

# AN MCV & PERSONAL TRIBUTE TO TONY LOCKE

## *Recollections of Tony at work*

People who share a common interest often find that it brings them together. One such person for me has been my good friend Tony Locke who shared a mutual, and often exciting, interest in birds and local bird-watching.

Sometimes, specific dates can also bring people closer. One of these dates was 18th October 2021, my birthday and also the day that my birding friend and colleague Tony passed on to do his birding from an elevated position from where he can scan new birding horizons.

On that same date, 18th October, but seven years earlier in 2014 Tony was a special guest at my retirement party. As always he looked exceptionally well tanned and happy and, as usual, he was industrious in helping the party swing along in his own inimitably quiet way.

When Tony was the chairman of the Milford-on-Sea Wildlife Recording Group, he was asked to become our local flora expert and to take over from the late Elizabeth Young. Elizabeth and Tony had researched the parish flora to help produce the definitive wildflower records of Milford-on-Sea and Keyhaven. Both proved exceptionally knowledgeable about Milford's flora. Their unique records will be shared later in 2022/23.

Having lost the love of his life, the lovely Eva, Tony decided to give his latter days to local conservation and to develop further his interest in wildflowers until they became one of his passions. There were other nature passions that he also took up, more about those below.

Tony's daily routine was to walk around our local nature reserves, where he would so often be putting final conservation touches to sites he had personally been working upon, often alone and enjoying just being free to do exactly what he wanted in the fresh bracing air of Milford-on-Sea.



Over the years Tony developed two further nature-related interests. One was, with me, to record annually the cliff-face nest sites of Sand Martins. These tiny birds have bred for many years along the coast at Barton-on-Sea and Hordle Cliff. The other, more bizarre, interest was recording seabird corpses washed up on Milford's seafront, which he did on his own! His meticulous records were submitted annually to the Hampshire Ornithological Society.

He was never happier than when doing things he found interesting and beneficial to the nature recording movement. He wrote and published several important birding papers

*A happy smiling Tony Locke as we all knew him*

In 2016, Tony became Chairman of the Milford Conservation Volunteers (MCV). Tony's time at MCV's helm was without question his finest local conservation hour. As committee members we would suggest numerous conservation projects that sometimes seemed too complex ever to be brought to fruition but with his leadership, guidance and support all were eventually brought to a successful conclusion.



*Footpath and Revetment work in the Pleasure Grounds*

Under Tony's direction, MCV were able to win Parish Council support for numerous projects like the Studland Common Grazing scheme, successive Pleasure Grounds woodland management plans, the Sturt Pond Bird Hide, the development of Old Milford Meadow (*aka the Secret Garden*), Studland Community Orchard, the Pans Wetland Bird Observatory and more recently the Rowan Tree Copse and Wildflower Meadow in Swallow Drive. These projects were achieved under his leadership and the community is grateful for Tony's vision in helping make them come to life.



*Tony propping up at tree and leading a nature walk in the woodlands*

In 2018, jointly with the Parish Council, MCV won the prestigious New Forest National Park Authority **Land Management Award** for our conservation management work in the Pleasure Grounds and Studland Common. In 2020, also under Tony's leadership, MCV were awarded the country's highest accolade for a voluntary group, the **Queen's Award for Voluntary Service**, equivalent to an MBE.





Tony was also an active member of Lymington Naturalists (aka LymNats) for some 25 years and was a past Chairman, Vice-chairman and walks leader. In more recent years he acted as Master of Ceremonies at the annual Members' Evening.

Tony's easy-going manner has brought many tributes from those who worked closely with him or knew him through his many local friendships. Here are some of the things which have been said about him:

- *“Such a good man with a big heart. We will miss our chats with him as we often saw him working in the Pleasure Grounds or on Studland Common”*
- *“It is hard to imagine MCV without him”*
- *“His ornithological and botanical knowledge was extensive. He was enthusiastic and generous in sharing this and many of us benefitted from it. He was a huge asset to our Society (LymNats) and will be greatly missed by all those who knew him”*
- *“Tony was such a gentleman. We have admired his dedication for many years since the passing of his wife. Always keeping busy through the hardship of losing Eva and the love of nature all around him. We will remember the amazing work he did for conservation and his dedication to MCV”*
- *“I shall remember him especially for his amazing knowledge of wildflowers and walking along the Danes Stream footpaths he helped enhance, enabling everyone to walk through that beautiful area, whatever the weather”*
- *“I will miss seeing him in the woods near me – so often collecting rubbish or doing a much needed bit of conservation work. My thoughts are with his family and friends”*
- *“It was always reassuring to see him around, he was a huge part of the village”*
- *“Calm, gentle, determined and a joy to work with under his quiet but progressive leadership. Never a cross word and always ready to talk and support MCV's conservation projects. A true conservation and environment hero and someone who, like Elizabeth Young and Mervyn Couzens before him, will have left his footprint in the sand”*
- *“Much missed and impossible to replace”*

One of Tony's more recent endeavours was to help to remove highly-invasive non-native plant species. He worked tirelessly to remove rhododendron from the Pleasure Grounds and in the following photograph, he seems to be showing great delight as he removes this *American Skunk-cabbage* from an area close to the boardwalk near MEG Bridge.





*Below: Tony taking a well-earned break from doing work on Studland Common.*







*Above: Sharing his wildlife knowledge at a Bug-hunt with Rainbows in Sharvells Copse*



*Tony with his infamous 'logging bench' that took an army to move it around the woodland*





*Admiring his handy logging work on Studland Common*



*Tony with Mike Collison – 'birding buddies'*





*Above: Volunteers of the Year winners Ken and Tony with the Bill Smith Tern Raft at Fledglings before launch*



*Tern Raft ready to be launched at Sturt Pond – Nature Reserve*





*Sharing a moment with Tony at the Bird Hide*



In 2022, Tony would have celebrated his 80th birthday with his twin brother John.

*'In memory of a lovely gentleman and friend who loved nature and so generously shared his birding and wildlife knowledge with us all'*

Keith Metcalf