he had a great sense of humour.

To finish, a moving tribute from an allotment holder and local resident who cannot be here today.

'We shall all miss him terribly and shall not see his like again I fear. He was a true original and the eye he kept on the town and all its goings on was extraordinary. He was a true stalwart of the community, irascible and annoying sometimes but with a generous heart and a genius knack for starting a recalcitrant mower! He also had a wicked laugh and sense of humour. That grin of his could make a grey day shine. I don't suppose one feels the true extent of the loss of someone like him until he isn't there. Sunnyside has lost a legend.'