

Always Remembered...



This newsletter is written primarily as a tribute to our vet Ray Butcher who sadly died on the 2nd February this year.

Mrs Jean Wylie, wife of Dick Wylie and mother of David, also sadly died on January 13th – although she had reached the incredible age of 102! Our condolences go to all the people, family and friends, who loved them both.

More happily, vet Stuart returned to us for a few weeks in the spring. It would be nice if he could come back permanently, following his adventures 'down-under', but he is now based near Bury St. Edmunds, and that's not a commute anyone would like, so for the moment it's 'au revoir' to Stu.

It was also farewell to vet Michelle who left us to return to her native Oz in January, and 'arrivederci' to vet Carlo who has left us to run a practice in Southend. However, we welcome vet James (brother of nurse Emma J) who has joined us to work full time at Hornchurch.

Finally, did you take advantage of the January to March dental deal? If you did you'll now have a happier, healthier pet, and one much nicer to get close to!

Editor: Kathy Beasley

RAY BUTCHER – An Essex Boy

Many of you knew, admired and respected our vet Ray Butcher, who worked at the Wylie Veterinary Centre for 35 years. Sadly he died on the 2nd February 2015, on the morning of his 63rd birthday.

Ray was born in South Ockendon, and, when still a schoolboy, he decided that he wanted to become a vet, so he saw practice with Dick Wylie. On leaving school, Ray was accepted by St. Catherine's College, Cambridge to study veterinary medicine. Although a West Ham supporter, and not a typical Cambridge student at that time, Ray nevertheless excelled at university, and following graduation he became a House Surgeon at the Glasgow Vet School.



Mr Wylie and Ray Butcher

At Glasgow, Ray became a skilful surgeon, something many Wylie clients have been grateful for over the years, but, due to an illness in the family, Ray decided to leave academia and return to Essex. He worked briefly in Southend, but was soon offered a partnership at Wylies. It was an exciting time for the practice. The year was 1979 and the surgery was moving from Mr Wylie's house to a purpose built surgery at the present site in Hall Lane.

Ray began as he was to continue, working hard to give the clients and their pets the best possible veterinary care, and to aim for a practice that was 'state of the art'. Clients will know that there have been many changes over the years, and Ray was a major driving force behind every improvement.

No Problem Too Small – Or Too Large!

When Ray became a partner, Wylies was still a mixed practice, all species were treated, and vets were regularly 'on-call' at night after working all day. A typical day would be consultations and surgery on dogs and cats, followed by visits to horses and farm animals. Patients such as rabbits, guinea pigs, rodents, birds and reptiles were seen more rarely, but Ray could cope with whatever turned up, even the occasional monkey!

Occasionally something really unexpected happened, and it was necessary for Ray to extrapolate his knowledge more than usual. In the days when circuses still travelled with animals, a call came one evening stating that the llama had gone 'wopparty', kicked the camel, that had then bitten the horse! Also, could we also worm the big cats & check the wart on the elephant's trunk?! Luckily only Panacur sachets were required for the worming, but the sight of Ray examining the elephant's trunk while several other trunks explored his pockets will never be forgotten!

Other unusual patients were a porpoise and a minke whale, both beached at different times at Corringham. Again Ray did not hesitate to help, and on the latter occasion even featured on 'News At Ten'!

Sometimes clients brought a sick fish to the surgery. Ray felt that he should know more about fish to provide a good service, so he went on a couple of courses, only to find that he had suddenly become the fish expert for most of the south-east!



Crazy Ideas - But So Much Fun!



“ Ray was a good, patient teacher, whether it was helping other vets with their surgery, or tutoring the trainee nurses. He was also very enthusiastic and good fun to be with. ”

During the 80's Ray was involved in several charity events, one of which involved two of us joining him as 'The Supremes'! Another year three of us joined him as 'The Burdizzos', a circus tumbling act, with a finale where he was 'fired' from a 'cannon'! Dave Wylie and I were persuaded to enter the Harrow Half Marathon with him in 1985, and when Ray decided Wylies should have a team in the Chelmsford Jail Break race, vet Paul and I travelled with Ray on various forms of animal transport and won the trophy!

'Pets-In-Focus' was Ray's idea, a local all-day animal based extravaganza that was an amazing success. At the practice we followed it with terrifically successful Open Days, while the idea was taken up by others in the profession and became 'National Pet Week'!

A Lasting Influence Throughout The World

In the 90's Ray started to get involved with the national organisation, BSAVA (British Small Animal Veterinary Association), going from treasurer to president. He then became president of FeCAVA the European equivalent. He started to meet many vets and animal welfare organisations all over the world, and he became the veterinary advisor for both WSPA (World Society for Protection of Animals) and Dogs Trust. He spoke in many different countries, on subjects as diverse as fish medicine, practice management, humane stray dog control, surgery and even disaster management. Through WSPA Ray was able to give help and advice to people who were eager to learn but lived in areas with limited resources. He also became involved in the introduction of qualified veterinary nurses in other countries, and was a founding member of the Rabies Control Alliance. In the last few years Ray, together with a Belgian veterinary behaviourist, Tiny, created the 'Blue Dog', a multi-lingual, dog-bite prevention program for children.



An Inspiration—Much Loved, Much Missed

Ray had good friends all over the world and we met some of them when they visited the practice. He touched the lives of a great many people, and his knowledge and skill, combined with a kind, easy manner meant he was popular wherever he went. He is sadly missed by his work colleagues and clients here at Wylies, but he leaves us richer for having known him and he leaves us with a practice to be proud of. Ray's life was incredible and we were very lucky to share in it.

Ray received many awards from many different countries for his work in veterinary medicine and animal welfare. The last one, in 2011 at the House of Commons, was the rarely given Dogs Trust Award for services to dog welfare.

