



## Albert Stride 1926-2021

Bert Stride, a well known New Forest commoner and character has died aged 94 after a short illness. His family would like to share with you his life story...

Bert was born in Woodlands, Netley Marsh in 1926. He was the youngest of four children, he had two sisters, Pearl and Ruby and a brother, Raymond. Bert lost his mother when very young and often spoke about the tough times he endured before he and his brother Ray went to live with their Grandparents, at Brook Bushes in Bramshaw, who showed him great kindness and guided him through his early life.

These early years in Bramshaw were his foundation for a lifetime in the Forest. He remembered taking their sow to the boar at Walter Biddlecombe's, the Ovesting of the pigs by the Forest Keeper George Blake and long walks in the Forest with George Rockley, three well known forest stalwarts of yesteryear. He also recalled the grand meet of the Buckhounds at Fountain Court, home of Sir George Thursby.

Bert started work aged 14 in late 1939 for the Home Grown Timber Production Company, helping the war effort in the making of railway sleepers and charcoal for ammunition. This work was not only carried out in the New Forest but took him as far as Berkshire on his pushbike, his pay being £3.00 a fortnight.

In 1942 his life changed dramatically, he was called up to join the Army. He was always proud to have served his country and saw active service in France, Belgium and Germany. He attained the rank of Sergeant.

Whilst on leave from the Army he visited his sister Ruby, who worked at the Fenwick Hospital in Lyndhurst, there he became acquainted with Vera, daughter of Charles and Agnes Penny of Blackwater Farm. After the war he returned to the New Forest and continued his courtship of Vera. He recalled that on many occasions, before going out to the pictures or a dance in the village, Farmer Penny would expect him to hoe several lines of turnips whilst Vera had the job of putting some of her younger brothers to bed! Bert always said that when the carthorse Mary was hitched to the hoe, all he had to do was walk behind as she was such a good work horse.



*Bert and Vera at Denny*

Bert always expressed admiration for Vera's Mother who showed great kindness to him and although having a large family, always had enough food for anyone who happened to appear at meal times.

Bert had a short spell after the war as a lorry driver, but was not happy with the life, so he joined the Forestry Commission, his jobs included being a crawler driver, timber cutter and forest craftsman.

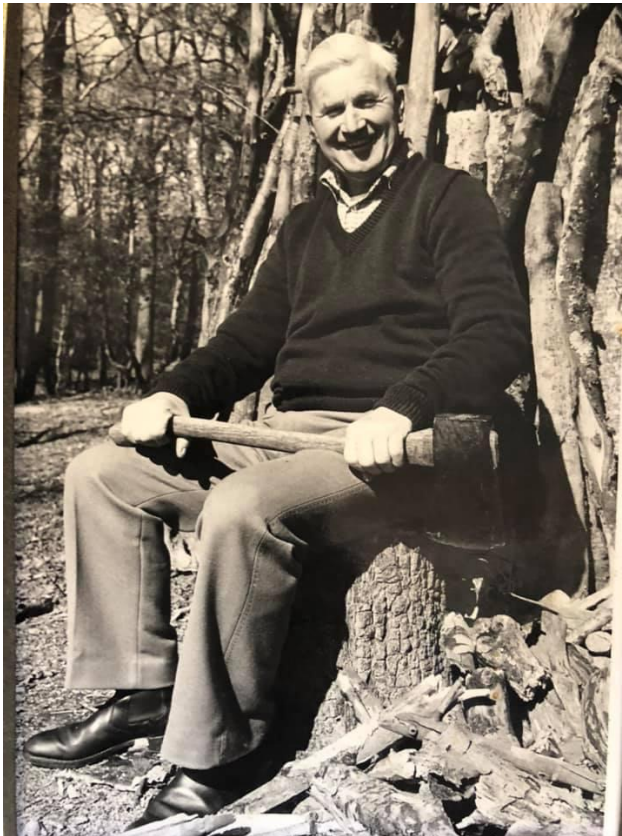
Bert and Vera were married at Minstead Church in 1948. They lived at Pikes Hill until 1954, when they moved to Denny Lodge where they were to live for the rest of their lives. Their life at Denny Lodge in the 1950s was not easy, with a young family, no electricity and well water to fetch, there was very little leisure time but they were content with their life on the smallholding. They milked a cow, kept pigs and were active commoners, building up a herd of New Forest Ponies, which he kept until his death.



One of Bert's proudest moments was when his riding horse Tan, won the annual Forest Point to Point Colthunters race three years in succession. Tan won this race six times in all and was second twice, this record has not been equalled to date.



Bert was active in Forest life, he was Branch Secretary of the National Union of Agricultural workers, spending twelve years as Chairman. He was Vice Chairman of the Commoners Defence Association and was always a staunch defender of common rights, both he and Vera were honoured to have been made life members of the CDA.



*Albert in 1985 when he retired from the Forestry Commission*

After 46 years he retired from the Forestry Commission and devoted his time to his smallholding and his garden. He enjoyed living in the peaceful surroundings of Denny. He produced fruit, flowers and vegetables for himself and his family. Meals always tasted better with vegetables grown in the garden. He also had a smoker and everyone enjoyed Bert's oak smoked gammon and bacon.

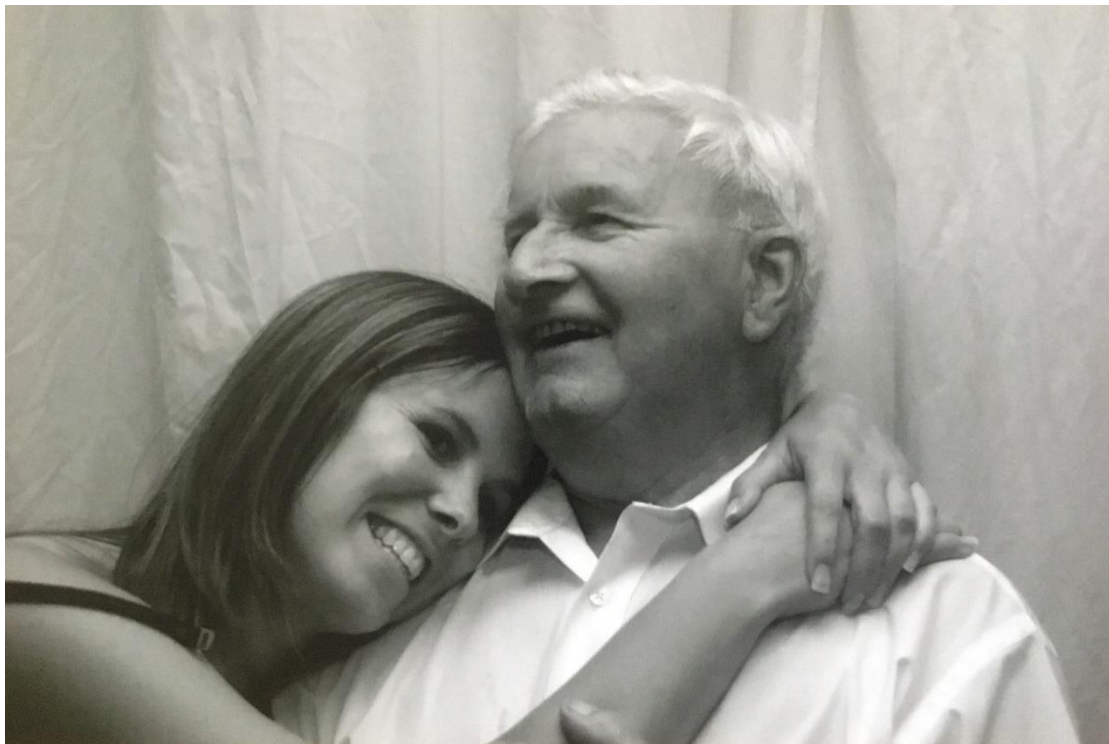
*Bert's bacon in the smoker*

In his final years, after the loss of Vera, he was able to stay living at home with support from his daughter Ann, when she wasn't in the kitchen cooking she was in the garden helping Bert, he



always insisted that he only kept gardening for Ann's sake! The family will always be grateful for the kind assistance of Bert's neighbours in the Lodge and Lower Holding.

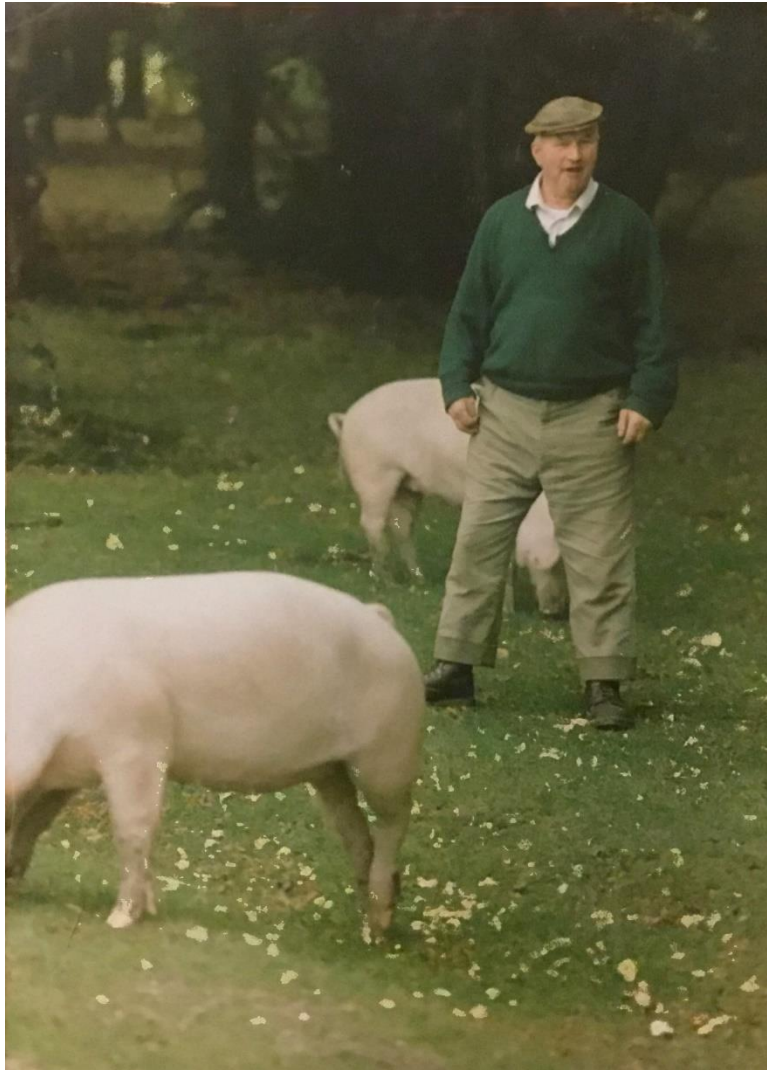
Albert leaves his daughter Ann, and three sons John, Richard and Raymond, nine grandchildren and fourteen great grandchildren and another on the way, they are all involved in country life in one way or another. Bert saw this as his greatest legacy. Bert was one of the last of his generation and a link lost with the Forest of old. His son John was the last huntsman of the New Forest Buckhounds, their demise was a great sadness to him and was he felt a turning point in the history of the Forest. All three of his sons worked for the Forestry Commission and Richard was also a Verderer. His grandchildren, Charlotte and Robert are now Chair and Vice Chair of the CDA and are proud to continue in the defence of Forest Rights.



*Albert with his granddaughter Charlotte*

As his funeral cortege took Albert on his final journey from Denny to the cemetery at Lyndhurst, the family were honoured

to see the route lined with commoners, his local Agisters in their uniforms and Forest workers who had all taken the time to pay their respects. It was particularly fitting that the FE staff were stood opposite Matley Inclosure, which Albert and his son Richard had fenced and planted 52 years previously. He was buried with his hoe and Tan's hoof.



His grandson Robert recalls: As children we spent many a happy hour down at Denny with Grandad and Grandma. There was always a job to do, whether it be repairing the fences, helping in the garden or cleaning the pigs out. It always finished off with tea and cake with Grandma. The days were filled with stories and anecdotes of his life in the Forest

and the characters that he had worked with and come across. I think these stories will be ingrained in us forever, never forgetting the likes of Ron Hawker, Jim Witt, Dave Kitcher, Benny Bessant and Jack Slightam to name but a few.

Grandad had the heart of a lion for work and never shied away from whatever needed to be done. His holding was a credit to him, with the ditches and fences all kept up together and done

by hand. His pride and joy was his garden, he took great satisfaction from growing his own vegetables and always had a bunch of sweet peas for a pretty lady!

Finally, to coin one of his favourite phrases,  
'Ah well, I've nearly seen enough of you for one day.'

Rest in peace Grandad.