

KENNETH LANGSTAFF (1918–2008)

We were saddened to learn of the death on Christmas Eve of Kenneth Langstaff at the age of 90, but glad that we had him living in Deddington for 18 years. Ken was a very unworldly man, a man of faith, softly spoken with a quiet humour; a lover of music, books and, of course, the arts. We all remember his artistic skills, particularly many of his covers of the Deddington News.

Ken and Helen moved to Deddington in 1982 and lived at The Nook in Chapel Square. Most of their married life was lived in East Barnet, Ken working as a graphic artist for a studio in London. He met Helen in 1943 and married the following year. He served in the army during the war in military intelligence using his skill as an artist, at one time sketching the terrain in North Africa in advance of a tank regiment; he recalled sitting in the sand with rockets and bullets whistling over his head as he sketched the landscape.

After the war he returned to his wife and home and an 18-month old son that he had not seen, to pick up the threads of a job in a studio but he always longed to be free to paint for himself. He was made redundant at 59 and then fought a battle with bowel cancer. However, he came through surgery and recovered and in one sense was liberated to fulfil his dream of painting for himself. He had paintings hung in the Royal Academy and as many of us know he continued to paint prolifically.

After Helen's death, Ken moved to Wales to live with his son Michael and continued his painting of all things rural and those around him. Following serious illness in 2006 he needed more continuous care and moved to a small care home. With his books, music and painting he was placidly content and in the last two years he held four exhibitions of his work. As in Deddington, he built up many friends who loved him and his art. He finished and signed off his last painting just two days before he died.

Mary Valentine

Many a house in Deddington has a Ken Langstaff oil painting, watercolour or print on its walls. When I first met the artist, I was impressed by his quiet, unassuming manner and his sheer professionalism. Over the years, Ken and I worked together on the *Deddington News*, the Millennium Map and *Discovering Deddington*. Somewhat diffidently he showed me his sketchbooks. They were crammed with drawings of people, animals, buildings, landscapes, all based on acute observation, down to the tiniest detail. Ken's finished work was always accurate, convincing and cleanly presented. He could be relied on to keep within budget and deliver on time. Underpinning the skills of the dedicated professional was the warm enthusiasm of the true amateur. He did what he loved, and it showed.

Norman Stone