

Tributes paid to former South Hams Newspapers editor Brian

by Sam Acourt

South Hams Newspapers' former editor Brian Cook died on April 1, a date that his wife says he would have seen the funny side of.

Brian was known for his great sense of humour and his wife Tess said they were a "very close couple" who fell in love "at first sight" while they were both working for the Gazette and even shared the same birthday.

Brian was born on March 22, 1936, and attended Worthing High School for Boys where he said he received an "A star in English and maths; moderate in geography and French; and poor in science with a GCE to prove it".

Brian took the 'old-fashioned' route into journalism. Rather than taking a degree, he started working as a newspaper delivery boy in 1949 and became a stop press and circulation assistant at the Evening Argus in 1952.

By 1953, he was made a trainee reporter at the Worthing Gazette before progressing to sports reporter at the Worthing Herald in 1956.

In 1957, he became the feature writer at London Transport Magazine, being made senior feature writer in 1958.

In 1960, he moved back to the Worthing Herald, this time as sports editor, where he stayed for five years before being made sub-editor for Becket Newspapers and the Worthing Herald in 1965, and was made chief sub-editor in 1967, working at the head office.

He was the editor of the Shoreham Herald between 1969 and 1974, as well as being a regular broadcaster on sport

with BBC Radio Brighton during this time.

In 1974, he became the group editor for South Hams Newspapers and was key in initialising or developing the Ivybridge Gazette, the Holiday Times, the Shopper series, the Totnes Gazette, the South Hams Handbook – now the directory, the Brixham News, Dart Television News, the Ivybridge Express and the Plympton Post.

After he retired, he continued working, editing the English Bridge Union Magazine from home, and travelling up to Aylesbury every month.

A keen bridge player, Tess said it was a job he really enjoyed, and he went on to teach bridge locally and at Kingsbridge Community College.

He was also a fan of chess, music, antiques, coins, stamps, gardening, DIY, youth work and sport.

Alongside his professional work, Brian was a stalwart of the Kingsbridge Chorus in Kingsbridge along with Roy Hann.

He was also instrumental in getting the swimming pool in Kingsbridge built, through the project's promotion in the Gazette; was a member of the Kingsbridge Rotary Club and, if that wasn't enough, he also ran three London Marathons.

Roy Hann, musical director and founder of the Kingsmen, said: "I sent a press release into the Gazette about the Kingsmen and Brian rang me up to say he was happy to publish it, and he'd be along for our first meeting.

"From then on, his encouragement and support through the Gazette meant we could build the chorus up to what it is today.

"He sang baritone in the chorus and he, along with three other members, formed a barbershop quartet and won gold medals in a national barbershop competition.

"After 25 years, we made him an honorary member, to keep him involved with the chorus.

"He served on the committee and really was a stalwart member of the Kingsmen.

"Forty or so members attended his funeral and I will always remember him for his dry sense of humour and the fact he was a really good singer.

"Everyone liked him very much, he was a very genial person."

Brian is survived by his wife Tess, their two children Susy and Matt, and their grandchildren Maisie, Eilidh, Daniel and Joel.





Contributed

Brian Cook



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Brian Cook in his earlier days in journalism