

Bill Allford 1923 - 2010. A Personal Tribute



A Service of Thanksgiving for the cheerful, long and active life of William James (Bill) Allford at St Mary's Church, Eastrop on Thursday 29th April 2010 was attended by the Milling Team and the Longbridge Restaurant Manageress, Linda. We thought we'd got to know him well during the six years he spent weighing and bagging flour every month, but of course, we knew him from only one aspect of his life.

We listened to the family tribute, written and read by his son-in-law, and our sorrow turned from sadness to amazement and laughter as we learned of his adventures, exploits and daring-do from his childhood and on through his adult life. Here's a flavour of that spirit which we heard about:

"Born a Norfolk lad Bill left school at sixteen and went to work as a railway clerk at Thorpe Station, serving during the Second World War in the Royal Corps of Signals as a despatch rider (but the Army never knew his only driving experience had been a small milk float!). Indeed, Bill never took a driving test either in the army or back in civilian life. His wartime service in France and in Germany was uneventful except when, out with his friends in a Jeep on something of a jolly, he was blown up but luckily escaped with a broken nose. After the war, Bill returned to his work at Thorpe Station. His sister, Evelyn, introduced him to her good friend, another Evelyn, who first encountered Bill as he carried out essential maintenance lying underneath his motorbike. Bill's great love of motorbikes was soon joined by a great love for Evelyn and they married. Now able to combine both loves, he took Evelyn for many rides on his BSA motorbike - their biking adventures became legendary in the family, who have visions of them sailing down hills and vales, the wind playing merrily with Bill's silk scarf and blowing through Evelyn's hair.

Railway work took him to Lowestoft, Walthamstow, Basingstoke, Waterloo and finally Aldershot. He was conscientious and hardworking - exemplified by the fact that one Christmas, rather than tucking into his own Christmas lunch, Bill was down at the depot, looking for a customer's

undelivered turkey so that she could enjoy her Christmas lunch. Instrumental in setting up his local branch of the NFC pensioners support association, he arranged outings and Christmas lunches for his retired colleagues, something which gave him immense pleasure. Deeply committed to this Church, Bill was a keen tenor in the choir and served on the PCC. Retiring at the age of 59, he became a volunteer hospital driver, helper at Park Prewitt psychiatric hospital and, with Evelyn, assisted in the Help the Aged Day Centre. Bill also set up and helped to run the Harrow Way Neighbourhood Care Group undertaking all manner of tasks for members of the community. But Bill was not simply a “do-gooder”, he undertook all his tasks with great cheerfulness and it was a huge pleasure to him to be with other people and to be helping them.”

Bill and I would sing and chat our way through our bagging times at the mill and my grateful thanks go to Basil Hunt for bringing his fellow Norfolk chum to the mill when Evelyn had died. He was fond of the mill, keenly carrying out his chores and so Linda had a brass plate inscribed to commemorate him which Basil has fixed close to Bill's work corner. We shall continue to miss him, but will fondly remember him and ponder about the many things this unassuming man filled his life with and his cheerful contribution to the lives of so many others.

Composed, with grateful thanks to Bill's family, by Sheila Miles Viner.