

DEREK SHARMAN - 1936-2017

It is with great sadness that we record the loss of Derek Sharman, who died after a short illness on December 4th 2017.

Derek lived virtually the whole of his life in Selsdon and Sanderstead. The family, consisting of his parents, his older brother, Michael, and Derek, moved into a newly-built house in Ingham Close in 1938 when Derek was two. He subsequently bought that house in the early sixties and later moved into Sanderstead with a house in Norfolk Avenue, where he had lived until his recent death.

Derek attended Selsdon Primary School, which still holds an annual reunion. He was there at the latest one in October 2017 and some of his old friends from the 1940's were at his recent Memorial Service – proof of the quality of the school under the leadership of the formidable Miss Almond and the bonds it created. From there he went on to Purley County Grammar School and made friends he still met last year at Purley John Fisher (formerly Old Purleians) Rugby Club.



His early years were dominated by the war. He was evacuated to Wales in 1940 to escape the blitz and to Lichfield in 1944 when the V1 flying bombs started landing on South East England. This was a good move, as one fell about 50 yards away and badly damaged the family home. As a result the family lived temporarily in Birdwood Close while their house was being repaired. While in Selsdon during the war, Derek saw the Battle of Britain at first hand, he slept in a shelter in the garden, trailed in and out of air raid shelters at school and suffered from rationing and dreadful school dinners! In spite of all this, life went on and it was a happy childhood in many ways with plenty of Dunkirk spirit in evidence!

After the war, Derek had a good teenage experience with family holidays, Scout Camps, cycle tours and later a memorable trip to the South of France in an old London taxi, bought by a group of seven friends, of which Derek was the youngest. The trip was written up in the Selsdon Gazette and the Croydon Advertiser. Sixty three years later, five of them were at his Memorial Service. He made and kept a lot of friends throughout his life.

After leaving school and reaching the age of eighteen, he was called up for National Service just in time for the Suez crisis. He served in the Royal Signals and was sent to Cyprus and then briefly to Egypt, but fortunately it was all over quite quickly. He then went to work in the London insurance market and spent the whole of his working life involved with Lloyds ending up as a marine underwriter with his own box, before retiring at age 60.

Sport was always important in Derek's life. He was a very good athlete as a teenager and played rugby, tennis and plenty of golf later in life. He was an active member of Selsdon Tennis Club for many years and then North Downs and Effingham Golf Clubs.

Even more important was his family. Derek and Maureen were married in 1961 and they lived happily together for fifty-six years. They have three daughters, Andrea, Clare and Victoria, all of whom are happily settled and with children of their own. Derek greatly enjoyed having grandchildren and organised family reunions with a sporting theme each year. In his retirement, he and Maureen travelled widely and enjoyed a walking group and opera together. Derek chaired his Probus Group and investment club and enjoyed social golf, watching rugby and sociable lunches, often combined!

Overall, Derek had a good life, which he well deserved. He worked hard, but achieved a good balance between work, family and leisure. He was also a thoroughly good chap.

Michael Sharman

Editor's note - Michael supplied me with a copy of the original Gazette piece about the trip to France, which he wrote. It was also Michael who had the conversation with the AA Man! The following was printed in the Gazette in 1954 - I make no apologies for including comments that would be considered non-pc these days which much amused me 😊

"LORETTA"

The sunny Riviera has always been regarded and an ideal spot for a holiday, particularly when you are young. Unless you are lucky, though, the funds will not stretch to this luxury, and this is where the idea of "Loretta" was born. Perhaps we should explain that "Loretta" is an old London taxi, purchased for a reasonable sum from some young Australians who used it to tour England last year.

The first problem was to get it insured. Apparently no company considered it a worthwhile risk owing to the fact that not one of the seven owners held a driving licence and no-one had reached the 'age of discretion'! Eventually, after pulling a few strings arranging an interview with the company concerned, to allay their strong doubts as to the advisability of their action, the problem was solved. With the help of friends and almost permanent L plates, we now have three drivers. We might mention here that the two girls are still valiantly struggling to master the art of driving without much encouragement from the opposite sex!

"Loretta" has already experienced one or two mishaps. On one occasion we were going to the motor races when a thrifty young man switched off the engine to save petrol in a stream of stationary traffic, causing the starter motor to jam. To our humiliation and to the great amusement of passing motorists. we had to dismount and push "Loretta" off the road and call the assistance of an A.A. man. With a small turn of a nut the trouble was over. We jokingly asked if he was busy and he replied with a grin, "Oh yes, but only silly little things you know!" Since then "Loretta" has travelled many miles and seen many places.

Lately she has been brightened up by a pot of red paint and now sports red wheels and a red belt around her middle. At the moment everyone is busy working, saving and planning as the last Saturday in August and our promised adventure draws near. We hope to report on our travels when we return.

Les Sept Voyagers





Editor's note - Mike offered more detail of the story - see below. If you are one of those shown in the photos do please get in touch.

There were seven of us who bought the taxi and two who had a car and we travelled in convoy!

Pam & Wendy Francis, Mike & Derek Sharman, Michael Stanley, John Browne and Alan Abel travelled in the taxi and Shirley Davies & Terry Grayson in the Morris Minor

The photo immediately above of the shiny taxi contains everyone except Terry and I who were both working at Smedleys at the time it was taken.

John is absent from the photo on the previous page of us all in shorts, as he took it.

Sadly, we lost Alan Abel from the taxi party two years ago, and now Derek, but we have all remained friends and in touch for the last 60+ years. Michael Stanley and Pam Francis subsequently married and are still happily together. Wendy was my girlfriend and Derek's wife to be, Maureen, had not yet appeared on the scene.

The articles below were published in The Croydon Advertiser which used the same photo. I am afraid that the follow up article for the Gazette telling of the trip was never written

Nine take a taxi— to France

TAXIS are coming into vogue for transport for Continental holidays. Early this year a mild sensation was caused by the appearance on the roads of "Priscilla", property of seven Coulsdon young men. Now comes "Loretta", a taxi of similar vintage. She set off late on Friday night for the roads of the Riviera.

The picturesquely named "Loretta", formerly the property of some young Australians, who used her to tour England last year, was bought by nine young people aged 17-21. She cost them £40.

SIX BOYS—THREE GIRLS

Originator of the idea was Michael Sharman, of Ingham-close, Selsdon. His friends, who joined with him to raise the money to buy "Loretta", are Pamela Francis, Shirley Davis, Terry Grayson, Michael Stanley, Alan Able, John Browne, Wendy Francis and her brother Derek.

"Loretta" was made in 1936, and does about 20 miles to the gallon. First problem to confront the owners after her purchase was the insurance: none of them at that stage held a driving licence, and this, coupled with their ages, meant that no company considered the risk worthwhile. However, after a persuasive interview with a representative, insurance was eventually arranged.

ETERNAL "Is"

With the guidance of friends, and the adornment of "almost permanent L-plates", the party now have three drivers.

Long before their departure on Friday night, the taxi owners had been busy working, saving and planning.

Some of those not at work took temporary jobs to raise funds.

"Loretta" will be assisted in her transport tasks by a Morris Minor. Accommodation during the holiday will be either at hostels or in camp: many of the party have been Guides or Scouts.

Trip to France will cost £25—thanks to 'Loretta'



"LORETTA," a 1935 vintage London taxi, is a sort of fairy godmother on wheels to eight young people at Selsdon. But for her, they would not be embarking at the end of this month on a "luxury" holiday in the South of France.

In more prosaic terms, "Loretta" is a £43 10s. investment. And by each contributing towards petrol and oil, the young adventurers hope to motor to the South of France and return via Paris, all for £25 apiece.

Taking part in the trip will be Miss Wendy Francis and her sister, Pamela; Michael Sharman and his brother, Derek; and John Browne, Michael Stanley, Alan Able and Miss Sheila

Davies. A small car driven by Terry Grayson will follow the taxi, so that its passengers can take turns in riding with him.

The group had difficulty at first in insuring the taxi because they were all learner drivers. Now, four of them have passed their test at the first attempt, and the others hope to have done so before they set out for the Continent.

The oldest member of the party is Pamela, 21; the youngest is Derek, 17.

"Loretta" has been given fresh coats of black and red paint for the occasion, and it is hoped to add to her collection of pennants by the time English soil is reached again.