

## **Tom Stobbs (1936 – 2017)**

Linda and I first met Tom in 1987 at a rally that we were running at Belsay in Northumberland. Linda had called in at home on the way back from work when the phone rang and a late booking was made by Tom.

Linda arrived on the rally field saying that we had a booking from new ralliers – “Mr & Mrs Fobbs and I think they may be foreign!” And so began the legend of Tom and his Geordie accent that even after 30 years many fellow ralliers had difficulty in fully understanding, especially if they were not from the North East – but undoubtedly this was part of the charm of the man.

Despite still holding down full time jobs Tom & Kitty quickly settled into the rallying lifestyle and started running rallies in 1988 – their first was a holiday rally at Snettisham, Norfolk followed by 2 more that year at Heighington and Hett.

6 more rallies followed in 1989 in counties as far apart as Northumberland and Essex. During this time a close friendship developed with Jack & Margaret Gillance and for the next 10 years they ran 10 or more rallies each year, with either one of them as Rally or Assistant Marshal, including many holiday rallies in Scotland. The four of them even ventured up to Aberdeen with their caravans each New Year to celebrate Hogmanay with Ronnie Kain, the Scottish Secretary at the time.

During these years “Kitty’s Kitchen was operating at its height with both awnings facing each other and the resultant gap covered with a variety of plastic sheets all supported and held together by an array of metal poles and ropes – the 3 course meals that they used to prepare and serve up in such limited conditions have always been a source of wonderment to fellow ralliers, as was the assortment of pots and pans that Tom gradually accumulated and carried around with him.

Tom was also a regular rallier at AGM rallies up and down the country and almost without fail any prizes he won in the raffle were put to one side for his own raffle at the Factory Rally, 2 or 3 weeks later, which was run to generate funds to help pay for the entertainment that he arranged every year at this rally.

Tom continued to run rallies after both Kitty and Jack Gillance died, teaming up with fellow widower Roy Kay, Matty and Lily Wilkinson and latterly Graham & Joyce Bradley for the Darlington Factory Rallies.

Tom took over the running of the Factory Rally in 1992 when it left Lanchester and subsequently ran 23 of them – 3 at Earls House, Durham, 12 at Bishop Auckland RUFC, 7 at Darlington RUFC and the last one at Sedgfield in 2014 when Elddis

celebrated their 50th Anniversary with the Eddis Owners Club. It was also at this rally that Tom was presented with a commemorative plaque in recognition of running more than 100 rallies. This sadly also turned out to be one of his last rallies as ill health began to take its toll and left Tom unable to drive.

That Tom was a great character there is no doubt. Whilst Tom always pegged out his rally fields, sometimes the cry "Wey gan where yer like" was heard – this could be a fitting epitaph.

I doubt that the Eddis Owners Club will ever see such a prolific rally organiser again.

Well done Tom!

R.I.P.

Peter Turner