

Eric Dore 1940 – 2026

Eric was born 1 January 1940 in Portland, Dorset. As a key naval base, Portland was frequently bombed so the family moved to the safer surrounds of Bath and then to Dunoon in Scotland, a country Eric was to return to later in his life.

They returned to Bath where Eric went to junior school. One of his earliest memories was being collected from school by his aunt Freda to join the dancing and street celebrations when VE Day was announced.

After completing his secondary education at Weymouth Grammar School, Eric applied to the civil service and was accepted into Customs and Excise. Initially working in London, he was soon posted to Scotland as an itinerant Excise Officer. This entailed visiting and staying at practically every distillery across the mainland and islands. He seldom drank whisky after leaving!

In Aviemore Eric got hooked on skiing. No chair lifts in those days – wooden skis, march up the mountain, tie them on with straps and head down into a blizzard. Then walk back up again. He became a truly accomplished skier and it was a passion he continued throughout his life. He belonged to the Oxford Ski Club and went to resorts in Europe for a week of immersive skiing every year.

In 1964, after the breakup of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Eric was one of a dozen or so UK Customs & Excise officers recruited by the newly established country of Malawi to train Malawians to take over Customs and Immigration. He was posted to Salima, close to Lake Malawi, as Salima was an inland port with a railway to Beira, Mozambique. Everything from Zambian copper to ground nuts went out this way and goods from India and elsewhere poured in. Here he met Lesley whose parents owned a Customs Clearance business and lived on the lakeshore. Eric took up water skiing and soon became an accomplished mono-skier; dressed as Father Christmas, he delivered gifts to hotel guests after sweeping in off the lake.

He married Lesley in 1965 and in 1969 they set off for London by sea, traveling up the East coast of Africa, then through Suez and Egypt, where they saw the Egyptian army massing ahead of the Six Day War.

Back in the UK, Eric left Customs and joined Westminster Press. He became advertising manager at the Oxford Mail and Times, and after 10 years moved on to the Newspaper Society in London, the head office of the provincial press, as advertising manager. This brought some glamour into their lives – Royal Garden Parties, black tie dinners, award ceremonies and conferences. Sometimes the family could join them, and sons Lawrence and Gerard discovered the joy of vast help-yourself hotel breakfasts which they thought were the height of luxury.

Eric continued to study, first attaining qualifications from the Chartered Institute of Marketing, then completing an MBA at Oxford Brookes. Feeling ready for a change he joined a management consultancy and ultimately struck out on his own, setting up Oxford Communications Group. The firm offered business and marketing advice to a huge range of clients ranging from Government contracts to Saudi Arabia and India.

Eric and family moved to Brightwell-cum-Sotwell via Abingdon in 1973. He loved village life and threw himself into it. He was a founder member of The Villager which was set up in 1976 as a free community magazine. His expertise with local advertising helped to fund it. He designed the first front cover, a compilation of press photographs of Brightwell set on a green background, which lasted for 40 years! In later years he was one of the originators of the village website.

After he retired, Eric truly immersed himself in photography - one of his great passions. He attended classes in Great Missenden for a good ten years and was a committee member of the Wallingford Photographic Society. His photographs featured in the annual village calendar and in the Community led Parish Plans of 2004 and 2014 to 2024. He chaired the Amenities Committee on the team who put together the 2004 Parish Plan - Vital Villagers: Building a Sustainable Community and was Parish Clerk from 2010 to 2011.

He will be remembered for his sense of fun, for his endless optimism and for always seeing the best in people.