A Celebration of the Life of

Alan William Anstey

9 August 1936 – 2 May 2026

28 May 2026, Kingsdown Crematorium
Celebrant: Kirsty Allen



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Alan was a gentle soul with a patient heart, the quiet strength, and a technical mind that could turn any challenge into an opportunity. He approached life with methodical determination, craftmanship, and a belief that if something was worth doing, it was worth doing to the highest standard. Throughout his life he demonstrated an incredible resilience and stoicism – refusing to give up and fighting with courage right to the very end.

The American author, Mitch Albom, says that ‘To find meaning in life is to devote yourself to loving others, to devote yourself to the community around you, and to devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose’ – summing Alan up perfectly.

To share a more personal reflection, I’d like to invite his grandson, Alex, to come forward to share a personal adaptation of the poem 'Miss Me But Let Me Go', beautifully rewritten by Alex to capture the unique spirit, hobbies, and simple pleasures that defined Alan's life.

When I come to the end of my days,
And the sunlight fades from view,
Don’t fill this room with sadness,
For my spirit has slipped through.

Miss me a little, but not for long,
Don’t let your head hang low.
Remember the love we shared in life,
Miss me, but let me go.

For every soul must travel on,
And walk that path alone.
It’s part of life’s simple design,
A turning toward the home.

When you feel lonely or heavy of heart,
Think of things that I loved so:
The garden full of life and colour,
The tools kept shining in a row.

Think of cricket fields in summer,
The sound of bat and ball.
Of skittles standing tall and proud,
Getting ready for their fall.

The swims that brought me quiet peace,
My afternoon nap maintained.
Forever holidays in sunny Cyprus,
And the pride I took in every frame.

Think of walks I loved so much,
With Welly trotting by my side.
Bran flakes and banana for breakfast,
A toothy grin, impossible to hide.

Think of the things I built with care,
The Wendy house, the wooden chest,
And know I left my love in there,
In every beam and every nest.

So, when your heart feels tender,
Let kindness be the way you grow.
Carry me in all your days,
And miss me, but let me go.

Thank you so much, Alex. You alluded to walks with Welly in your poem – your mum's dog that Alan and Barbara used to babysit for her, and Kevin, whenever they went abroad. Jane shared with me that Alan loved walking Welly in the evenings and was always strict about him not coming into the lounge. However, Welly would often find a way to sneak in, and Alan became softer and softer with him over the years until eventually, he was actively encouraged to join them. Alan also used to love teasing him by balancing toys on his nose. Welly, like Alan, clearly had a well-developed sense of patience!

Alan's love of animals really began with their previous dog – a black Labrador called Bobby, who guarded Jane and kept her safe as a baby until she was about eight. Alan really loved Bobby and often talked about how he always went to cricket matches with them. It would be Jane's mum and dad in the front seats, and Jane in the back with Bobby and another cricket fellow called Polly, all travelling in Alan's Vauxhall Viva. Bobby was a bit of a character; he would often sneak off whilst they were at the cricket, only to find the most disgusting water to swim in before returning to the car. He'd take up his place in the back for the journey home – wet, and stinking of soggy dog, forcing them to roll the windows down manually to escape that horrid, stagnant smell.

The company that Bobby provided – mischievous as it was – was just the beginning of a long line of animals that brought love and companionship into Alan's home over the years. Thanks to Alan's soft spot for pets, Jane was allowed to keep a rabbit (which inexplicably multiplied after a visit to the next-door neighbour's garden), Cilla and George the dogs, a budgie, goldfish won at the fair, a tortoise, a guinea pig, and hamsters that lived out in the lean-to and miraculously survived the summer heat. Looking back, Jane remembers never really wanting for better company.

There is a well-known reflection on life that says:

> 'The greatest simple pleasure is to be satisfied with what you have, and to find joy in the ordinary things of the earth.'

Alan lived that truth every day, holding an appreciation for the genuine things in life – the people and the animals that he chose to surround himself with.

We come now to a very personal part of today's service, as I share the tributes from Alan's family with you. No one knew him better, learned from his example, or experienced his quiet care and commitment first-hand, more
than his family. And although Alan belonged to a generation of men who rarely, if ever, spoke the words 'I love you' aloud, he never needed to. His love was spoken every single day through his actions – in the things he built, the advice he offered, and the steady, practical devotion he gave to those he cared about most.

We begin with Barbara his wife, she says –

> *Alan, we met by chance in Cyprus and it changed the whole course of my life. From the very beginning, you made everything feel lighter, brighter, and somehow more possible. I took a chance on love, packed up my life, and moved over 150 miles to be with you… and it was the best decision I ever made.*
>
> *With you, I found a happiness I never knew I was missing. You gave me over 30 years of laughter, comfort, and companionship – years I will treasure for the rest of my life. You weren't just part of my world… you became my world. My home. My heart.*
>
> *I don't yet know how to walk through life without you beside me, but I do know this: the love we shared will stay with me always. It's woven into who I am. It's in every memory, every quiet moment, every breath.*
>
> *Forever yours, Barbara.*

His daughter, Jane, has asked me to share the words she's written as a reflection of just what her dad meant to her. She says:

> *Dad, I love you, and I know I didn't say it enough.*
>
> *You were my steady place, the person I turned to for advice, for answers, for calm. I'll miss your practical wisdom, your gardening tips, the advice about plants and vegetables, how to tackle jobs around the house and the way you always knew how to fix things. I still catch myself thinking, I'll just ask dad, and then remembering… And the silence hits hard.*
>
> *In these last months, hearing you talk about your childhood, how independent and strong you were growing up, and your stories about cricket and bringing me up on your own, made me realise how much of that strength you passed on to me. I promise I'll carry it forward and pass it on to Kristy and Alex too.*

Thank you for being my dad. Thank you for loving me in your quiet, steady way. Thank you for shaping the person I am.

I love you, dad. Always.

Alongside Jane's reflections, his Granddaughter Kristy also wanted to share some cherished memories that show just how central a figure Alan was in the lives of his grandchildren. What follows is a collection of the distinct, fond, and fun memories that defined their childhood years with him.

Kristy writes,

Grandad was deeply loved by both Grandchildren. Alex and I carry so many happy childhood memories of time spent with him. From building a Wendy house together (he did 99% of the work), to enjoying the wonderfully delicious – if sometimes unusually shaped – vegetables from his garden, he brought warmth, laughter and care to everyday life.

We'll always remember being told to, 'Breathe in' to squeeze through the narrow gully that led from the front to the back of his and grandma's home; naps together under the grandfather clock; and dinners comprising jam sandwiches and fruit cakes – taken strictly at 5pm – a routine that Alan would firmly insist he never had.

These small moments became treasured times, and we will remember him always with great love and affection.

Thank you all for sharing those reflections. There is a beautiful balance in what we've just heard – the profound weight of losing someone who was such an anchor in your lives, right alongside the sheer joy of remembering the characteristics that made him who he was.

And Alan was most definitely a man of routine, despite his own denials. Not only was tea to be taken at five o'clock sharp, but dinner was always at twelve sharp, and he would religiously ride his exercise bike for ten to fifteen minutes every single day just to keep himself limber.

It is often said that the secret of a person's success is found in their daily routine, and Alan was living proof of that. He showed you all that a good, content life is built on the strength of simple, steady habits.

Born here in Swindon on the 9th of August 1936, Alan was raised in the town by his mother, Lilian, and his father, Edgar Charles, who worked in the moulding trade on the railways. Alan was the second-born child in the family, joining his elder sister, Josie, who was ten years his senior. Despite the age gap, Alan and Josie got on incredibly well. They became particularly close in their later years, visiting each other more often and

sharing a wonderful bond up until Josie passed away a few years ago, well into her nineties. Through Josie, Alan leaves behind a nephew and two nieces.

Growing up, Alan was a curious and independent child from a very early age. In fact, he often recalled a time when he was just three years old, confidently walking the mile and a half all the way back from Queens Park to the family home on Bruce Street. It was a different era back then and Swindon was a very different town prior to the second world war.

During his early school days, Alan discovered a love for cricket, a passion that stayed with him throughout his life. By his 20s, he had become the captain of Swindon's Loco Sports Cricket Club, leading the team with the same calm steadiness that defined him in every other part of his life – winning numerous trophies for both his bowling and batting achievements and appearing in the local paper – the snippets of which have been kept to this day.

Attending Jennings Street School in the late 40s and into the early 50s, Alan excelled in technical drawing, maths, and the practical subjects of wood and metalwork. These subjects suited him perfectly and gave him a strong foundation for his later career. From a young age, he showed a natural talent for woodworking; in fact, the toolbox he crafted during his school days still looks as good as new – a testament to his lifelong precision and pride and the foundation of the remarkable technical skill he carried throughout his life.

On completion of his education, his interest in technical subjects led him straight to the heart of Swindon's industry. Alan took up an apprenticeship with British Rail as a Boilermaker, using his natural aptitude for metalwork and precision on a much grander scale.

At 21, mandatory national service called for his conscription, and he served in Cyprus for two years with The Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment. Returning to the workforce in 1959, Alan carried a wonderful reference from his superiors, who deemed him a steady, clear, thoroughly reliable and trustworthy man who had shown up well during his time in service. Those years sparked his lifelong love for travel, and Cyprus always remained a place of deep meaning for him.

Once back home, Alan balanced a demanding working life with the absolute centre of his world: his daughter, Jane. As a single father, he worked incredibly hard to provide for them both, commuting daily to Chippenham, where he served as a senior planning engineer for Westinghouse Brakes. Throughout those busy years, Jane was exceptionally well cared for. While Alan was at work, she was looked after by her nan, who would stay overnight to make sure Jane got off to school safely before heading back to her own home.

Alan also taught himself how to cook, keeping things practical with a classic 'meat and two veg' approach. Because Jane got a proper hot meal at school every day, their

evening dinners were kept simple, usually revolving around a tin of soup or jam or cheese sandwiches. Later, when microwaves first became popular, Alan decided to master the technology – though it did take a bit of learning. In the early days, he was known to put a pork pie in the microwave for ten minutes at a time, until he eventually figured out the intricacies of how it actually worked.

Despite a busy routine, Alan excelled in his career, earning a solid reputation in the Westinghouse paint shop as he dealt with engineering and design queries, provided technical estimates, and focused on the introduction of new paint systems that reduced costs by 95% across the shop. His work in introducing powder coating to the company successfully resulted in Westinghouse securing several major contracts with the London Underground. Throughout it all, Alan remained entirely modest about his achievements.

Memorable holidays were spent at a Guest House at Sandbanks in Poole harbour with Jane each year. Alan taught his daughter how to row a boat, and as she grew older, she was allowed to bring her friend Nikki with her for additional company.

But Alan's story with Cyprus wasn't finished. It was on his later return visits to the island he loved so much that he met the other great love of his life, Barbara, bringing his family circle complete.

Not long after they met, Alan was sadly made redundant from his long career at Westinghouse Brakes. Ever the practical man, he chose to sign on for a brief period before officially declaring himself retired and in 1994, he and Barbara married, formalising their union in a wedding in Florida just before their granddaughter, Kristy, was born.

Barbara moved down to Swindon to be with Alan in the house he called home for 66 years, leaving a grown family in her hometown of Manchester. Together, she and Alan became a wonderful support system, helping to look after Kristy and Alex while Jane worked. Alan and Barbara took exceptional care of each other. Because Barbara lived with Coeliac disease, Alan made sure she was always looked after, regularly baking gluten-free bread for her – both by hand and using a bread machine. He remained utterly devoted to Barbara over the years, caring for her until he was no longer physically able to do so by himself.

Their shared love for travel meant there were many return trips back to Cyprus, with the couple holidaying on the island for six to eight weeks every year until the Pandemic hit. These trips were a wonderful opportunity for Alan to reconnect with the places he had served in all those years earlier as a young man. And these holidays also appealed to his practical, thrifty nature. Alan famously refused to invest in heating the upstairs of his home because he simply never felt the cold, so he often joked that these extended trips to sunny Cyprus were just a less expensive way to heat the house.

Alan had many passions, and he threw himself into each one with quiet dedication. He loved to swim, along Barbara, finding peace and rhythm in the water. He took great joy in taking candid photos, noticing moments others might have missed and further cementing his reputation as having an eye for capturing the smallest of details that led to the greatest of impacts. He also had a sharp eye for Skittles, hitting them with great precision. As a child, Jane had attended cricket alongside him, sitting to watch whilst he played and keeping score since it allowed her access to a free tea. However, she wasn't quite as enamoured with his love for skittles, despite the skill he showed for the game.

DIY wasn't just a hobby for Alan; It was a part of who he was. From a young age he showed a natural talent for woodworking. The toolbox he crafted at school still looks as good as new, a testament to his precision and pride. And the Wendy house he built from scratch for his grandchildren, Kristy and Alex, that you heard Alex speak of earlier, has stood strong for 28 years – although a little small for them now, it remains a symbol of his love, his craftsmanship, and his desire to create things that lasted.

His garden and allotment near Mannington in his early years were another of his great passions. Gardening was something he'd learned from his father and carried with him all his life. It wasn't just a hobby for Alan – it was a way in which he could look after people. First, he kept his daughter fed as a child with endless strawberries and tomatoes, and later he kept himself and Barbara well supplied with the raspberries, gooseberries, rhubarb and other fruits and vegetables he grew at home, right up until last year.

He shared his knowledge freely, passing on the tips and wisdom he'd gathered from both watching Countryfile and gardening programmes on the television and through a lifetime of learning for himself. No visitor ever left without a cucumber mysteriously finding its way into their pocket – one from the glut that fell his way after he'd nurtured his seedlings so carefully – his quiet way of giving, of making sure you went home with something he'd nurtured. His tools, cared for with meticulous attention, shone like mirrors even after decades of use. They reflected not just light, but the pride, patience, and love he poured into everything he touched.

And of course, Alan's loyalty to Swindon Town never wavered. In his earlier years, he'd been accompanied at matches by Jane, and when attendance became impossible, during his time in hospital for example, he continued to follow matches on the radio.

Alan lived a life built on care, craftsmanship, and commitment. He was gentle but strong, patient but determined, humble yet remarkable. He built things that lasted – not just in wood or metal, but in the lives of the people who loved him: Barbara, Jane, Kristy, Alex, and the ready–made family he gained through Barbara – Susan, Christine, Steven, Janet, David and June. His legacy lives on in every memory, every story, every piece of work he shaped with his hands and his heart.

He will be deeply missed and loved forever...