

William (Bill) Hartfree (joined 1933)

William (Bill) Hartfree was born a Guildfordian on 9th April, 1922. His father worked his way up on the railway from the footplate to driver and the family moved to Portsmouth when Bill was 14. They lived at Ringwood Road, Milton and had many a tale to tell from the war, lying in bed hearing the ghostly doodlebugs flying over the 'smitten city'. Bill was a radio mechanic, stationed in a fort on Portsdown Hill on D-Day, while his younger brother, John, was in the navy.

Bill was always careful health wise, having nearly succumbed to pneumonia in early childhood: "Don't cast a clout till May is out". At Sandfield School, Guildford he learnt many poems to cherish and was 'top of the class'. His father was determined for Bill to succeed academically and he was very knowledgeable, enjoying consulting the dictionary daily and being mentally very alert to the end. His family were by no means well off, bread and butter pud being a staple and favourite throughout life. Bill was forced to write his wonderful handwriting right handed, but being ambidextrous served him well. He particularly excelled on the football pitch, a left winger able to strike the ball equally well with both feet. Bill's Dad made him hurdles and coached him on the downs at Guildford. The neighbouring Cathedral was being built while Bill and John remember playing on the wagons used to construct the A3 bypass.

In Portsmouth, Bill went to the Southern Grammar with his favourite cousin Wally Hartfree. Apparently his father pushed him far too hard but he achieved good results. Bill had a trial for Portsmouth F.C. and also had a life-long love for Portsmouth Athletic Club, travelling down monthly by train to the Mountbatten Centre until a year before his death. He worked briefly in an office at Gosport and in the Civil Service before being called up. The end of the War saw a convoy through Suez and 2 years service in India for the Royal Engineers. His favourite story was scoring a goal directly from a corner on leave in the Himalayas, the banana shot passing through a cloud! Bill heard the cheers and saw his team running back to their own half.

Bill started a special post war 2 year teacher's certificate at Shoreditch Training College, Egham in 1954. His main subject was wood and metal work and here again he excelled on the sportsground winning soccer and athletic full club colours. At the end of the course in August 1955 he met his lovely wife, Margareta, in the Windsor youth hostel and after a whirlwind romance via the first of many trips to Stockholm they married in St James Church, Milton in October of that year. The family home was in New Malden, naturally within earshot of the railway line over their beloved golf course fairway view. Bill taught in schools in the London area and was warmly appreciated by the pupils. How many keep up contact with their teachers? Two of his ex-pupils did just that, fixing up a VIP trip to the Bluebell Railway in 2002. Bill was once proud to be one of 3 generations of Williams in the driver's cab from the Hard to Fratton, with his only son born in 1961.

Bill was highly musical, a piano entertainer and sang tenor with the family in the local church choir. He had a great many interests to pursue in retirement; watercolour painting, opera club chorus, Wimbledon tennis club with veterans tennis and international athletics, model railway, church football team, Kingston Sports Council Management Committee and DIY jobs. He was seemingly unstoppable and a pacemaker providing a new lease of life. He proudly attended Annika and William's wedding in Sweden in his 88th year, despite poor mobility in later life stemming from fracturing his leg in a collision with a goalkeeper in the 60's. And as a relative put it: "I always thought of Bill as a kind, generous and hugely enthusiastic person - and like all the cousins of that generation - a bit of a character!"

Nothing on this earth would have stopped Bill from attending the Old Secundrians' annual dinner, especially the great highlight when hero Alan Pascoe was guest of honour. Dad, you are sorely missed but thanks for an incredible innings!

William Per Hartfree January 2012