

## ROBERT HUNTINGDON – A HOST LIKE NO OTHER (1978–2011)



The tragic death of Rob, the landlord of the Duke of Cumberland, stunned and saddened the Clifton Book Club. While we brought forward the Book Club evening to allow us to pay our respects to Nick, Rob's father, and his dear wife, we also took the book we are writing and gave pages over to record people's favourite reflections of Rob. Here are a few.

Alan Collins reflects on a night CAMRA had a meeting at the Duke. Nick was away and Rob was holding the fort. A few of us in the Book Club were doing what we do best, propping up the bar, as the meeting broke up. One of the committee members (an aficionado of the real ale world known to many came up to thank Rob for his hospitality and said that the beer was obviously well kept (a fact that the Book Club will certify to anyone who'll listen), as this was the best pint of Hook Norton he had ever tasted. Later that evening Nick returned. At the end of the evening he finished his rounds and returned to his traditional stool behind the bar with a forlorn sigh: during the day Rob had put new barrels on in preparation for the CAMRA visit and had piped the Archers from Swindon into the Hook Norton pump and vice versa!

If this portrays Rob as a host somewhat light on detail he was huge on vision and planned many spectacular events, one of which had me playing football with Freddie Windsor, the Queen's nephew! We are all far richer people for having known Rob.

Kevin Mayo remembers a summer's evening when Rob had booked an acoustic group to play in the garden. This was fine until Morris Dancers turned up for a prior (but forgotten) arrangement. They ignored the band, and did what they do. At this moment a coach pulled up carrying African missionaries on an exchange visit who had come to see their first English pub. After taking refreshments they decided the Morris Dancers needed a dance off and the band provided the backing track. An image that could only be in Clifton with Rob in charge!

Tim, Luce and the boys want to say: our favourite memory was you charging access to your vegetable patch during one of your famous firework parties and running for cover after setting off the firework display.

Rob will be deeply missed but we will raise a glass to celebrate the exuberance he brought to the village. André Tansley recalls: a classical trio one Friday evening at the pub just before Christmas as the food critic from *Four Shires* magazine came to dine. What could possibly go wrong? Well the trio had compressed the seating plan somewhat and one of the waiting staff just brushed the Christmas tree that wobbled and fell on the critic. The fact that he still wrote a great review showed what a lovely evening was on offer.

Ian, Sarah and the boys want to thank Rob for many great book clubs, a kind host with a great selection of beers, good company and a very flexible approach to calling time. Gaz says: a great guy. I will always remember he could still smile and laugh even when the Scouser left next morning without paying his bill – twice.

And Lorna: I will never know such a charming, witty, gentle or caring person. You were my employer, but also my friend. You made me laugh out loud so many times and there was never a dull moment with you around. I will miss you so very much and love you forever.

*Martin Bryce*