

ROBERT HENRY DAVIES
1st September 1930 – 19th July 2019

Robert Henry Davies left us at Epsom General Hospital on the 19th July 2019. He was 88 years old.

Born in Leyton, East London on the 1st September 1930 to parents Thomas and Edith, Robert or Bob as he was often known was the youngest of three children. Bill and Neena being his elder brother and sister.

The family relocated to South Croydon, but on Bobs ninth birthday, World War II began and life in Britain was to be very different from the world we know today. Bob was evacuated for his safety with his sister to Lower Beeding in West Sussex and it was here that he honed his love for the great outdoors.

He enjoyed playing in the woods and whittling sticks - all pastimes that he kept an interest in well into his later years. Neena and he returned to the family home when they thought the worst of the war was over however Bob was fortunate (to put it mildly) when a bomb landed on the house next door but failed to explode.

On another occasion he was leaving the newsagents on the Brighton Road, with his paper round sack full of that mornings newspapers to be delivered, when another bomb fell behind him and landed on the shop itself. I'm still not sure whether he was lucky or if things followed him around but either way, he escaped both incidents unscathed.

Bob attended the local Grammar School in South Croydon and by all accounts he was a diligent child and consequently he did very well.

Upon completing his education, he sought employment at a farm in Capel where he continued his interest with life outdoors, before he was seconded into the Navy to complete his National Service. During this time Bob spent most of his days Boxing and playing rugby for the service's team.

It soon became clear that Bob was lucky after all, as he was demobbed two days prior to the beginning of the Korean War - a situation that no doubt

would have altered his outcome.

Bob began life as an Underwriter for Employers Liability (now Aviva). He certainly understood the realities of a working life and he possessed an enormous capacity for work and for getting a job done but, if we are honest, it was also a position that he loathed but appreciated everything that the job came with and therefore it was of no surprise when offered the opportunity of taking early retirement at the age of only 52, Bob practically ran out of the door.

But it was while working at Employers Liability that his life would change forever. He met a young lady, Pamela Thomas. She was quiet and timid - he was not. But opposites do attract and together they started to click and soon they began to court. Their relationship blossomed and so on the 18th March 1961 at the St Mary Magdalene Church in Addiscombe - Pamela Thomas married Robert and they were united as Mr & Mrs Davies.

Ian and Susan completed their family in 1963 and '65 respectively.

The family tried a holiday on the south coast at Bognor Regis but if truth be known, Bob vowed he would never holiday again at a British Sea side resort... and he didn't.

Family holidays took the shape of 'working' holidays at farms in either Herefordshire or Pembrokeshire. They were marvellous fun and much more what the family enjoyed apart from the time they all caught chicken pox in Devon.

The holidays to Mrs Daniels' farm in Ledbury became so regular they were looked upon as part of the farm family. It was fantastic - it was also handy that Bob got a pretty good deal for cash. Those were the days!

Bob had an infectious zest for life and an adventurous spirit so when the children enquired about a ski-ing holiday, Bob obviously said yes. Whatever the challenge, wherever the event Bob was there in full force.

Bob cherished his rugby - he was a tight head prop and revelled in the close encounters of the scrum. He joined Streatham Rugby Club and became a stalwart of the 1st fifteen. From 1950 until '74, Bob represented

the club, on and off the field, and even got mentioned by The Daily Telegraph.

The squad was on a summer tour of Guernsey and got involved with launching a rescue attempt for a small dog that had landed in the sea. The Daily Telegraph were delighted to write such a positive article about the heroic rugby boys from South London and the owner of the dog also happened to be the landlord of the hotel where the team were staying. Well, he was so grateful he provided free beer for the entire team for the duration of their tour. Happy Days.

What no one *had* mentioned though was, it was actually Bob who had delicately assisted the animal off the pier and into the sea in the first place. It was only after a slight pang of guilt as he witnessed this small insignificant mutt struggling with its swimming that Bob decided to launch a rescue at all.

Bob was always up for a good laugh so while on tour to Fakenham in Norfolk, it was decided that the club should leave its' stamp on the town by painting a white hoop around each post box therefore leaving the town wearing the Streatham Club colours.

However he, his very good friend Vic Goodale and others were caught red handed so to speak and it seemed a bit of a bargain to hand over £5 each to cover any of the criminal damages incurred rather than stay in communicado with the local police.

As a young man, Bobs' love of the great outdoors resulted in him and his friends trekking the countryside. He was also a passionate cyclist and cycled to Cornwall and back with friends including his oldest chum David Morris (who is here today) as well as touring parts of Europe just after the war.

While out and about the favoured form of accommodation was always with the Youth Hostel Associations or the YHA as it is known.

Bobs time in the countryside meant that he encountered numerous tempting hostelries serving the finest beers. These evenings out often consisted of an appreciation of live folk music and introduced him to a form of dancing that would dominate his soul. Morris Dancing.

Bob became a member of the East Surrey Morris Men in 1950 - a group of men who took equal pleasure in the unique and quirky traditions of our nation while enjoying a darn good pint of ale.

For over sixty years Bob was the life and soul of this band of merry men who brought pleasure and entertainment to thousands. They toured country villages and pubs and Bob became immersed in the history and culture of Morris Dancing.

He possessed a great voice and a huge repertoire of songs and could tell many a fine story.

You see Bob Davies was many things to many people

A husband to Pam

A Father to Ian and Sue

A Father-in-Law to Roy

A Grandfather to Phoebe

As well as a friend and an inspiration to so, so many more.

He will be remembered for the energy and dedication he gave to each and everyone of his roles.

Yes, he could be scruffy, stubborn and argumentative occasionally and of course he was never wrong himself but he was a generous and a gregarious character who just got on with whatever needed to be done.

Bob was not the most romantic of chaps but he and Pam were the best of hosts. They held regular social events with Pam excelling in the kitchen while Bob made sure everyones glass was always fully charged with his often lethal homemade wine and beer.

The nights would be spent in the garden with Bob commanding the role of chief bonfire lighter. He did love a good fire.

Other passions included history - he was a sponge of information and could recall anything to do with World War II.

He was also mildly addicted to a cheeky maiden bid at an auction. It wasn't unknown for Bob to return home with some unusual item that he

had purchased and hoped to sell on with a 10% profit, but in fairness everyone was surprised when he arrived back with fifty pairs of second hand clown trousers. Yes you did hear me correctly .

Bob was well known for suggesting shortcuts when out driving but I think its fair to say that these didn't always end up quite as he intended. Ray Fuller, Chris Hoskins and Bob were en route to a pub in Somerset as part of the Morris tour. Well, it had been raining fairly heavily the night before when the boys in Bobs little red Micra arrived at a ford in the road which they needed to cross. They entered the water and then watched helplessly as it flowed over the bonnet and then began to fill the car up.....Ray & Chris made their escape via the windows and then thigh deep in water pushed the car back onto dry ground.

Another of Bob's miscalculated journeys ended up with Bob driving illegally onto Forestry Commission land to cut 'Morris Sticks', but somehow he drove the car so far into the woods that he got stuck and then had to walk miles to find a local farmer to tow him out.

Bob also loved a good quiz show and didn't disgrace himself when he appeared on the popular show 15 to 1 as well as Todays The Day.

But above everything else Bob Davies was a loving, generous and proud husband, father and grandfather who was inspirational in his care and devotion to his family and passionately maintained family traditions.

Bob leaves a legacy of care, kindness, commitment and involvement in the heart of his family and the community. He was a trusted confidant, a loyal friend and a wise mentor to those who crossed his path.

As many of you know in 2010 Bob suffered a stroke that made the past few years complicated to say the least. The inner strength that he displayed with dealing with his ailments was an insight to us all. He never complained, never moaned about the months that were fraught with difficulties; but the serenity he displayed was his hallmark.

Bob's greatness was not measured in terms of wealth or fame but in strength of heart and spirit and it is that generous spirit that will never be forgotten.

Bob Davies was a wonderful character, a loud yet caring man who will be dearly missed