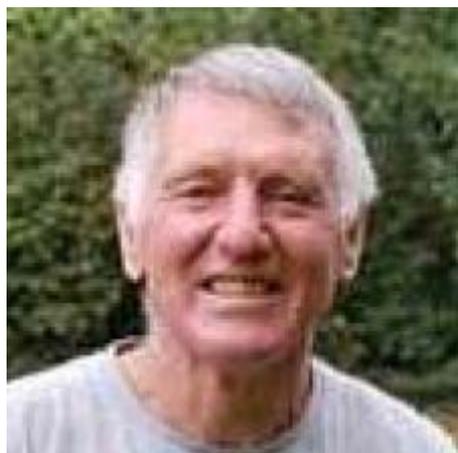


Hunts Post 24



Obituary: master thatcher dedicated to King's Ripton

Thursday, May 26, 2011

11.00 AM

WITH the death earlier this month of 70-year-old Malcolm Dodson Huntingdonshire lost a passionate devotee not only of the small village of King's Ripton but of the family's skills in thatching – now in their third generation.

The youngest of six children, Malcolm Dodson did leave the village for a time to train as a metallurgist with Peter Brotherhood in Peterborough, where he lived in the company's hostel.

But the lure of both King's Ripton and thatching – the craft introduced to him by his father, founder of Dodson Bros Thatchers Limited in 1920 – proved stronger than mechanical engineering, so he joined his four elder brothers in the family firm.

His widow, Sheila told The Hunts Post: "He became passionate about thatching and fought tirelessly to uphold standards, not only for the thatching trade but also the customer – even writing to the Prime Minister on one occasion and also going to court for the customer's rights."

In his younger days he ran a youth club in the village hall, organised and ran village fetes and car rallies, and more recently organised a fun duck race on the brook that attracted the whole village with named and decorated ducks.

He was also a keen sportsman, playing both football and cricket for local teams and being asked to play for the county.

With the family firm – which has now won the 'best thatched house award' five times – he travelled all over the world, Sheila Dodson said.

"He was also well-known for his talks, travelling after work in the evenings to WIs and history groups, first to give demonstrations on corn dollies and then on the history of thatch going back 500 years.

"But his most acclaimed achievement was the working demonstration of growing straw, binding it and thatching, at the Ramsey Rural Museum in 2006. Some people were so impressed with his talk that they listened to it twice."

He would probably still have been working for the firm today had he not been diagnosed two years ago with Pick's disease, a rare form of dementia, and motor neurone disease.

"He had great inner strength and courage, and continued to walk up the road to greet his men at 6.30 every morning until the day before he died," his widow said.

"He was greatly admired and praised by friends, customers and his workmen, many of whom said he was the best boss they could have."

Malcolm Dodson also leaves three sons, Steven, Stuart and Alastair, two daughters, Beverley and Natalie, and two

grandchildren, Baker and Fern.

His funeral will take place tomorrow (Friday) at St Peter's Church, King's Ripton, at 11am followed by burial in the churchyard.

INFORMATION: The family has requested family flowers only, but donations in his memory can be made to Farm Africa or King's Ripton Parish Church through William Peacock and Sons, Castle Hill Lodge, Castle Moat, Huntingdon PE29 3PG

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