

# *Account of Purley on Thames*

## Obituary - Ron Denman 1929-2006

R200523 29/1/2018

### **RON DENMAN 27.1.1929 15.9.2006**

*Here is a tribute by Rita Denman to her husband Ron who amongst his many other contributions to Project Purley was responsible for many years for the setting and layout of the Project Purley Newsletter ex R000251*

An only child, Ron was born in Brighton, Sussex. He grew up in the Elm Grove area and attended Elm Grove School. He took the 'scholarship' in 1940 and passed with the distinction of gaining a Hedgecock Special Place at Varndean School for Boys. Ron had many friends and took part in the youth groups, which were attached to the parish church of St Wilfrid. Like so many boys of his age it was during the war years that he developed his interest in aeroplanes and aeronautics. He gained Matriculation standard in 1945 staying on to the 6th Form at Varndean leaving at the end of the summer term in 1947.

He decided to take a degree course in Electrical Engineering at The Brighton Technical College but this was delayed as he was eligible for National Service and in September 1947 he joined the Royal Air Force. His postings took him to RAF Leeming and Northallerton in Yorkshire and Aldergrove in Northern Ireland. He left the Service as a Leading Aircraftsman in 1949.

The next three years were spent at the Brighton Technical College gaining his Degree and his first employment was in 1952 with the Marconi Company at New Street in Chelmsford. His friendship with Rita, which began in 1947, blossomed into marriage in 1953 and they set up their first home in Chelmsford. His Department was transferred to the new town of Basildon, Essex which in 1955 was in the very early stages of development. Ron and Rita and their three-month-old son moved down to the new town. Three years later the Department was back in Chelmsford and Ron and the family, which had grown to two sons and a daughter, returned to Chelmsford. It was while Ron was with the Marconi Company that in 1959 he got his first taste of travel when he spent 6 weeks in Kenya where Marconi were installing a communications line.

In 1961 Ron was ready for a career move and was successful in obtaining a position with the British Communications Corporation a company that had been set up by Polish Air force personnel and technicians who had remained in this country after the 1939-45 war and who had developed some of the very early mobile communications. The Head Office was at that time in High Wycombe, later moving to Wembley. One of Ron's responsibilities was to organise an exhibition and hospitality marquee at the Farnborough Air Shows. These were very enjoyable occasions for him as he was able to combine his job with his continuing interest in aeronautics. For the next 15 years the family home was in Croxley Green in Hertfordshire where the three children grew up.

This was a time of rapid development in the communications industry and The British Communications Corporation became merged with the young Racal Company. In 1975 Racal started a new group in Reading named Racal Tacticom. Ron was offered a position with the newly formed group, which he accepted, and the family home moved to Purley in Berkshire. It was during the next 10 years or so that the travel aspect of Ron's career, setting up major contracts in many parts of the world took over, and every few weeks he was off on another open-ended trip. Although he visited most of Europe, Australia and North and South America his particular 'patch' was Africa. He was in

Harare about the time of Independence and witnessed the early years of self-government of a number of the emerging countries. He had many travellers' tales to tell of his experiences and the natural beauty of Africa.

Following the rigours of overseas travel Ron spent the next few years travelling for the Company within the UK. He retired in 1992 enjoying his family and home and travel for pleasure. Settling down to a more relaxed lifestyle he became involved with local affairs taking on the Neighbourhood Watch co-ordination for Purley Village and following many interests. For a number of years his involvement with Project Purley included the setting and layout of the magazine.

He played a part in the millennium year photographing of all the buildings in Purley on Thames and made a video recording of the reenactment of the Court Baron in millennium year. He was also a superb support for Rita's activities with the Society. He was a computer enthusiast and it gave him the greatest pleasure to be reacquainted with members of his old school through the 'chat room' and the Old Varndeanian Association and keeping in touch with friends he made in his youth.

He was first diagnosed with colon cancer in 2003 and underwent an operation and was successfully treated with chemotherapy and radiotherapy. The cancer was again diagnosed in August of 2006 but despite every effort by his surgeon and the medical staff he died following surgery. Ron and Rita achieved their 53rd wedding anniversary three days before he died.

A loving husband father and grandfather he is sadly missed by Rita, his two sons and daughter, four grandsons and a granddaughter.