

## **A Bulletin Supplement**

# **John Peter Fifield 1940 - 2015**

### *An Appreciation*



On the morning of Friday 18 December, gasps of astonishment could be heard throughout the village, which, as the news travelled, coalesced into a shock wave of dismay. For the sad fact became known that John Fifield had just died. Some knew he had been ill and a few just how seriously, but for the many his sudden and untimely death came as a complete shock. Now, over a month later, it is still difficult to comprehend that we shall never again see his presence in the village.

He has been called 'Mr Village', an endearing, but wholly applicable sobriquet, for there are very few groups and activities in the village to which he had not, at some time, belonged, or supported. Right up until his sad demise he was pursuing his chosen interests, acting as a Parish Councillor, a position he had fulfilled with great distinction over many years, making valuable input on the MATCH Committee and had recently volunteered to continue his long term commitment as Entertainment Coordinator for the Street Fair. He was also in his element as a very active supporter and contributor to the Milton Abbas Local History Group and, as a committed Christian, to the work in the community of St James Church. Being keen on physical fitness, every Thursday found him leading and acting as tour guide on a 'healthy walk' and he was a regular attender at the Abbey swimming club, where he displayed his unique swimming style and sense of direction. However, try as he might, he never quite managed to control his laptop, despite receiving patient tuition at the Computer Café.

When John decided to get involved, it was with energetic enthusiasm, for he took his activities seriously. He pursued and developed a broad range of interests, but had a passion for the history, local customs, and flora and fauna of Dorset and Milton Abbas, which he researched avidly. His many contributions to the Parish Council and elsewhere were always worth listening to, even if, on occasions, the denouement was a tad slow in coming. He spoke not only from knowledge, but also from a platform of firm personal principles. A true democrat, but, when found to be in the minority, prepared to stand his ground.

Perhaps not surprising then that one of his favourite hymns was John Bunyan's 'He who would valiant be – though he with giants fight'. Over the years, through his many pursuits, he had built a wide network of contacts and friends, so becoming not only a key figure at the heart of the village, but part of a much wider family.



His funeral, on the 29 December, will live long in the memory of all who attended.

Hundreds came, not because they should, but because they wanted to. To say their farewell to a person who had earned their love and respect and to support and offer condolences, as we all do, to Peggy and all John's close family. There was genuine warmth in the church, both physical and emotional, in heartfelt recognition of a person who had given and achieved so much.

During the funeral Tamsin Farrant and Justin Fifield gave us, quite courageously, a summary of memories of their father's life. In this they reminded all that John was not a country boy, as many may have thought, but a Londoner, born in Fulham.

Ultimately, after a number of moves, the Fifield family settled into number 3, Milton Abbas in the 1970s. This, as it transpires, turned out to be a most successful decision for the family and, as we all now appreciate fully, for the village.

Physically a little man, but of great stature and presence. We shall miss him, knapsack on back, on his walks around the village and calling in unexpectedly, boots off at the door, to have a chat.



The many gaps he leaves on the various committees will, we might hope, soon be filled by people [and more than one will be needed] who share John's principles. It is the wells of emotion which will take more time, but ultimately, will be filled by our own personal memories of our friend John. Now John, you have no need for boots, put on the celestial slippers, you have earned them.