

Alan Horrocks (Popeye to his old friends) 1946 - 2014

It is with great sadness and regret to inform you that Alan Horrocks, friend and a long-time supporter of Sandbach Gymnastics died on Wednesday 10th September 2014 due to injuries sustained from a motorcycle accident.

Alan was involved in Gymnastics since 1977 when he first brought his daughter Sharon to join our gym club. Shortly after he became a parent coach and coached for many years. Alan's day job was a machine tools specialist, designing machines to make machines a very clever man indeed. Alan and his wife Beryl were both very actively involved with our club in the eighties and nineties.

As a club we have moved twice and on both occasions Alan's technical skills and knowhow has helped us to get to the facility we have today. He has helped to design and made coaching devices to make our coaching safer as well as contributing by coaching in his positive and familiar personable style. His clever brain enabled him to analyse gymnastics skills and to significantly contribute towards improving gymnastics in the early days of our club. Alan had the ability to fix anything; we knew if Alan couldn't fix it, it was bust.

In the later years Alan also helped in the fitness area at the club on a Sunday morning so that I could go to church, (one for Al). There he met a new circle of friends who looked forwards to his smiley face and worldly conversation nothing to do with fitness at all, on a Sunday morning. He regularly visited Janet a special friend down in Devon.

Just recently Alan has kept himself busy by completely building and renovating a 1960s mini cooper for his daughter Julianne, which is now sparkly red and on the road ready to drive, as well as helping to fix engine problems on a 35year old speedboat belonging to another long-time friend Ian.

Alan still visited the club at least three times a week for a chat with old friends and cup of tea which was always made especially for him by Tracy. Whilst he was there he would always watch gymnasts and marvel at what they had achieved.

For the past three years Alan's passion had been his motorbike, he would go out whenever the roads were dry. His philosophy was to get out on his bike on the last day of the year and also the first day of the New Year. Over the last two years the Sandbach biker coaches and friends, (Alan, Kev, Mark, Ken and me), would book time off and do a bike trip. We did Cumbria, Scotland, Dorset and Cornwall in the last two years, Lands' End and John O' Groats were both achieved.

Scotland was the best, six days and 2500 miles without touching a motorway. The philosophy was; as soon as we arrived at the destination, forget the bikes and go to the hotel bar and sink a few whiskeys. On the third day when we arrived in Aberlour at about 5pm, we were meeting and dining with another old comrade who lived nearby (John another parent coach that crossed the border). By 6.30pm Alan was completely smashed bumping into the furniture after many double Macallams. We had to assist him and carry his gear to his bedroom. Fortunately he recovered enough to enjoy a stunning meal at John and Elunid's house.

During that trip my gear selector had broken on my Triumph, still 1500 miles to go. Alan in his normal style new what the problem was and fixed it on the roadside with an elastic band. He adjusted the tension so it was easier to change down the gears, which was probably for the best. I completed the Scotland tour, without Alan it would have been the AA for me.

On the day he died we were off skiing at Colwyn Bay, with our resident engineer Alan. As normal we were about half mile off shore with Alan's backside up in the air head stuck down inside the engine compartment and screwdriver in his hand before we rowed back. At least I got a ski that day.

About 5pm we went out for an evening ride, stopped for a brew at a regular haunt and then returned home. On the way back Alan had an accident which caused his immediate death. He did not suffer but he was gone forever.

Our thoughts are now with his friends and especially his family, Sharon, Julianne, Jess, Kara and Isabella.

He was the most contented and happy man I have ever met, (37 years a friend)

RIP Popeye