

Wychwood Surgery Volunteer Drivers

A 'Thank You' to Stan and John

The surgery volunteer drivers' scheme was set up by Sandy Scott some years ago to help people with transport difficulties get to the surgery or to their hospital appointments. He drove non-stop from John O'Groats to Lands End as a sponsored drive to raise some money to help set-up costs.

John Cliffe and Stan Fincham were the backbone of the service for very many years, John for an amazing 22 years and Stan for 8 years after his retirement. They drove virtually every day and were always willing and cheerful. Some hospital appointments meant taking people in wheelchairs and staying half a day at the John Radcliffe while patients had various tests as outpatients. Stan was well known for his rather clapped out Fiat Panda charging about the countryside. He once went as far as London to collect someone from St Mary's hospital following a fall. John would no doubt have had many a tale to tell as well. They both continued driving as long as they were fit to do so before their sad departure.

The surgery would like to say a very big 'thank you' to them both for their stalwart service to the patients of the surgery. We appreciate all they have done. There are many other volunteer drivers past and present and we greatly value what you do for the surgery.

David Nixon, Wychwood Surgery

Stanley James Fincham 1929-2010

Stanley was born at Colchester, Essex, where he won a scholarship to the King's Grammar School. On leaving at fifteen he toured Europe on a tandem bike with a school pal Pluto, before cycling to Weybridge in Surrey to start an aeronautical apprenticeship with Vickers Armstrong (later BAC). He flew as a Test Flight



Observer on Valettas, Varsities, Vikings, Vangards, Valiants, Viscounts, One-Elevens, and VC10s. He also learnt to fly himself and would take me, (we met in 1951 and married in 1955) and other friends for flights in Tiger Moths and

Austers. In the early 1970s he was sent to Fairford to fly on Concorde as a test observer. We bought a property in Shipton and moved here in January 1973 with our children, Amanda and Mark, and three horses.

Stanley flew on Concorde to Alaska on ice trials and Bahrain for the heat. He was on record-breaking flights to America and back

stopping only to refuel and is the only person to have flown to Canada and back twice, once again only landing to refuel and change pilot and flight engineer; Stanley stayed on board as it was his test project.

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Concorde and Flight Test moved to Bristol and Stanley would travel there each day. When Concorde testing came to an end, he went back on to VC10s, which were being converted into air-to-air refuelling tankers for the R.A.F.

Eventually all test flying came to an end and he was sent back to Weybridge to find spare parts for Concorde and VC10s. When Weybridge closed he was offered early retirement. After one week he was working in operations at Oxford Airport. One day a Tiger Moth landed. He looked in his log book and found he had learnt to fly in it. The plane took off but crashed

minutes later and the last he saw of it was in crumpled pieces on the back of a lorry. When he finally retired, he became a volunteer driver for the Wychwood Surgery and will be remembered for his kindness and help when taking local patients to the surgery, and Oxford and Banbury hospitals. He continued doing this until taken ill in early 2009.

A kind and generous person, nothing was too much trouble. He is very much missed by his family who would like to thank everyone for their kind words, cards and donations to Prostate Cancer Research.

Audrey Fincham

John Cliffe 1925-2009

John led a very full and interesting life. I hope you will not mind me sharing a few facts about him.

As a young boy, he came from a family of Music Hall Entertainers and he appeared on stage with his extremely famous Great Uncle Dr Walford Bodie. He also became the Champion Runner of Paddington, and a Southpaw Boxer.

As a teenager, during the blitz, John joined Fire Watch. His svelte body was ideal for rescuing people from the rubble! As the war progressed, John joined the Merchant Navy serving on mine sweepers around Reykjavik and the Mediterranean.

He was passionate about sport, starting with weight training, and he often appeared in health magazines. He later

became a Dan 2 in Judo and a Dan 1 in Karate. John was approached by Professor

Saa sue ki to run his own Do Jo in Japan. John respectfully declined his offer and continued running his own business.

John had a rare blood group and after making his 100th donation, was invited by the Queen to attend a Garden Party at

Buckingham Palace.

After retiring he began a new 'career' as a volunteer driver for Wychwood Surgery, a job that he did for around 22 years, until January 2009. He was a wonderful, very much loved Husband, Father and Grandfather.

**Joanna Simson,
Susan and Jon Cliffe**

