

A Sprowston man of the people

OBITUARY: JOHN BRACEY

A man of courage, kindness and determination – those are the words used by the daughter of the late John Bracey, who served as a Sprowston town councillor right up to his death.

Mr Bracey, who served on both Broadland and Sprowston councils, died of pneumonia at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital on August 26, aged 93.

His daughter, Gill Reeve, described the well-known figure as a modest man. “He had an understated way about him, but he was amazingly energetic and enjoyed helping people. His abiding qualities were kindness and determination.”

Mr Bracey, who lived at Rangoon Close, Sprowston, was born in Norwich, the youngest of four children, in 1923. After joining the RAF at 18, he became a flight engineer in Bomber Command, flying in 26 Lancaster raids over Germany during the Second World War.

“Those bombing raids were terrifying, each one lasting eight to 10 hours,” said Mrs Reeve. “Considering he was only 21 at the time, he showed great courage in the face of terrible danger. Coming so close to death time after time must make you re-evaluate everything, and I think that’s why he had such energy for life.”

Mr Bracey was recently awarded the Legion d’honneur, France’s highest distinction, awarded to British veterans who fought for the liberation of France during the Second World War.

After he was demobbed, Mr Bracey married Gweneth in 1951 and they had two children, Gill and Richard. “I remember, growing up, my father was so encouraging. He was a lovely man, wonderful and always there for us. We were very, very lucky.”

Mr Bracey became a woodwork teacher at Sprowston Secondary Modern in 1959 and later became head of woodwork at Hewett School, before retiring, aged 58, in 1981.

He was elected as a Broadland district councillor in 2011, holding the position of vice-chairman until he stood down in May last year. During his time at Broadland and Sprowston, Mr Bracey became involved in the provision of care and activities for older people in communities. As chairman of Broadland Older People’s Partnership, he made it a mission to provide support for others, a passion borne out of caring for his late wife, who suffered from Alzheimer’s.

Mr Bracey also had three grandchildren, Jack, Liam and Lara.

His funeral will be held on Friday, September 30, from 10.30am, at Earlham Crematorium for family and close friends. It will be followed by a service of celebration at Norwich Cathedral from midday. Anyone who knew Mr Bracey is welcome to attend this service.

“We don’t want people to wear black,” said Mrs Reeve. “There will be lots of talk about Dad. He did a lot of good and I was very proud of him. We want it to be a celebration of his life.”

