

Bill Chester (1912 - 2015)



Bill Chester (7 September 1912 - 12 August 2015)

William George Chester - known as Bill - died peacefully a few weeks shy of his 103rd birthday on 12th August 2015 at the Riverside Nursing Home in Cookham, alongside his beloved Thames.

Bill was born in Brighton, and joined HM Customs & Excise when he left school, working first in the Port of London in the days when it was still a vibrant and exotic place, with goods arriving from all over the world. During WW2 Bill served in East Africa as a customs officer attached to the King's African Rifles based in Mogadishu. After he was de-mobbed he was posted first to the Scottish Highlands where he gained an in-depth knowledge of Scotch whisky, and later to Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides where he met and married his wife Dolly.

Bill was posted to Maidenhead in 1952, and he and Dolly settled in Marlow, living first in a flat owned by the widow of the artist Edward Gray at 33 West Street. At that time Bill drove a 1931 3-litre Lagonda Tourer which he was able to

park across the road in Reg Speller's garage. The car was very heavy and required a special dispensation to use Marlow Bridge. Bill and Dolly moved to Dunstable House, near Marlow Bridge, when their daughter was born, enjoying life beside the river even when it flooded. Finally, Bill and his family moved to Southview Road, which was his home for nearly 60 years.

All his life Bill enjoyed being out in the open air, walking, climbing, exploring. Despite spending much of his youth rock climbing in Britain and Europe - he even climbed Kilimanjaro before it became so fashionable - after he settled in Marlow Bill developed a great love for the gentle Chiltern countryside. He joined the Chiltern Society Rights of Way Group in the 1970's and started drawing footpath maps for the Society largely because no-one else wanted to do it. In all Bill produced more than 20 footpath maps of the Chilterns, many of which are still in print today. This body of work was formally recognised by the Chiltern Society when Bill was 80 and is a lasting testimonial to him and his love of the countryside.