

IN APPRECIATION OF VAL CUMMING MBE

I will always remember the day after I broke my wrist; I was sitting at home in a bit of pain and feeling very sorry for myself, when unexpectedly Val rang my doorbell and presented me with a delicious chicken casserole. Val's kind act made such a difference to me, firstly I had an already cooked meal which was a godsend with one of my arms out of order, and secondly I felt cherished by a dear neighbour which cheered me up no end. In the five years or so I lived opposite Val, I learnt a lot from her regarding 'Neighbourliness'. God bless you, Val.

Pippa Alexander

It was Val's passionate love of Sarratt that led to the formation of SPAG – Sarratt Preservation Action Group – set up by Val and Peter to enable residents to discuss new planning applications that might be detrimental to the local environment. Val organised the production of leaflets, distributed by volunteers to ensure that everyone was informed. At meetings, Peter would present the facts of the case, with interjections from Val through the kitchen hatch from where she dispensed coffee. Without Val's positive ideas, and her energy, the Sarratt of today would not be such a pleasant place in which to live. A fitting legacy to her memory would be the continuation of the crusading spirit of SPAG and the conservation of the Sarratt that she so loved.

Joy Fuller.

Without a doubt Val Cumming was a remarkable woman – dynamic, determined and caring. For four years I worked with her on the Parish Council where she strove to protect Sarratt's traditions and green credentials with a passion akin to that of a mother for her child. Sarratt became her child and when awarded the MBE, Val kept saying, "It is for Sarratt". The parish owes her a huge debt of gratitude and she has left a void which will be difficult to fill.

Brenda Lines

Val was always committed to the Sarratt Wildlife Volunteers. It was her enthusiasm as a member of the Environment Sub-committee on the Parish Council that led to the formation of this group. She would always turn up with copious supplies of coffee and biscuits, and although not strong enough to do much physical work would encourage us with the task in hand. She kept a close eye on the local environment, on the commons and the Green, and knew what had to be done. We miss her involvement, her dedication and her keenness to learn about our local wildlife. We shall carry on the work in her spirit.

Dawn Pitts

Val's dedicated love of and service to Sarratt and its community were outstanding, and although her intense feelings and passionate defence of all in which she believed made her both challenging and vulnerable, she was never afraid to stand up and be counted. We remember her deep compassion for anyone in distress, and her many acts of kindness were always done quietly and from the heart. We remember too her great sense of fun, and, however serious our conversations might have been at times, we always ended them with laughter. Thank you, Val for our years of friendship and love, and we shall never forget your courage in the last stages of your illness. We offer our thanks to God for your life.

Michael and June Clark

Val loved her village and she gave her time and energies to it with a passion that would be hard to match these days. She had a deep Christian faith that sustained her in good times and in bad, and she used that to help others. She had a kind heart and was always prepared to give her time. She could be difficult; she had very definite ideas and would fiercely defend her position even when she was totally outnumbered, but that was Val, and everyone accepted her on that basis. She was courageous to a fault, and one could only admire her for it. I loved her, although we had many a run in on Council matters, and I shall miss her, very much. God bless her and may she rest in peace.

Jenny Dimond-Hewlett

Val was a founder member of the local branch of Cancer Research Campaign in 1973 and became Chairman in 1979. She had been devoted to the cause for all those years until she died in November 2002, and during this period she and her gallant committee have raised over £556,000, a truly remarkable achievement for such a small community.

Jean de Peyrecave, Hon Treasurer, Cancer Research UK

Val was a one-off. There will not be another. She battled continuously to save Sarratt from insensitive and intrusive developments and no doubt, in doing so, she upset a few people. In a much quieter way there were the many acts of kindness and the thoughtful words and notes of thanks and congratulations for those working for the community. Sarratt meant so much to Val and Sarratt owes her a great deal. How could Val's work for the community be marked in some tangible way?

Laurie Young

More tributes to Val will appear in next months Spotlight.....