

# A celebration of life John Charles Jenkins “Jack”

26 October 1929 – 09 August 2017

11.00 am, 22 August 2017, Coychurch Crematorium

*a personal goodbye*

Humanist  
*Ceremonies*

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## Tribute

Jack was born in Maesteg on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 1929. He was the third child of Gwyn and Kate Jenkins. Alan and Lillian were his older brother and sister and Henry this younger brother. Both his older siblings have already gone and Henry being ten years younger only really knew him as a teenager. The family lived at 27 Nantylfyllon Terrace. Jack attended Nantylfyllon Primary School and Maesteg Grammar where he worked hard. He was very intelligent and studious and his father who was a miner was determined that Jack would do well in school and would not work underground.

His father had a small holding on Ganwen Mountain where he kept a variety of animals including pigs, duck and chickens. Jack spent a lot of time helping on the small holding and this started a lifelong love of animals. As a result, he also spent a lot of time in Penlan Farm, helping there as well, though his father saw this as a waste of time when he could have been studying. His other passion as he grew up was cycling and this love would also last him a lifetime.

He left school when he was fifteen and started working in a paint factory in Bridgend, but he only worked there for about six months as the fumes affected his stomach. He got a new job working at a Bradenhouse, a wholesale fruiterers in Cardiff. He started helping with the deliveries and as soon as he passed his test he drove the lorries. He delivered to shops all over Cardiff and enjoyed this job as he met so many different people. He worked there for about four years until the depot closed and then he moved closer to home and began working for British Tissues in Maesteg.

He started working as a labourer and then on the shop floor before becoming a foreman and eventually shift manager. He liked working there and stayed until he retired in the late 1990s when he had a triple heart by-pass and decided it was time to slow down and enjoy life. I said at the beginning that he was known in work as either Grumpy or Bear when working nightshift, but this seems to have been very specific to those circumstances and the rest of the time he was well liked and the consensus among his work mates was that he was a damn good manager who wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty. On one occasion "getting his hands dirty" resulted in Jack being brought home by ambulance, swathed in bandages where he had been scalded by a steam leak. Typically, of him he sent someone to the door first to warn his family and tell them he wasn't as hurt as it looked. One of Ann and Jack's neighbours, Billy was a former colleague of Jack and he recently told Ann that Jack was one of the best bosses he ever had, and that he would do anything for his staff both inside work and outside, but if you did something wrong, you would know about it.

Jack was a keen cyclist when he was younger he was a member of the Maesteg Wheelers for some years and even the treasurer for a while. He rode in local races for the team and enjoyed touring on his bike, over the years seeing most of Britain from the saddle. He also achieved one of his ambitions in the late 1950's when he rode part of the Tour de France route, riding the most iconic climb the Col De Galibier and watching the actual race climb it. Though his riding days were long behind him, Jack still enjoyed watching cycling on the TV and would avidly watch the Tour de France. This year the Tour climbed the Col again, which it doesn't do every year, and Jack enjoyed reminiscing about his adventure.

Jack was very good with his hands and over the years learnt many skills, he was an excellent carpenter and really enjoyed working with wood, also doing some wood carving. He was also a good plasterer and when his parents bought their house off the landlord he completely refurbished it for them. Doing all the rendering and plastering and even making new doors throughout for them.

The love of nature, horticulture and animals I spoke of earlier remained with him all his life. He enjoyed fishing, mostly fly fishing and had fly-fished at most places in Wales worth visiting. He also enjoyed fishing off beaches and piers and while he did occasionally go sea fishing off a boat, he wasn't a very good sailor. Though when he was younger he had enjoyed scuba diving, particularly the coast around St David's in West Wales. He was a member of the RSPB and spent a lot of time in his conservatory watching the birds he attracted to his garden with pounds of bird seed. He also loved horses particularly and he frequently went to the Royal Welsh Show where he spent most of his time watching the horse competitions.

His love of gardening meant that he always had a colourful garden and when he lived in Maesteg an allotment. He grew all sorts of vegetables and beautiful flower displays, particularly big-headed chrysanthemums. The front and back gardens at Oaklands Avenue were a joy to behold and the focus of a lot of his attention.

Jack had a lot of varied interests. He liked steam trains and used to like seeing them when they went through Bridgend station. He was especially pleased to see the Tornado, the first steam train manufactured for many years when it visited a few years ago. He read a lot and loved listening to choral and orchestral music but his absolute favourite was opera. He often went to see Henry and his choir sing and in 1996 he was delighted when he and Ann went to see them sing at the Albert Hall as part of the thousand-voice choir. Jack and Ann would go to Cardiff to see the Welsh National Opera and touring productions, but their favourite treat was a trip to Covent Garden.

Jack and Ann met about twenty years ago and they have spent their retirement together. Ann said that they made the most of their time together. They simply enjoyed each other's company, be it walking the dog, their weekly visit to Porthcawl for fish and chips, being on holiday together or simply pottering about at home. I asked Ann what he was like and she told me that they had a really good life together and he was a wonderful husband and that she would always be grateful to him for that. She also told me that since his death she has been told many nice things about him, how much people liked him and found him to be honest and considerate, perhaps best summed up by Mike next door who told Ann. "Of all the many people I have had contact with, he was one of the most genuine people I have ever met."

Fifteen years ago, Ann and Jack had a fabulous holiday in Canada, visiting quite a lot of the country using trains. But while they were there Jack was taken ill and diagnosed with the early stages of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. This didn't have a huge impact immediately but over the last few years Jack's health has deteriorated and he has been in and out of hospital. He was a determined man and Ann told me that he fought hard against his condition to keep his promise to her that he wouldn't go first. But that was not to be and as it became obvious he had fought long enough, they discussed what they wanted to happen today and to say all the things they wanted to each other.