

PETER MIDDLETON

Born in 1934, Peter attended Mostyn House Preparatory School in Parkgate, Cheshire, and Uppingham School in Rutland.

In 1952 he joined the Army and after basic training at Eaton Hall OCTU held a short service commission with The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry serving with them in Germany, Bermuda, British Honduras (now Belize) and Jamaica.

After leaving the regular Army in 1956, Peter applied to become a management trainee with Lambert and Butler in London, however he continued to have great loyalty to the British army which eventually led to his dedicated volunteer work for Help the Hero's.

"I was invited to attend an interview in Bristol by Imperial Tobacco, who at the time was recruiting management pupils," said Peter, 78. "In those days you could only be trained in all aspects of the business by Wills in Bristol and Player's in Nottingham and I was accepted on the two-year training course by Wills."

In 1958 he was appointed head of the sales promotion section in the Wills advertising department.

"We were responsible for promotional activity at holiday camps such as Butlins and Pontins as well as Billy Smart's Circus and Mecca Dance Halls," he said. "We also had a mobile exhibition unit which we took to agricultural shows and other outdoor events. It was an incredibly fun first job by anyone's standards."

Peter did have a wonderful sense of fun, he enjoyed life and all the humour that life could bring which included theatre where he met Dawn Holdsworth through their mutual love of amateur dramatics and after a timely romance, got married in 1959 in St Mary's Church, Stoke Bishop, Bristol and set up their first home together in the beautiful country village of Chew Stoke, just on the edge of Bristol.

Their first born, Anthony was born there in 1961.

In 1961, Peter was seconded to British American Tobacco in the Channel Islands to help launch State Express 555 Filter Kings, before being appointed assistant to – and then sales manager of – the Wills London division.

1963 gave birth to Dawn and Peter's second child, Suzanne and in 1965, their final offspring, Sarah. By now Dawn and Peter had moved a couple of

times with Peter's work and were making Bristol their home.

Between 1965 and 1996 when Peter retired he had a successful career within the tobacco industry. Moving up the ladder from PA to marketing director John Wilson, he became Wills general manager western division and subsequently Wills general sales manager. Moving on a few years Peter became development director of Imperial Distributors Limited, a management company for Imperial's retailing and wholesaling interests.

During these years there were many tobacco sponsorship events including formula 1 car races, speed boat races in the docks at Bristol harbour, Polo events and darts to name but a few. Both Peter and Dawn were involved in these events with many black tie do's and award ceremonies to attend. Peter was a very sociable and popular man, getting on with everyone from all walks of life which awarded him with many friends and a great deal of respect.

As time went on, Peter's career grew and eventually he became Imperial Tobacco's sales and marketing director which he remained until he retired in 1996. His retirement was a great loss to the tobacco industry and he was

surely missed by colleagues and competitors alike.

During his career, in his younger years, Peter enjoyed messing about with boats, starting off with an Avon rubber dingy and graduating eventually to a small speed boat. His idea of heaven was to cruise out to sea just off the coast of Hope Cove in Devon, cut the engine and just drift along with the tide.

With work colleagues Peter enjoyed some of the more countryman pursuits of fly fishing, clay pigeon shooting and the odd live shoot. Peter loved animals – having originally wanting to be a vet as a young lad, however the prospect of dissecting a frog in biology put a stop to that idea!

A few years before his retirement Peter found his dream home in Blacker's Mead, Compton Dando. It had the Winnie the Pooh bridge and the (much smaller) 100 hundred acre wood, the stories of which he had loved since his childhood.

Dawn and Peter moved in to Compton Dando and Peter made it his business to become part of the village community by supporting the Church, (hours were spent discussing the Church toilet), being a member of the Millennium committee and generally helping out in

whatever ways he could. Peter loved living in the village and made friends with all he came in contact with either at the pub, out on a litter picking walk, at the Summer fete or helping to organise the Dog Show.



Peter on the right, with Chris Daubney at a village event

Peter was passionate about dogs, and loved to spend hours supporting a local dog rehoming charity called Dogs Friends where he used his marketing skills to enhance their business. Alongside his commitments to the village, Peter also worked tirelessly as a trustee of Flying Scholarships for Disabled People (FSDP), set up in memory of Sir Douglas Bader to improve the quality of life of disabled people by learning to fly light aircraft.

Peter loved entertaining and made the most of the beautiful garden at Blacker's Mead to hold horse racing events for the village, evening soirees, and croquet parties.

One of the last events that Peter was involved in within the village was a Murder Mystery evening where he proved to be quite the rigid task master at directing and producing the play. With a lot of humour and jesting, a solid performance and a thoroughly enjoyable evening was had by all.

Peter died unexpectedly in February 2015, leaving his wife, Dawn of 56 years of marriage, his two King Charles Cavaliers, three children, three grandchildren and one great granddaughter who was just about to be born.

As Peter had hoped for and had stated on many occasions – he wanted Blacker's Mead to be his last home and in his true fashion it was his best.

