

## **BRIAN (TITCH) SHAMBROOK**



Brian died on Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> April at the age of 85 in Colchester General Hospital, Essex. He was initially admitted to hospital on the 20<sup>th</sup> March with a suspected blood clot on the lungs but was subsequently diagnosed with Corona virus; whether he was diagnosed as having the infection on arrival in hospital or whether he was infected whilst in hospital has not been verified.

His cycling career began with the Rodney CC. He subsequently transferred to the Sydenham Wheelers and then to the De Laune Cycling Club, which he joined on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1960, having been proposed by Harry Thomas and seconded by John Barber (incidentally, Len Brown also joined at that time and was elected at the same committee meeting). His address at the time was 18 Hornshay Place, SE15, off of Ilderton Road in the Old Kent Road area, which was very close to the Millwall Football Club Stadium (in fact his father would charge Millwall supporters 1/3d to look after their cycles whilst they went to the stadium to watch the matches; however, that did not stop the supporters throwing stones through the rear windows of the house - the windows were subsequently protected by chicken wire).

Brian was born on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1934; his parents were Ernest and Elsie Shambrook and he had one brother, Dennis who was born in 1929. His father was employed as a sign-writer for a well-known company by the name of Pearce Signs at New Cross (as was Dennis, but Dennis was an electrician with the company as they progressed into using neon tubes). It was Brian's father who originally gave him the nickname Titch not, as many thought, his friends. Brian's education was interrupted for some time when he was evacuated in the war years to East Anglia; however this did not prevent him from passing the Eleven Plus examination and gaining a place at Wilson's Grammar School in Camberwell, southeast London. On leaving Wilson's he began work with the Co-operative Insurance Company until he was called up for two years national service with the RAF as a radio technician, serving in Aden and Kenya.

He was to become a loyal clubman, taking on various jobs over the years, first as canteen manager at St Faith's Hall on Red Post Hill, Dulwich, continuing with this job when the club moved to the new clubroom at Choumert Road. From the demolition of the old church hall in Choumert Road to the completion of what was to become the finished building, the De Laune's own clubroom, Brian could be found week after week taking on any task given to him with enthusiasm and pride. As an acknowledgement for all his hard work he was awarded the Gold Badge of Honour in 1994. In 2010 he was also awarded his 50-years' membership glass tankard and became a Life Member of the club.

Those who knew Brian well were aware that from an early age he was very frugal to the extent that, whilst undergoing his initial training with the RAF, to ensure the contents of his toothpaste tube were completely expelled, he used an electric iron to flatten the tube; at the ensuing kit

inspection which was laid out on his bed, the inspecting officer took exception to this and interpreted it as insubordination, for which he was confined to barracks for several days! On being demobbed Brian retained his RAF greatcoat, cutting off the bottom half, thus turning it into a "donkey" jacket and which was kept to the end in the boot of his BMW for emergencies!

After National Service he returned to the Co-operative Society but later moved to the Royal London insurance company based in Finsbury Square as a solicitor; he stayed with that company for the remainder of his working life.

The house at Hornshay Place was demolished by the local council and he moved with his parents to a flat in Catford . He then went on to buy his own flat in Shortlands, Bromley but just as he was settling down to life in Shortlands, the Royal London, with financial inducements from the Greater London Council and Colchester Borough Council, moved their headquarters to Colchester. Employees who were prepared to relocate with the company were given accommodation in houses that the company purchased in order that they could take time to decide where they would prefer to live in the area. This gave Brian ample time to select the bungalow in Coles Oak Lane, just outside the village of Dedham, 11 miles from his new workplace enabling him to commute by cycle, which was his chosen mode of transport for the whole of his working life.

Dedham is situated in Dedham Vale, now known as Constable Country, in which John Constable was to produce many of his landscape paintings, such as the Hay Wain, Flatford Mill and Dedham Lock with the River Stour flowing just outside the village. In 1814 Constable also painted a landscape of Dedham Vale with the 15<sup>th</sup> century Dedham Church in the background, and it was at this church some 150 years later Brian honed his bell-ringing skills.

Whilst still working in London, he was knocked off his bike (apparently by an irate driver who had just been informed that he had been sacked from his job!) which resulted in Brian having a permanent limp; however, this did not prevent him from riding his bike, competing in charity running races in Dedham, walking the 136 miles of the Pilgrims' Way or the 87 miles of The Ridgeway; also the 630 miles of the South Coast Path with a rucksack and tent on his back! He was a proficient skier on pistes (classed as red runs) and had ridden vast distances on his bike in France and Spain. In recent times he had been on walking holidays with HF Holidays to the Lake District, North Wales, Dorset, Somerset and the Isle of Wight, organised by Mike Peel.

He had tried his hand at racing in 25-mile time-trials but came to the conclusion that it was not for him. He just loved riding a bike for both pleasure and commuting which, of course, fitted in with his frugal way of life. He did need a car, however, to drive the 80 miles from Dedham to Kent where most of the club cycling and social activities took place.

If the club were promoting a time-trial or road race, he could always be relied upon to assist in marshalling duties, was present at club dinners, prize presentations, Newnham Memorial services, Belgian Nights as part of the waiting staff and the New Year's Day walks from

Knockholt. For the last 20 or so years he has driven or acted as navigator on John Kavanagh's trips to France or Belgium following the different stages of the Tour de France and had his annual two-week trip just before Christmas to the Canary Islands to catch some sunshine before winter set in.

His last official position with the club, which he held until he died, was on a sub-committee originally set up when the clubhouse was sold in 2002 through lack of use. The sale brought quite a large amount of cash into the club's coffers and Brian's presence on the committee was highly valued.

Brian was a bachelor and lived alone in his bungalow. He loved riding his bike around the beautiful lanes of the Dedham Vale and will be much missed by the local villagers who knew him as "Brian the Bike". He will also be sorely missed by his many friends, be they cyclists, walkers or skiers, especially for his good humour and dry wit.

Our sincere condolences are extended to his nephews, Gary and Kevin, and to his many friends.

Brian Saxton