

## A Tribute to Barry Woods

Barry Woods and his wife Patricia moved to Occold sixteen years ago to achieve one of their dreams: living the rural life. Barry had taken voluntary redundancy from British Telecom and was looking forward to a new chapter in the Woods' life. Full retirement wasn't quite on the cards though, and Barry continued to work as a consultant for four more years, but even when that was over, he found plenty of projects to keep him busy.

From an early age, Barry had ambition and drive. Born in Paddington during WW2, his childhood was far from idyllic but he was raised by loving grandparents and worked hard at school to reach the standard required to achieve his goal of becoming an RAF pilot. Unfortunately this wasn't to be: Barry was found to be colour blind and his dream was shattered. He rejected the opportunity to train as a navigator, and at 15 years of age Barry joined The Post Office, which would later be renamed as British Telecommunications.

Having an aptitude for maths and science, Barry continued his education at college whilst working for the GPO, rising through the ranks to become a project manager developing fax technology. Computing was a very new and strange world for most people, but Barry was at the cutting edge of technology and embraced the challenge head on, picking up many awards for his groundbreaking work over the years.



His interest in the RAF and all things military remained strong, and as Barry had been a member of the Air Cadets since he was 13, it was a natural progression for him to eventually become AC of both 1331 Squadron Stowmarket and 1287 Squadron Wattisham that he christened "The Tigerbirds"



It was because of his involvement with the Air Cadets that Barry met Pat when she was on the committee and a civilian instructor. Romance blossomed and they married in December of 1982.



In 1994 Barry (far right) went on a "Spitfire watch" mission by helicopter piloted by his stepson Mark. They collected the serial numbers of many planes for documentation.

Barry enjoyed travelling in style: he crossed the Atlantic in Concorde and once indulged himself with the purchase of a Rolls Royce – it had to be done: the registration had his name on it!

When Barry finally finished working for BT he started websites for Occold and Debenham, and with Pat, set up the regular Markets when the new village hall was built, looked after the bookings for the hall, and to this day the keys are kept at Rose Cottage. As Village Recorder, Barry was solely responsible for gathering information on behalf of Suffolk Local History Council. Thanks to his dedication, valuable material is preserved and available for all to view.

The Woods shared a passion for family history and ran their own research business helping others find their roots. Having gained experience in researching historical records, in 2015 Pat and Barry decided to take on the mammoth task of honouring all the fallen servicemen commemorated on the village First World War memorial by documenting their histories. This painstaking work culminated in the publication of the Occold Roll of Honour in 2018, which was given to every household and every pupil at Occold Primary School.

The work was completed while Barry was fighting cancer but he was able to enjoy the special 100 year anniversary event and celebration of the publication of the book.



In May 2109, with his family around him, Barry lost his fight against cancer and Occold lost an unsung hero: a man loved by his family and friends, respected by his colleagues and community, a man who sought no praise or accolades but freely gave his time and expertise to enhance the lives of others.