

Juniper Hall Volunteers Newsletter – Special Edition

Our friend Bob.

Following the sad passing of our friend and volunteer, Robert Holah (Bob) in early January I thought I would take a look back at his time here at Juniper Hall Field Centre. He was one of my first volunteers, along with John Sewell and for some time it was just the three of us. It was apparent early on, that Bob was a special kind of person and one who felt compelled to give his all and help every Thursday (as it was then) as well as tend his bees every week too. Looking back through some of my photos, I have picked out some that will forever remind me of the fun times and support Bob gave to me, the volunteers and Juniper Hall, over the years.



Bob originally came to Juniper Hall as a bee keeper, setting up his Apiary in the meadow. It wasn't long before he joined the volunteer group working in the grounds each week. One of the earlier projects he undertook, in January 2015, was to help plant the new orchard in the meadow, which is now flourishing, with bumper crops of award winning apples.

Every week, he'd turn up to tend the apiary and was a familiar sight around the Centre. His willingness to talk to staff and visitors alike ensured they all went away knowing a little bit more about the life of a honey bee. (Obviously a trait that all bee keepers have, as our current bee keepers, John and Howard, are also very keen on talking to everyone!) Bob retired from bee keeping a couple year's ago and handed the baton to John and



Howard, who have fitted into the team extremely well – and I know Bob was so pleased that they took on the bees at Juniper Hall from him.



Even dressed like a storm trooper, you could see his grin – he loved it – especially when called in to rescue a swarm from the trees.

Several of the fruit trees in the orchard were sponsored by him in the name of his grandchildren, and he named each of the bee hives after a grandchild. Family mattered a lot to Bob and they always came first!



For 6 years Juniper Hall had 4 pygmy goats, Clove, Treacle, Liquorice, and Chives and a couple of Dorking hens, Bunty & Babs. Bob was always happy to muck in, quite literally! We needed a plan to cope with all the used straw from the goat shed! So... we made a new compost heap.

Due to bird flu restrictions, we sometimes had to relocate the hens from the open goat pen to



another more enclosed one, which meant carrying them across site – Bob mastered this, again with a smile! He was happy around the animals, and would take his turn in cleaning out the goat shed, erecting fencing around the cedar tree to prevent the goats from damaging the bark, and fixing all sorts of things – sometimes, with help from one of the goats, which made him chuckle even more.



As a volunteer team we often ventured off site to help out the local villages . Left: we are helping to plant a hedge beyond the churchyard in Mickleham, and on the right Bob is helping to clear the River Tillingbourne of excess weed at Abinger Hammer, where our Tutors take groups to learn about rivers.



Bob also joined the staff team for the Keep Britain Tidy litter pick around our local villages, Westhumble and Mickleham in the pouring rain. He loved his special wellies, always keeping his feet dry.



Come rain or shine, Bob was always there with a smile, willing to do his bit! Helpful suggestions, funny anecdotes, and a desire to finish the job he started – even if it takes several weeks! He loved cutting the hedges in the walled garden and took great pride in doing a good job.



Removing ragwort, pressing apples, or Brucie impressions – he did it all.





The group worked hard, but we took time out to get together too – tea and cake were the fuel of the group and thanks must go to Janet too for her many cakes Bob brought in with him over the years. We knew Bob was so very proud of his family, as during our tea breaks he would often tell us about times with his boys on sailing trips, or setting the train set up in the garage and spending precious time with his grandchildren.

Bob being recognised for 10 years volunteering at Juniper Hall Field Centre, by the Central Surrey Voluntary Awards in October 2024.



Thank you Bob Holah for your years of dedication to the grounds of Juniper Hall. You did so much more than just volunteer – you were an avid supporter of the Field Studies Council, and of each one of us as a person. You were a dear friend too.

We will miss your gentle, kind, generous soul, but.... We will never forget!