

Brian Fuller 1937–2022

Brian was born on 6 April 1937 in Deddington. However, it was recorded, by an act of skulduggery, accident or bribe, as 5 April, benefiting the family by his being born in the previous tax year.

His parents were Charles and Ada who had bought Earls Farm on a handshake a year before and walked their livestock on the main roads from Priors Hardwick. He had a big sister, Mary, and later a little sister, Rosemary.



Brian went to Deddington Primary School and he would recount a school trip he had taken to the Rollright Stones, walking to Ayhno station, catching the train to Great Rollright, walking to the Stones, having a picnic and then returning to school – an exhausting day but he loved it. Brian would also tell of waving to Churchill from the school playground as he was being driven by.

Brian also went to school at Muggy Mellors in, Banbury and then to Bloxham School. He excelled at boxing and was happy to report that Bloxham had once beaten the boys from Eton.

Brian was not only born into farming but he found his vocation and a beautiful 'office' to toil in. As a youngster he was responsible for looking after the shire horses, Bonnie, Nobby, Dolly and Blackbird, and when the family found horseshoes, he could tell whose it was by the wear. As a teenager he started mowing the Castle Grounds, something he did for more than 50 years.

He was very practical and built a cow feeder with diagonal openings when he saw the cows bringing out the hay when stepping back. If they had to turn their head, they would not do this. He never patented the idea but it is now the industry standard. He was a true custodian of the land. Anyone old enough to remember Green Hedges Lane in the 1970s will recall a muddy deeply gouged lane. Over the years he filled and refilled the holes as they reappeared, and mowed and maintained the farm's hedges.

He had an affinity with animals particularly all the dogs he loved as a reassuring presence around his livestock. He could calm the meanest dog and animals gravitated towards him.

He met Audrey at a dance in Wardington and knew that night that he would marry her. She took a little more convincing, but they went on to be happily married for almost 64 years, creating a formidable partnership. They both worked incredibly hard: Brian on the farm and Audrey setting up a B&B and taking to the role of farmer's wife with aplomb, even when being elbowed out of bed to take her turn during lambing season.

Brian supplemented his poor farming wages by entering ploughing matches and hedge-laying competitions. He once won £5, almost a month's wages. In 1955, Brian joined the retained Fire Service. Loud sirens rang through the village, waking all residents with the call to attend. He was a leading fireman when he retired after 30 years' service. He loved the

camaraderie and the training meant he was fantastic in a crisis, once having successfully performed CPR in front of the whole family.

He was a member of the Parish Council for many years. He was a man of action: hosting the village bonfire night, getting cars out of ditches, clearing snow, mowing, restoring lanes, planting trees and using farm vehicles for all manner of parades.

After their children, Andrew, Roy and Susan, had flown the nest, their life took off with Brian taking flying lessons, playing golf and bridge and Audry & Brian taking many wonderful, memorable holidays together.

In 2000 Brian was diagnosed with prostate cancer and initially given 6–18 months. With some amazing care from Audrey, the NHS and his incredible *joie de vivre* he lived another 20 years.

Anyone who knew Brian would know him for his legendary chat. A friend remarked, after noticing the time it had taken for him to buy something from the Co-op, 'If Brian met a talking pig, he would ask how it was'. Thereafter, if he had taken some time, the question was always posed, 'How was the pig?'

He will be remembered for being unassuming, empathetic, great in a crisis, steadfast in himself, a workhorse who was never backward in coming forward. He loved gently and consistently, loved to laugh and spend time with people and have a drink.

Susan Fuller