

The Tribute to Earle Derek Nash

6th November 1932 - 15th February 2018

Derek was a keen chronicler of events in his life, thus much of this tribute has been created from lists and records that he had made, along with Jackie, Jayne and Sally's myriad recollections of Derek's very full and interesting life.

Derek was a Bedworth boy, an only child born to parents Fred and Gladys on 6 Nov 1932 – the family wonder was it the fireworks that started his mother's labour?! His earliest memory was of going up a slide in Collycroft Park and being too afraid to go down! He recalled moving to a house owned by his uncle near to Newdigate Colliery where Fred worked; whilst Gladys took over her family's shop, which her granddad had opened in the late 1890's. Derek remembered the shop's windows being blown out twice by German bombs in 1940.

An intelligent and hardworking schoolboy, Derek passed the entrance exam for King Edward VI Grammar School. After achieving his School Certificate there in 1949 he started an apprenticeship in electrical engineering at EMEB in Sandy Lane, studying on day release at Coventry Technical College. His career was interrupted by his call up for National Service in 1952. After training as a Radar Mechanic in the RAF he spent 6 weeks aboard the SS New Australia to arrive at Changi Airport in Singapore where he spent 18 months. What an exciting experience for a young man you might think, but in fact Derek disliked the heat and having to eat rice 3 times a day! And despite subsequently becoming very well-travelled around Europe and the UK this turned out to be the only time Derek ventured outside our continent.

So he was glad to return to Coventry to finish his apprenticeship in 1956 and described his time at the EMEB as "changing his life" in 2 ways. Firstly, he changed his name. Derek's first name was Earle, named after the film star Earle

Williams, whom his mum had had a crush on. His first foreman at EMEB said he couldn't call him that, so Earle opted to go by his middle name Derek, but always remained Earle to his family in Bedworth. Secondly, he had his eye on a young girl called Jackie Underwood, whom he saw in the Works canteen. Jackie herself had her eye on a friend of Derek's and asked him to escort her to the NALGO dinner dance. The friend told her politely that he was going with someone else, then, in Jackie's words, "*a little voice said 'I'll come with you!'*" The rest is history and after 3 years courting Derek left the EMEB for a job at Rootes so that he could earn £1,000 per year - enough for a mortgage on their first home, 153, Kinross Rd in Lillington. The happy couple had a spring wedding on the last day of March in 1959 at St Mary Magdelene's church in Lillington, with all of the pillars bedecked with golden daffodils. In September 1961 Derek became a father when Jayne was born, followed by sister Sally in January 1964.

Cars were always important to Derek, and in typical Derek style he always kept detailed records of each pride and joy, including cost, mileage, fuel consumption and so on. His very first motor, in which he passed his driving test in 1952, was a 1938 Ford 8, bought for him by his mum for £280.

Derek subsequently worked at Armstrong Whitworth (later Hawker Siddeley), which included trips to Aberporth in Wales for trials – Jackie still has the letters Derek wrote to her from there. He was made redundant from there, but never out of work, Derek's career eventually came full circle with his very final job back at the EMEB in Sandy Lane – not as an apprentice of course this time, but in the senior role of Transport Manager.

Family life was busy and enjoyable. From when they were very young, Derek had sole responsibility for Jayne and Sally each Saturday, whilst Jackie undertook her duties as sub-postmistress at West St PO in Warwick. Steam trains and photography had always been huge passions of Derek's and he was able to combine looking after his daughters with these interests. Both girls have

happy memories of having their dad all to themselves, standing with him on bridges excitedly watching out for the trains. He perhaps wasn't so practiced at the more practical aspects of child care and they still laugh at a photo of Jayne wearing her cardigan upside down, as put on by her dad!

There were lots of holidays and frequent days out. Sundays were family days, with visits for tea with Derek's mum in Bedworth; trips to museums; exploring the countryside; climbing hills in the Peaks and Wales. A particularly memorable holiday was at a villa in Spain in 1966, with all 4 of the girls' grandparents. Jayne recalls getting locked in the loo and Derek climbing up on the roof to shout instructions to her as to how to let herself out!

Another key moment in Derek's life was on July 13th 1992 when he became Grandad to Oliver.

Derek took a welcome opportunity for early retirement at 62 and really made the most of these years. He already had a huge range of interests: the trains, of course, including the high spot of driving the Flying Scotsman at Tyseley, a present from Jackie. He was an avid photographer and has left shelves of albums, packed full of memories. Family history was another major interest and Derek was proud to trace 973 of his relatives, going back to a Richard Nash born in 1786.

He loved his music – he played the piano and adored opera. There was the garden, the lawn immaculately mown into stripes and his fishpond – the fish were fed every day at 5 p.m; watching the birds and trying to keep the squirrels away from the feeders; astronomy; the Coventry Telegraph crossword and his regular photo slot. These were just some of his many interests.

Above all, Derek enjoyed getting out and about into our glorious countryside with Jackie at his side. They have travelled the length and breadth of Britain, walking

many hundreds of miles along the most beautiful long distance paths: Pembrokeshire, the Isle of Wight, the SW coastal path in Cornwall and Devon; the Cotswold Way; the Lake District. More recently, even as his health wasn't so good, he and Jackie continued to make the most of every day, with plenty more local outings. Indeed, just a few days before he died, he and Jackie were out in search of snowdrops at Birlingham Church near Pershore – a trip they made every year.

For his 80th birthday Derek was asked to choose where in the whole world did he want to spend it? He chose Blackpool Illuminations and the family all had a great time there. Derek was asked for words of wisdom from an octogenarian's point of view. His advice was simple: "*Keep walking*". Derek and Jackie recognised, particularly in these last few years, that life is very precious with each day there to be enjoyed. And this is what he did, right up until the end.

Jackie, Jayne and Sally feel that Derek was always somewhat outnumbered by the women in his life, hence the final part of this tribute has been created by Jayne's partner Simon and grandson Oliver to balance things out with a more male perspective.

Simon's words

For those who don't know me I'm Simon, Jayne's partner and I've known Derek for over 20 years. As you are aware Derek was the only male in the immediate family until Oliver was born and I became a part of the family shortly after that.

I'd like to share some of our fond memories and reflections on Derek as Oliver and I had many shared interests with Derek. As Maureen has said, Derek was a man of science and reason and his science genes have certainly been passed down to Oliver. He was a very proud grandad when Oliver graduated with a BSc from Nottingham University in Bio Technology.

Derek loved experimenting and used to brew his own beer and make a variety of wines. He also loved his glass of red wine every day with his evening meal. Derek brewing and distilling certainly inspired Oliver and was equally proud when Oliver recently became a qualified brewer who's now making his own beers.

Although I only met Derek when he was in his 60s, I know he was sporty in his younger days playing many sports including rugby and tennis and he remained physically active throughout his life. Derek and Jackie's walking adventures, including walking the 630 miles of the South West coast path and the 186 miles of the Pembrokeshire coast path have been an inspiration to Jayne and me, and we are avidly following in Derek and Jackie's walking footsteps.

Even in his later years when he could no longer walk very far and struggled uphill, Derek and Jackie would go off in the car into the countryside with their fold up bikes and there was no stopping Derek. Even Jackie struggled to keep up with him.

Derek loved his cricket and I'm sure was pleased when he first knew I shared that passion and we had many an enjoyable time discussing Warwickshire and England's cricketing fortunes. I'm also going to take up his excellent technique: when you don't fancy being too sociable – stick on your pocket radio, put on your headphones and hey, five days of Test Match Special.

Derek was a real outdoors man and wasn't one to hang around the house unless there was something useful to do: fixing something, playing the piano or at his computer. If there was nothing to be done, then he simply had to be out and about discovering with Jackie and they were out every day, come what may. He loved to be out in the countryside, whether walking, cycling, admiring the beauty of stately homes or at open gardens scheme.

Having grown up in a sweet shop, Derek had a lifelong a sweet tooth. So if there was one good reason to be indoors, then it was to be in a cosy tea shop for cake. A daily necessity for Derek.

Derek had a deep love of nature, something else he's inspired and passed on through all the family, right through to Oliver. He was also an animal lover, a long time member of the RSPB and he had a special bond with Sally's dog Winston, who he used to walk regularly.

Moira has mentioned the photos Derek had published regularly in the Coventry Telegraph over many years. Upon learning of Derek's passing away, Leigh the Content Editor at the paper emailed Jayne to say: 'I did not know your father; however I can tell from his photographs that he saw beauty in this world where others may not – that is a special thing'.

Indeed: a very special thing from a very special man.