

John Osborough, 1956–2021

John Osborough died suddenly last summer. He was well-known and loved in Deddington, involving himself in many church activities and was minutes secretary for the Parish Council in his early days in the village. He could often be seen in the Deddington Arms with his morning coffee and on his favourite bench on the village green.

John, my cousin, was born in 1956, the only son of David and Anne Osborough, in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, where he grew up and went to school. We both remembered Derry fondly, with its steep streets, fine city walls and beautiful river Foyle in the decade before the Troubles.

John and I were only children and during school holidays, when my family always returned to Northern Ireland, we met with other family members and enjoyed ourselves on the sandy beaches of Portrush and day trips to small towns on Lough Swilly in County Donegal, where our family's roots are. On one such trip, John, then aged about six, announced to my father that he would treat our group of seven to dinner in a local restaurant. Dad gently enquired how much money John had available to spend. 'Sixpence', John announced and my Dad, hiding a smile, said that would be absolutely fine.

John, like so many other children in Northern Ireland, led a very restricted social life during the Troubles. He was quiet natured and enjoyed reading, painting and making models, all hobbies which served him well at this time. He was particularly interested in art, keenly observing architecture, ships and the sea, which featured then, as later, in his talented paintings and drawings. His family moved home twice from the danger of the inner city. His father and grandfather, a Somme veteran, had served in both World Wars. John's father served in Italy and later in India.

In the mid 1970s, John came to England to study and work, first in Bristol and later in Birmingham, and we remained in touch over the years. He was widely travelled throughout Europe. His lively interest in literature and the arts sparked a fulfilling friendship with my husband, Gerard, over the last 20 years, particularly during the times he spent with us, when the two of them went to the cinema and for drinks afterwards.

John had varied work experiences. In the early '80s he worked in prosthetics and rehabilitation for the NHS at Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham, where his gentle approach was appreciated. He worked later for the DHSS in Birmingham for a number of years, leaving to gain a degree in business before returning to Northern Ireland where he worked for the NI Law Centre. His work involved offering free legal advice and support on a range of issues; he enjoyed the work and was popular with his colleagues. Following the death of five close family members, including his parents, John left Northern Ireland and eventually settled in Deddington in 2001. He became an active member of the parish until health issues caused him to step back.

John's showed immense courage in the face of his declining mental and physical health during recent years, particularly his often daily battle with depression. Even the smallest tasks of life were exhausting, and he bravely battled his demons, telling me that he was 'just chugging along'. His legacy is his charming, soft-spoken courtesy and kindly disposition. He was a deeply spiritual person who is loved more than he ever knew. May he rest in peace. John was a resident at the Holly Tree Cottages in Earls Lane. Deddington Housing Association that manages the cottages have recently placed a memorial plaque on 'his' bench on the green.

Elizabeth Beattie

