

## Alec Beer 1920-2012

Martin's father, Alec died in March following a fall and a period in hospital. He remained active and independent until the fall. We were with him at home ten days before he fell and he was reminiscing with us about his time in Georgetown (Malaysia) at the end of the war. For the past five years Martin has been visiting Kuala Lumpur several times a year as an External Examiner and Father was always interested in how KL had changed, and whether the places he remembered when he had been based there were still recognisable. On our last visit to the hospital we discussed Georgetown and Penang.

Father was born in Totnes in Devon and Martin fondly remembers his early summer holidays which were always to visit his Grandmother and Auntie Em, who continued to live in the town until they died. Alec's brother, Gerald, passed away a few years ago in Totnes. Father left Totnes when he joined the RAF in the early days of the Second World War, and was posted to Morecambe in Lancashire for his initial training. At the same time Martin's mother, Ruby had relocated to Morecambe with the Post Office to avoid the Blitz. They met and the romance blossomed. They were married during the war and lived a happy family life until Ruby died in 2005. Their marriage was potentially very short as their wartime honeymoon was in Devon and they were walking on Babbacombe Cliffs in Torquay when they were strafed by German fighters. Alec had various postings until the end of the war in Europe, mainly training aircraft mechanics, when he was based in Lincolnshire. Martin remembers him telling him that he was watching the vapour trails of the V2 rockets being launched across the North Sea. Alec was then posted to India to prepare for the amphibious assault on Singapore and he told Martin that his task was to set up the engineering support to get the Changi airfield operational (Changi is the current international airport that Martin has passed through several times) as soon as possible after the assault. His close support was to be Gurkhas. Fortunately the Atomic Bomb rendered the assault on Singapore and after a period cleaning up (in Burma, KL and Georgetown), Alec returned home to start a proper married life. Alec's love of aircraft was passed on to Martin, who joined the RAF CCF section at school and gained his Gliding Pilot's licence, and to Martin's nephew, Laurence, who is now a First Officer with a UK civil airline.

Alec and Ruby settled in London, renting a flat in Crouch End and Martin was born in 1950. In 1956 a job change led to a move to Maidstone where Martin grew up. His sister, Susan, followed in 1960. A move across Mote Park to Bearsted followed in 1970, where they remained. Alec worked as a sales representative for Bibby's, a Liverpool company and when Martin became a lecturer in Liverpool they would meet up when he had meetings at Head Office. Alec moved to Princes when Bibbys transferred the food business, and on to Buitoni when Princes were sold to them. He retired in 1985 as the Regional Sales Manager for catering supplies for the South East. This included regular visits to the Isle of Wight which continued as family visits for the rest of his life.

Retirement was busy with regular childcare assignments with their two grandchildren. They enjoyed their holidays, particularly to Greece, and brought back many tales of encounters they had made. As Ruby's health deteriorated Alec became her carer and looked after her and the house with great pride. After Ruby died, Alec's health began to deteriorate and he spent more time with Martin's sister in Bromley. He eagerly followed the activities of Emily and Laurence, his grandchildren, but was always happy to return home. To the end he took

an active interest in the world around him and Martin's telephone calls home often included discussions of current affairs of mutual interest.

Alec will be greatly missed by all his family and friends. His infectious good humour cheered up visitors and staff even when he was in hospital. He was blessed with reasonable health to the end, and would not have liked losing his independence. In the event he remained in control to the end.