

Jack Howard-Drake 1919 - 2013

It might well have been said of Jack Howard-Drake that amongst his many fine attributes, he was a highly esteemed 'man of letters'. To his friends and family he was much more besides - husband, father, friend and good neighbour.



Jack died in May at the age of 94. The politics of the 20th century defined his early adult life and he was a soldier in the Second World War and saw action during the Sicily Landing and the Invasion of Italy. His return to 'civvy street' launched a long and distinguished career in the Colonial Office and later the Home Office where his consummate skills as a calm operator, critical thinker and wordsmith were put to good use when drafting legislation on such emotive issues as the dismantling of the British Empire, race relations, women's rights and 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland. Those who have known Jack since his retirement may well have glimpsed some of these proficiencies put to good use as he chaired a committee meeting, edited a journal or organised an event. The move to Shipton opened up new areas of interest for Jack; there was time to take up new pastimes, village friendships and projects. Most notably perhaps was his work on Shipton history and his transcriptions of the Oxfordshire Tudor Church Court rolls (joint ventures with his wife, Joan) which has left Jack well respected not only amongst his WLHS colleagues and co-researchers but

also amongst the professional historians with whom he came into contact.

If all this makes Jack sound too intimidatingly cerebral (which he could be!) then, of course, there was another side to this 'man of letters'; he could cry with laughter at a Tommy Cooper

gag, a witticism by his beloved Sydney Smith or a silly Gussie Fink-Nottle jape. His tastes in music and the arts were predominantly high brow but he had been known to tap his foot to Fats Waller and Glen Miller and I did hear him (just the once!) sing along to Caruso. He and Joan have long been well known amongst their friends for their generous hospitality.

Jack was an excellent gardener and created lovely gardens in all the homes he and Joan shared during their 66 years together. He maintained this hunger to learn right to the end, At 94 he was more IT literate than many half his age. He played the man he was perfectly and unswervingly for almost a century - he was greatly loved and will be missed in equal measure.

Alison Merry (daughter)

My family and I have been very moved at the kind remarks said about Jack in the many cards and letters we have received after his death. Thank you too for the messages of support and sympathy to us all, they were much appreciated.

Joan Howard-Drake