

Ronald Furley 23rd October 1937 to 19th February 2017

Ronald Furley, *Ron*, was born to Josephine and Cyril on 23rd October 1937 – the year of the coronation. He was born at home in Sherwood, Nottingham where he grew up as an only child. He had a good childhood at the centre of his parent's attention – parents who adored him. One of the key memories he had of his childhood was of using the air raid shelters during the bombings of World War 2. And he often reminded us of the fact that the Germans had bombed his local chip shop!

Growing up in the 1950s it is not surprising that as a teenager Dad became a Teddy Boy, adopting the full gear – the draped jacket, drainpipe trousers, the long, strongly-moulded greased-up hair with a Quiff at the front and the side combed back to form a DA (duck's arse) at the rear. Gang culture was part of the Teddy Boy scene and of course he embraced this in his youth. Dad and I shared a love of graveyards and for him it may have started when, as part of his gang's initiation test, he had to put a note in the deep crypt at Rock Cemetery during the day, and recover it at midnight on his own. He admitted it was scary but never the less he did it. He was nothing if not courageous.

Although he had many memories of going to school, he wasn't a particular fan of it, although by all accounts he was good at the Sciences. Maybe this is why he left Claremont Secondary at 15 years of age and went to People's College in the evenings so that he could go to Boots College on day release. This was the year that GCEs were introduced and, as intelligent as he was, it was no surprise that he got GCE O levels in Maths, English Literature and Language, Science, Chemistry, Geography and History.

These results allowed him to get a job at Boots the Chemist as a Trainee in the Special Labs, where special prescriptions were made. He had many stories of these times, including recollections of how all the staff had to rotate from lab to lab as, before the days of protective gear, the fumes and dust from the drugs often gave the staff worrying symptoms such as yellow skin, rashes or male breasts. He loved working at Boots and had considered becoming a pharmacist – only changing his mind when he returned there from the army and realised it wasn't for him.

Instead he changed course completely and became a SGB Steel Erector, before moving into his main profession as Jeweller. In his later life, he followed in his father's footsteps as he ran his own butchers shop for a while, working alongside his two sons. He ended his career at Homebase - a job he enjoyed until he retired at 65. But the job he did for most of his life, and was well known and respected for, was as a qualified Jeweller and manager of Jewellery Shops. He had a reputation for his expertise in clock and watch repairs, as well as for his advanced knowledge of gems, in particular diamonds. As well as qualifying as a Fellow of

Gemmology (FGA) he also held a National Association Goldsmith (NAG) Diploma, several Defence, Industrial and Technology based qualifications (DITB) and the DeBeers Diamond Certificate.

It was the latter, alongside his vast experience and reputation, that resulted in him being invited by De Beers to Saint Petersburg. He was asked there to value the Russian Reserves. Obviously, they couldn't ask the locals as, while the country was still under communist rule, it could not admit it was quite so wealthy. So, Dad was put up in an hotel and escorted daily by the KGB to the vaults, and then at the end of the day escorted back. He did not see any of the city, as he wasn't allowed out of his room, which is a shame. This adventure held strong in his memory, perhaps because he felt extremely honoured to have been asked and also because he was able to see one of the largest, most beautiful Emeralds there. We had planned on going to visit the city together this year, but sadly he became too ill to do so.

Whilst being a Jeweller was the longest career he had, it was being in the army that had the most impact on him. On 15th March 1956, he joined the **3rd Kings Own Hussars** as part of his National Service. He spent most of his time in Germany, where the regiment were stationed in Epsom Barracks in Iserlohn and York Barracks in Munster, but also served with them in Suez and Malaya. A conduct report by his commanding officer said of **Trouper Furley of the 7th Royal Tank Regiment**, *'among all that know him, Furley is a well-liked and cheerful soldier. He works hard and tirelessly..... and can be relied upon to give of his best. He has been an extremely good Signaller who was always efficient and reliable, trustworthy, intelligent and quick witted. He is one of those rare people who can keep calm in an emergency. This coupled with a sound common sense and an accurate knowledge of his job, has made him become more and more relied upon. Popular, with an amusing sense of humour, he should do well in civil life'*

Dad said that this was the best time in his life. (apart from when he got blood poisoning and had to spend a month in hospital. His boots had caught fire when a burning shell fell on him inside the tank). He felt that the army made him. He loved it and was proud of this time as a *Moodkee Wallah*, as his regiment was nicknamed.

His love of this time is probably what drove his interest in collecting military memorabilia, especially Victorian Military costume. He became a well-respected dealer and collector, especially of all things 3rd Hussars and specialising in Sabretaches – *the purses that cavalry wore flat to the left-hand side of the body when on horseback*. He had a large collection, which he meticulously restored and researched.

What else was he interested in? He loved music. The Teddy Boys liked Jazz as well as Rock and Roll, so maybe this is why he developed his love of Jazz, especially Modern Jazz - people like Duke Ellington. But he also loved classical music, especially Mozart, Elgar and Wagner; the Big Bands including Glen Miller; and some modern pop music such as Elton John and Queen.

When he was younger he was quite sporty. As well as playing basketball for the YMCA and the army, he also got certificates for Skiing when on holiday in Switzerland and, of course, was a Speed Skating Champion in his youth. In latter years, his sporting interest was a little more sedentary, liking to watch Ice Hockey or Formula One on TV.

He did like TV and Dvds. Cartoons were probably his favourite – *Tom and Gerry* and *Road Runner* were his preference when we were children, more recently the *Clangers* and *Simpsons*. He loved war films – anything with the charge of the light brigade or an old fashioned Western. Although his all-time favourite, as we know, was *Zulu*. He also really enjoyed watching documentaries, mainly about nature – especially if they were about gorillas and tigers; And he had to watch the news every day, seemingly taking pleasure from moaning about the state of the world or about human being's doing stupid things.

What else? He loved sunflowers and birds and feeding his squirrels (*his lads*). He used to like DIY and was very good at it. He could fix most things, whether it was a car or a clock. And he was very good at making things, especially out of wood – furniture, dolls houses etc. He also loved to read and was always reading something. One of his favourite books was *A day in the life of Ivan Denisovich* by *Solzhenitsyn*, but he also liked history books, especially military history. And of course, he would read the newspaper every day – cover to cover.

He was really interested in cars and steam trains, whether it was fixing them, reading about them, riding them, watching them in real life or in documentaries. He loved art – Japanese sculpture and painting and paintings of military scenes. He carefully collected antiques and enjoyed the history of them, of the people who may have used them before – his vintage glass, hourglass, clock, vodka shot cups from 1800s. He liked his vodka, also port and rum, although he was very discerning, it had to be the right one. Bison vodka above others, for instance. And he liked his food, especially tapas, pork pies, smoked salmon, cashews, figs, fried breakfasts.

Dad met mum – Dorothy when he was nearly 18 years old. They worked at Boots together and had their first date at the cinema. After about 3 years, on 3rd October 1959, they married at St Anne's Methodist Church in Nottingham. Their honeymoon was spent in Norwich, a place they moved to for a while in later life. Together they had three children –

Nett, Mark and Carl and four grandchildren – Tom, Jack, Laura and Blaze. He was very proud of his children and loved us and his grandchildren very much.

When we were children he liked to go out for the day as a family, whether it was trips to Sherwood Forest to picnic and play cricket in the woods or trips to the seaside or an air show. He used to like holidays with his family; when Mark and I were younger it would be caravan holidays at Ingoldmels – we have many a happy memory of times on the beach, building sandcastles with moats around them. When Carl was young it was trips abroad to places like Yugoslavia, with day trips to Venice, and to Spain which he loved. More recently he and I enjoyed a trip to Edinburgh to see the Tattoo, which is a really fond memory.

He still loved for us all to get together. Family were important to him. It is easy to forget that, as there have been times when we haven't seen enough of him. But when he was there, he liked to have us around, or for us all to go out for a meal. And in more recent years he has done his best to spend time with us, or do whatever was in his power to help us.

So, what sort of person was Ron, Dad? We can thank him for teaching us the values we hold - honesty, assertiveness, inquisitiveness and being honourable. He was very strongly principled. He disliked people to be indifferent to the world and, although some of us may not have agreed with his political perspective, we can be grateful that he taught us to challenge the world. He felt we have a duty to make the world a better place and was saddened that society is so selfish now. Probably one of the reasons he supported causes, such as the plight of the Gurkhas. And I think it is partly this concern for the world that led to his growing interest in Buddhism. Having spent most of his life an atheist, he started to question how the world operated and what it was that sparked human life. Buddhism seemed to offer him some possible answers to this.

What else? He was always seeking knowledge and wanting to learn more; he was very clever and as a result very knowledgeable. He was straight talking, sometimes to the point of rudeness. He was not especially tolerant and didn't 'suffer fools gladly', or for that matter, politely – he had a sharp tongue on him if he thought something was 'crap', or if you kept him waiting too long for something. But he could also be very charming. Many people have said to us in recent weeks what a lovely man he was. He was strong willed – there wasn't much you could do to change his mind once he had decided on something. A stubbornness inherited by his sons I would suggest. But he was a good man.

He was brave and courageous – something he demonstrated in the final weeks as his illness challenged him. He mainly stayed calm, and although he was in a lot of pain and discomfort, he never the less kept control and often managed the situation with humour. He has always

had a strong sense of humour. It was quite dry and sometimes strangers didn't get it, but it was always there, especially his playfulness. The playfulness that we still benefitted from in the last few weeks.

And let us not forget his generosity and his love of us. Not always openly demonstrated, but always there. I am so thankful to have been reminded by him in these last few weeks, of how much he loved us. These have been difficult times because he was so ill, but they have also been precious, because we have been able to spend this intimate, cherished time with him.

I loved my dad a great deal, and know others did too, and I will miss him asking me '***are you alright flower?***', telling me something was '***marvellous***' or stating that '***there's not much you can say about that then***'.

Actually dad, there has been a lot we can say about you, and your life, and we can thank you so very much for sharing it with us.

Written and read by Nett Furley at his funeral ceremony on 6th March 2017 - On behalf of his children - Nett, Mark and Carl Furley and his wife Dorothy Furley