

Leighton Jones 1937 – 2017

Words of Tribute by Vince McCully

You can almost hear Leighton say, “Blinkin ‘eck, in two weeks, on the 27th December, I’ll be 80”. Though it wasn’t to be, it’s not to say Leighton didn’t have a full, rich, interesting and, maybe in a quiet way, eventful life.

A life shared, almost in its entirety by Muriel. They met when they were just 14 years old, not that Leighton was necessarily aware of it because Muriel used to sit behind him on the bus . . . I’ll re-phrase that; Muriel always made sure she got the seat behind him on the bus. Because although they went to separate schools, he to the grammar and she to the secondary, Muriel had him in her sights. Even though Leighton did first court a girl called Shirley, Muriel was not deterred and it wasn’t long before that was over and their life together began.

Leighton and Muriel’s first date was to go to the Odeon in Llandudno, as it happens, with Leighton’s friend Chris. But even young love was not without its ups-and-downs. Aged 17 off Leighton went to Weybridge on apprenticeship in the aero-space industry and was only allowed home in the holidays. His dad was an all-round ‘great guy’ and did what he could to assist their young love.

Leighton and Muriel got married at 21 years of age in Horeb Baptist Chapel, Llandudno Junction. This was where Muriel had been accepted into the Chapel as an infant and was later baptised by full immersion. Leighton was always supportive of Muriel’s Chapel life it wasn’t really for him. Another slight difference was that although Muriel was a fluent Welsh speaker, at one time speaking only Welsh, Leighton was not.

In 1959 they were able to set up home in Weybridge where Leighton was working for Vickers Armstrong. They lived at Little Sandhurst where their two children, Leighton and Susan, were born and brought up. Little Sandhurst was only 5 miles from Broadmoor and it was a fact of life that they got used to hearing the siren from that place at 10 am each morning. If it went off at any other time, it was not a good thing and all the families had to fetch their youngsters from school and stay indoors. Why? - because it meant a prisoner had escaped.

On a brighter note, holidays in the caravan were mostly spent in the New Forest where the family loved to rub shoulders with the wild horses in the area and Leighton’s love of wild life found full expression.

Leighton had many interests which included trains and planes mainly, but other things such as photography and computers can go on the list as well as model building and carpentry. Leighton drew up the plans for Rivington Chapel’s rather

fantastic literature display stand and he built a very important item of Chapel furniture, the "Visitors Collection Box" no less.

I asked Muriel if they had ever seen The Flying Scotsman and Muriel said, "Yes . . . many times". Yes, there's many a field they have sat in to see such delights.

While at Weybridge Leighton worked on contract in Bristol, both on Concorde and later on the TSR2 which unfortunately was cancelled. Vickers Armstrong closed and in 1977 Leighton found new work at BAe Salmesbury. So the family upped sticks and moved up to Lancashire. When he finally retired aged 55 in 1992 Leighton's job title was Electrical Inspector.

But, getting back to Leighton's hobbies, he also liked TT races on the Isle of Man and there is a calendar in the kitchen sporting rather fine pictures of high performance motor bikes.

In Weybridge trips to the air show at Duxford were a must and Leighton was indeed a member of the Spitfire Association. Another thing which bore witness to Leighton's lifelong love affair with aviation were the splendid model aircraft that he would build and suspend from the dining room ceiling in all their glory.

When living in Lancashire family holidays were often spent in the caravan on Anglesey or at Muriel's parents at Llandudno Junction. In fact, it was while on Anglesey that one of Leighton's little known feats of cycling prowess took place, and I don't mean motor bike either. Muriel got on a bus in Holyhead to Llandudno Junction. Leighton raced the bus from Holyhead all the way to Llandudno Junction . . . and beat it. Such love. Blinkin 'eck such energy!

Leighton, you have given us all such a lot to think about, indeed a life well lived.