

## In Memory of Ken Page (18 June 1928 – 20 January 2018) late Life President of the Biggleswade History Society

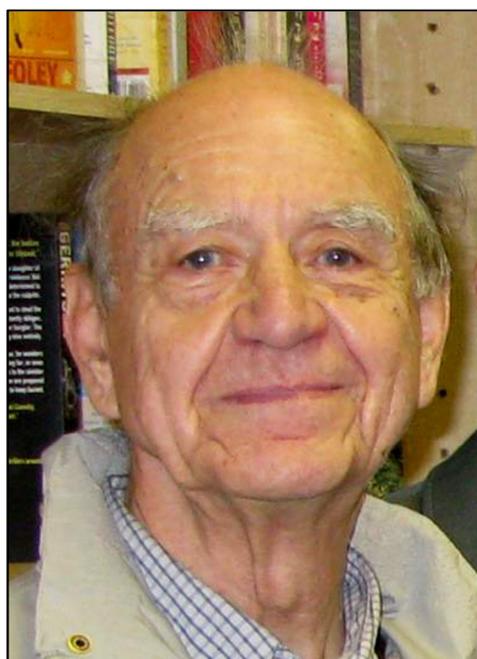


This is not intended to be the life story of Ken Page, who was a many faceted individual and a very private, unassuming man. Biggleswade born and bred, from a family of dairy farmers, apart from a period of National Service with the Royal Artillery after the Second World War, he spent his 89 years in Biggleswade and knew and loved the town and its people like no other.

Suffice it to say that he was educated at the local council school, did a paper round as a boy and, in common with most of the local lads, left school at the age of fourteen. His 50-year working life was spent at the Biggleswade Brewery, interrupted only by his spell of National Service. He was a devoted father to his daughter Janet, and a kind, thoughtful man. Concerned for animal welfare, he was an active supporter of the Wood Green Animal Shelter and, for the last twenty years of his life, a vegetarian.

Ken was an active member of several local organisations, principally the Royal Artillery Association, the Sandy Transport Group and, of course, the Biggleswade History Society, which he joined not long after its formation in 1974 and soon became its leading light and principal historian. During his lifetime Ken did more than anybody to learn about, promote, care for and celebrate the history of our town and its people and for this we and the Biggleswade community are immensely grateful. We have lost a treasure.

Ken died unexpectedly and peacefully on 20 January 2018 at the Lister Hospital in Stevenage, where he had been taken for observation following a fall. He had lived at home independently until the last and during his short stay in the hospital had been in good spirits and ready to receive visitors. According to his wishes he had a private woodland burial at Olney in Buckinghamshire on 6 February and this was followed by a Memorial Service held at Trinity Methodist Church in Biggleswade on 28 February, at which Rev. Peter Byass officiated and tributes were spoken by representatives of the Biggleswade Branch of the Royal Artillery Association and the Biggleswade History Society. The full text of the Society's tribute to Ken is reproduced here.



**KEN PAGE – MEMORIAL SERVICE**  
**TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH BIGGLESWADE**  
**WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2018**

Tribute spoken by Jane Dale, Editor, Biggleswade History Society

- **I would like to say a few words about our Ken on behalf of the Biggleswade History Society of which Ken was Life President.**
- I have served on the Society's Committee as the monthly Newsletter Editor since 2011. This is one of the many jobs Ken did in his time. But so far I have only produced 83 issues. Ken produced 180 between 1985 and 2000 – and that was just one small part of his massive contribution over the years.
- Many people here have known Ken far longer than I, and many who worked closely with him in the early years of the Society are no longer with us. I am from an old Biggleswade family but have not lived here since I was 18. Ken was from my Dad's generation. They were about the same age and both grew up in Biggleswade and went to the same school. I lost my parents about 20 years ago but was able to continue to learn a great deal about my home town through Ken's work. He was for me a portal to an earlier Biggleswade that my parents and grandparents knew – but he was also much more than that.
- I first met Ken 25 years ago in 1993, when I joined the Society. For years I just came to meetings and sent articles for his Newsletters now and then. Ken retired from the Society's Committee in 2005 after 22 years' continuous service, and he became Life President in 2009, although throughout that time he was still very active in many ways – giving talks and slide shows, preparing material for the local press, for books and the Society's website, conducting research and answering queries from all quarters.
- Ken never stopped, even after he began to experience mobility problems. He was fiercely independent and just kept on going. We admired him for his courage & determination. He never complained, and we imagined he would go on for ever, so it was quite a shock suddenly to lose him. A previous President of ours, Harold Smith, had lived to 100, having said his ambition was to be the oldest president of a history society, and only last year I asked Ken if he was aiming to beat Harold's record – I really imagined he might!
- Another of our Presidents, the late Horace Dilley, who will also be remembered with affection by many here, worked closely with Ken on the Society's Committee for 20 years. Like all who worked with Ken, Horace was well aware that it was Ken who was the main stay of the Society – and he summed it up in a report to the members in 1994:

“Once again I would place on record the sterling work put in by our Secretary, Ken Page, who bears the brunt of the Society's activities. He it is who deals with the administration of the Society and plays a major part in its organisation. His monthly production, which I refer to as ‘Ken's Penny Dreadful’ [the Newsletter] is a real gem. His knowledge of local history is vast, his efforts are untiring and his all-time courtesy is absolutely superb.”

- and again in 1996 Horace wrote of the

“.. tremendous amount of work put in by our Secretary, **Ken Page, ‘Mr History Man of Biggleswade’**. His knowledge is vast and his dedication to the Society cannot be bettered. Ken believes that history should be publicised at every opportunity and how well he himself carries out that objective: His displays at various events, slide shows, dealing with people’s enquiries, collecting material – History is something that Ken lives.”

(How true, that last remark; Ken devoted much of his life to history).

Ken replied in typically modest fashion:

“The kind remarks from Horace are appreciated, but I like to think that I am part of a team ...“

...and diverted attention away from himself, to focus on the contributions made by others.

**Well, Ken – today it is all about you! Like it or not, we are here to show our appreciation and to give thanks for a very special man – Yes, you, Ken!**

- Ken was a quiet, unassuming, very private man, a devoted father and a gentleman. I never heard him say an unkind word about anybody. He was Biggleswade born and bred, lived and worked here all his life, loved the place and knew its people and its history like no other. He will be remembered and loved as **our Mr History**.
- Some have said that all that knowledge is now lost for ever – but that is not the case – Ken was the last person to seek public acclaim for his wonderful work but he shared his knowledge very generously and put it out there for us and future generations to appreciate and enjoy. **His legacy speaks for itself – you have only to look.** A published author in his own right, he was also the principal author and researcher of masses of material for the press, and the Society’s booklets and website. He gave talks and slideshows - and was still doing so only last year – and, as the recognised authority on our local history he was first port of call for radio and TV researchers, the interior designer for the Wetherspoon’s Crown inn, and many others. Go into the Crown restaurant and you will see on the wall Ken’s name in a frame, thanking him for his input. **You didn’t ask Google – you asked Ken Page! .....**
- Yes, of course we shall all miss him and we shall miss seeing him in the town and stopping to have a chat with him – **but we can still find him if we look.** I can go for a walk in Biggleswade streets with Ken whenever I choose. Look on the website, look in the books and let him be your knowledgeable guide to our history and our town.

**WHAT A GREAT GIFT HE HAS GIVEN US ALL.  
THANK YOU KEN, WHEREVER YOU ARE.**

