

Raymond Harry Steele. 21st March 1938 - 21st February 2014.

Ray - commonly known as Curly or Steely - was born in Ipswich, the youngest of thirteen children. After attending school in Tower Ramparts, which he left at the earliest opportunity, he found work on the fairs and he loved travelling with the wagons. At just fifteen he met Violet, the girl who was to become his wife. Violet was then nineteen, and her family accused her of cradle-snatching! They set up home in Ipswich, but it was the travelling life they both loved - around East Anglia, up to the Fens, down into Essex.

Curly and Violet had four children, Tom, Mandy, Mark and Charlie, and as a family they travelled in a trailer, picking strawberries in the early summer, plums and potatoes in the autumn and the final harvest of sprouts as the frosts set in. Wherever they went Curly would go into the pubs, playing his squeeze-box, tap dancing and playing the spoons - sometimes to the embarrassment of his children. The family came to live in Grundisburgh in the seventies - but only in the winter months which was when the children would go to school, picking up where they'd last left off. After twenty years or so of this life pattern, Violet put her foot down. She wanted to settle and tend her garden, so Curly began to keep his chickens, but he still visited the markets, buying and selling what he could. Many people will remember Curly with his little dog Whisky on his daily visits to Violet's graveside, frequently more than once a day - in all weathers - often accompanied by children and grandchildren of whom he was very proud. He recently took great delight in becoming a great-grandad to Max and Ralph. Curly would always stop for a chat on his walks around the village and a number of people took pleasure in engaging in conversation with him as he sat on the bench beside Violet's grave - as faithful in death as he was in life.

Madge Nicholas - with thanks to Rev. Canon Clare Sanders and Ray's family.