

A Celebration of the Life of

# **John Edward Allen**

5 January 1937 – 30 September 2024

6 November 2024, Southend Crematorium

Celebrant: Sally Brazier



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John was born on the 5th of January 1937 to his single mum Ida in Brighton. She had travelled there from her home town of Long Eaton to be with her sister Gladys. They looked after him for a short while so that Ida could return to her job as a lace mender. Ida returned to collect him and take him back to her family home in Long Eaton where she continued to work, and looked after her parents and her baby. John was surrounded by aunts, uncles and cousins. He was a sporty boy enjoying swimming and cycling who was, from an early age, a responsible person.

He was also a clever boy and following his junior school (Derby Road School) he attended Long Eaton Grammar school.

At the age of 17 he went to a local coffee shop and saw Betty aged 16. She noticed he was a kind and caring person, decisive too. He approached her and asked her on a date to go to the cinema. Things must have gone very well. They started seeing each other and eventually went on a cycling holiday to the West country staying in youth hostels. They married in January 1955, a few days after John's 18th birthday. Betty was 17.

It had been expected that he would train as an accountant. He was going to be called up to do National Service but having spoken to his friend Peter Hummel he changed his plans. John was advised that he could earn more money and the possibility of promotion by signing up so he might as well join the RAF. Carol was born the year he started in the RAF. His career started at RAF Compton Bassett in Wiltshire. He did his basic training here and developed his life long love of aircraft. In 1956 John learned he was to be posted to Malaysia by the RAF. Initially it was understood that Betty and Carol would be able to join him, they even had their inoculations. This was not allowed however (as Betty was under 21). Betty and John did not see each other for the next two years. They wrote letters and sent photos, John sent photos of himself on the beautiful beaches and Betty of herself with baby Carol. In those times it was not possible to talk on the phone we can only imagine how hard their separation must have been.

In 1957 John was sent to Kuantan to help set up the communications base in Jalan Gambang. After two years John came out of the RAF and returned home. Initially John, Betty and Carol moved into his grandmother's house with his mother. After a few weeks they were allocated a council property in Long Eaton. There were happy times here; the couple got to know lots of other young families like Audrey and Tony and young Carol started walking to school with their daughter. John was working at Ericsson's and also attended "night school" to study Chartered Engineering. The family expanded with the arrival of Martin, born at home in 1959. Long Eaton was fondly remembered as a place where the children could play outside and there were lots of other young families that became lifelong friends.

John was a very "hands on" father, getting involved in their games, making cars and boats in the sand on their beach holidays, helping out with homework, but it did not apparently include nappy changing. He was devoted to Betty, always looking for ways to make her comfortable and maintain her well being. He taught the children to swim; he loved swimming, especially sea swimming. Life in Long Eaton was settled, a happy family routine playing outside. Holidays to the West country, family Xmas, Easter and school routines. It must have been a shock when Ericsson's closed in 1964. Everyone lost their jobs, prompting a move South for John's family and many of his colleagues. John found a job in TMC and the family settled in Orpington in Kent.

John explained on the car journey to Kent there would be a change in pronunciation of words with the move South “Baaath not bath” and “grass not graaass”. The family kept their links with Long Eaton by returning there, frequently staying with John's mother. They enjoyed visiting family and friends including Betty's best friend Peggy and her husband David. Even meeting up with them on holidays to Wales and the West country. John was a loyal friend; he kept in touch with friends and colleagues from Long Eaton, Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire and Rayleigh throughout his life.

1968 brought further family changes. Richard was born and John got a new job in Marconis in Basildon so the family moved to the Chase in Rayleigh. John was a family man most content when surrounded by them and hosting a social event making sure everyone was well looked after. John was also always known for wearing a tie from walking the dog to climbing a mountain!

He was a very practical man, skilled at DIY and keen on doing his own mechanical repairs to the car. The family spent happy years in Rayleigh and also enjoyed holidays to Scotland, Wales and Cornwall in their touring caravan. The family had their first holiday abroad in 1972 to Mallorca; this later heralded many travels for Betty and John. Another move back to Chislehurst and Bickley in Kent was prompted by John taking up a post with the Ministry of Defence in Bromley and London. Amanda, his first granddaughter, even believed at one time he was a secret agent!

From 1982 when Amanda was born John and Betty's family grew with many grandchildren, twins Emma and Katy, Liam, Hayley, Jessica and Louis. They thoroughly enjoyed grandparenthood. John had the perfect situation to put the badminton net up in the garden, or get out the board games for family get-togethers. John looked forward to hosting bonfire nights, family Christmas's and mini golf, rarely sitting down as he made sure everyone had everything they wanted. He would take photos and videos of all the family gatherings and enjoyed hosting these events and showing the video or slideshow afterwards. A bit of a joker too he would say “would you like profiteroles?.... That's a shame we haven't got any”. He was keen to help his children in all their endeavours from moving house to DIY projects. He liked to make sure he taught them basic DIY skills too.

1989 brought another move back to Essex first to Lodwick then Leitrim Avenue (a particularly fondly remembered home). In 1995 John and Betty's friends Dave and Julie introduced them to a lovely static caravan site in Dunwich, Suffolk. They decided to purchase their own caravan and really immersed themselves in the simplicity of the basic caravan and the beautiful site. It gave John the opportunity to revisit his love of cycling, swimming and hosting family holidays. John continued to commute to London from Shoeburyness until his retirement in 1997.

Retirement heralded a new travelling era for John and Betty; they arranged some exotic trips visiting Malaysia twice, allowing John to show Betty around some of his old haunts from his RAF days. They went on safari to East Africa, visited China, Borneo, Singapore, New Zealand, Tunisia, Canada, the USA, Thailand, Bali, Austria and Switzerland. John was as ever focussed on Betty's comfort and well being and always tried to make sure there was a bath available for her and frequently a room swap. They also enjoyed cruises and coach holidays, the last one only two years ago to Weymouth where John swam in the sea.

John was a contented man; he had an interesting and varied work life and a very happy marriage and family life. He had many family roles: husband, father, Father in law to Elaine, Alan, Gordon and Mandy. He was also grandfather, and great grandfather to Toby, Noah, Eden, Darcie, Maya, Florence, Avie and Santiago.

John was referred to in a recent comment from Mr King the owner of the Dunwich campsite that really summarises this “happy disposition, his politeness and pride in his pitch were an inspiration”. John was at his happiest when making other people happy. He was loving, kind and caring, always willing to help.