

A TRIBUTE TO BEN.

FUNERAL SERVICE, HOLT HEATH CHURCH, 14-1-1991.

Carole, Dave, Alistair family and friends we meet here today to pay our respects and to say farewell to Uncle BEN.

He was born in 1904 at Brownheath. He came from a fairly large and closely knit family, and it is very pleasing to see that some of his brothers and sisters are still with us and present here today.

BEN left Great Witley School at about 13 years of age and commenced work for Sir Herbert SMITH at Witley Court. He graduated from errand boy to become Sir Herbert's right hand man. However, Sir Herbert insisted that young COOPER, as he had become titled, worked on Saturdays, but by this time BEN had become a keen footballer and football had become a priority. It is suffice to say that BEN left Sir HERBERT to become a coal miner, thus giving him Saturdays off for football. I never saw Uncle BEN play, but he often reminded me that he was a power striker with either foot, something feared by the best of goalkeeper

In 1932 BEN married his beloved Ina and they spent 45 happy years together until she died in 1977. Carole, Ben's pride and joy and devoted daughter came along in 1943.

During BEN'S married life he worked for the late A.B. Tyler as a general farm manager for 23 years, first at Cockshut Farm, Wichenford, Chapel Farm, Ombersley, Kitbridge Farm, Isle of Wight, The Mill Farm, Holt Heath and then to Sunningdale Bungalow which he bought. During this time he was always ably assisted by Aunt Ina.

After A.B's death in 1960 BEN worked for the late Tommy Ward at Witley Park Farm and it was during that time that Mr. Ward had Witley Park House built. This house was erected on open farm land and it was BEN who created the fine gardens that surround it today. When Mr. Ward retired and moved to live next door to BEN, BEN continued to care for the gardens for the new and present owner of Witley Park House Mr. Edwards. These gardens were BEN'S pride and joy. He tended them for 25 years.

BEN was a very hard working man, always with a full time job, but he still found the time to enter his produce at various local shows, and on many occasions managed to get his name inscribed on the cups awarded for best entries.

Whilst BEN was with Mr. EDWARDS he assisted the Bishop of Barking in setting out his garden and the BISHOP'S letter of appreciation is still kept in BEN'S old brown leather wallet.

It was whilst BEN was living at Sunningdale that he was approached by the Television people to assist them in preparing a programme about Witley Court. BEN was of course an authority on the history of the court and many times he was visited by persons who were researching Witley Court requesting details about what had at one time been a magnificent country residence. In actual fact BEN appeared on Television twice to my knowledge giving some of the history of the court.

BEN was a man who always had a smile for everyone. To his house one was always welcome. In fact he would not allow his door to be locked until he went to bed in case somebody called.

Since BEN'S retirement, which in total was no more than two years, I have visited him many times and it was during those visits that BEN would quote passages from the Bible. He always made a point of reminding me that it was no good trying to see into the 'Unknown' because nobody could do that. "The 'Unknown' he said, " was something to work on in the after life". He added that the reason 'AMEN' was used after everything said in church was to remind you that was as far as you went in this life, and you should not try to probe into the second world. That I think shows what sort of a man BEN was, a man who lived and enjoyed his life here on earth to the full and who was quite prepared to leave the unknown world alone until such time as the Good Lord directed him into it.

BEN was a lover of nature and his little birds were fed and watered every day. The large Magpie dined on the front lawn, the little birds on the back lawn, this said BEN was to save confrontation. Even little flowers in the cracks in the path had got to be left to grow. The side garage door was always left open to allow his swallows to enter and nest. On one of my visits to Sunningdale I saw BEN had fixed a direction arrow sign to his kitchen door directing the swallows into the garage. This was because the swallows had mistook the kitchen door for the garage door. It worked.

On behalf of Carole and her family I should like to express sincere thanks to everybody, who, throughout BEN'S life contributed in any way to make his life so enjoyable. During his lifetime he made numerous friends. At no time did I ever hear him mention an enemy. Why? because I'm sure he didn't have any.

In conclusion I should like to thank in particular a few people, who, over the past two years when BEN was not so mobile, have given him tremendous support.

John, his brother, who took him shopping every week and to get his supply of library books.

Mrs Morris, his daily help.

The Meals on Wheels ladies.

His two neighbours either side who were always there if he needed them.

Christine who sent him his little tasty dish for Tuesday dinner and his much loved jam doughnoughts.

Mr. Edwards, his old Boss, who visited him and took him home for coffee and to see his beloved gardens.

Tom Price, his good pal, who chauffeured him to church and a well deserved drink afterwards.

Lorna, his sister, and Fred her husband, who visited him as often as possible to chat about old times.

Staff at Ward 4 Newtown Hospital who tended him so carefully during his last days.

If I have missed anybody out please forgive me.

I have tried to condense a very active 86 years of BEN'S life into a few minutes, a feat I have found virtually impossible. One couldn't give a full account of his life in a whole day.

It only remains for me to say I am proud to be a nephew of such a lovable and good living man. The memories of Uncle BEN are too rich and enjoyable for this to be a sad day. He would not have wished it to be classed as such.

Thank You.

  
Trevor.