

Kenny Hazelwood, 1935 – 2020

Ken was born in 1935, in Great Bealings, a few years before the outbreak of WW2, which meant his childhood was shaped by the restrictions of rationing, the fear and trepidations of the time. I remember Mum and Dad both telling of the “doodle bugs” passing over their respective homes towards the end of the war.

Mum was Kathleen and Dad was Harold and his childhood and family life must have been terribly busy, moving to Lower Road in Grundisburgh in 1936 where he shared his upbringing with siblings Dennis, Joyce, Basil, Freddie and Mary.

He went to school at Grundisburgh; passed his "11 plus" and went to Ipswich High school for an entrance interview. He told them his dad was a drayman for the Tolly Cobbold brewery..... and did not get accepted, the snobbery of it.

Ken started working, earning pocket money for tending local gardens and Auntie Mary remembers his generosity because he would give her 6d from his earnings so she could go to film showings in the village.

Proper work started at the market garden in Post Mill, a long time before it was built upon for housing, before starting at Notcutts in 1951.

Ken was of the age when everyone had to do National Service and he did his national service in Italy. When demobbed he returned to Suffolk, where the family had rolled out the red carpet and flags were flying. Mary said he was not too happy about all the fuss.

We're not quite sure how Ken and Mary met, quite likely at a local dance held in a local village hall, cycling miles on their bikes to get there ... but meet they did and were married at Earl Soham Parish Church on 18th Dec 1959, a bitterly cold day as recalled. They set up home in Grundisburgh at 1 Rosehill Cottages and moved to Roseville in 1968, with children Robert, Brian, Susan and Norman.

From 1951 to Dec 1999 Ken worked for Notcutts: 48 years! He was recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society for his services to landscape gardening and worked at the Chelsea flower show for several years. Although he did say after he had retired, that he hated doing all the work for a few days to have it bulldozed at the end! All of us who lived in Grundisburgh knew Ken for his garden - at harvest time he grew the chrysanthemums for the harvest festival - but the garden was more than flowers – it was full of vegetables too, being self-sufficient throughout the year. We kept chickens and rabbits for meat and eggs. “The smell of the “chicken” potatoes cooking on the rayburn was disgusting. I was glad they were not for us”.

Ken's gardening skills earned him recognition at the Grundisburgh flower show, with cup wins on 11 occasions between 1986 and 2011 as the current records show.

Ken would gladly offer advice on gardening matters and tendered many gardens in Rosehill and The Street. He would stop and chat with anyone he met. Iain Langdon recalls a few memories of when he moved into The Holme in the mid-eighties. "He guided me through doing the lawns. As I rotovated the soil and then tried to rake it out he pointed out that I was doing it all wrong with a 9" rake. He provided two 2ft rakes and loads of seed and showed me how to do it properly. More recently, I replaced the hedge between us and The Bakery and he saw me putting posts and rails in and immediately announced that I didn't have enough horizontal rails. I told him the posts were too long and I would cut them off to have quite a low fence. His reply, naturally, was why have you wasted money on long posts that you are then going to cut down!"

His wife Mary (parish council and bowls club) passed away in 2008, having been lovingly cared for by Ken. He regularly visited Mary's grave and chat with Clare (vicar) in the churchyard. They would talk about the weather, the garden and chew the cud. It was Ken who planted the original weeping willow on The Green, before it was destroyed by the 1987 hurricane and he planted the one that's planted there now.

Willows have a shallow root – but roots that spread out far and wide – in contrast Ken's roots were very much locally based - in the Suffolk countryside he loved and worked in throughout his life. He was not a great one for gallivanting around – his garden was his joy and delight.

Robert Hazelwood