

## A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE ALAN RICE TD

By Keith Metcalf

The late County Cllr Alan Rice TD was a local legend. Alan was a community spirited man throughout his life here on the south coast. He was dedicated to his work locally looking after thousands of residents and local groups in his Hordle and Milford-on-Sea ward.

Alan has been involved in so many local projects that it is difficult to remember them all. He was a leading figure in helping the County Council purchase important wetland habitats at Iley Point and Keyhaven Marshes. He was instrumental in getting Sturt Pond designated as a Local Nature Reserve and helped fund many environmental and conservation projects in Milford-on-Sea for a number of groups, including MEG (Milford Environment Group), WRG (Wildlife Recording Group) and MCV (Milford Conservation Volunteers).

Not only was he able to help bring many important projects to fruition, he was a hands-on volunteer, getting his hands dirty by undertaking physical works in the Pleasure Grounds, Studland Common and at Sturt Pond (all now Local Nature Reserves) that he helped designate.

Alan would turn his hand to anything, footpath gravel laying, managing bonfires to clear unwanted brushwood and much more besides, including helping local children to plant trees through the Breathing Spaces programme back in 2006. He would nearly always turn up for conservation projects wearing a shirt and tie, but was always quick to get stuck in to whatever job was being done that day. He was always accompanied by his 'trusty rascal' van, the passenger seat often completely over loaded to the gunnels with papers, books, reports and tools.

Keith told us; *"Alan is irreplaceable and has been much missed since his retirement from office some years ago. His longevity (44 years) as a County Councillor and looking after his family and local community organisations is unlikely to ever be topped and the title bestowed on him in 2014 as an Honorary Freeman of New Milton was so well deserved"*.

*"I had the privilege of working with Alan for seventeen years when I was Parish Clerk at Milford-on-Sea. I don't recall him ever missing a local meeting, unless it clashed with one held by the County Council. He was a trusty friend whose work behind the scenes would go unnoticed. Our regular Milford café sessions together were always enlightening and I always looked forward to these informal discussions. He is a very sad loss to his family, friends and our community which he served with absolute distinction. God bless you Alan"*.

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All photographs by Keith Metcalf.





Alan at Breathing Spaces tree planting event 2006 - Gravel laying wearing his customary tie!



Path clearing with Emily – young conservationist      Fitting gate with MCV team



Footpath works in MEG days – 2006



Alan in his 'trusty rascal' van





Alan Rice flanked by Parish Councillors Maureen West and the late Brian Giles



Alan Rice (right) inspecting the St Valentine's Day Storm damage at The Marine