

Michael David Johnstone

Michael David Johnstone died on Thursday, June 22, 2017 at Royal Jubilee Hospital of congestive heart failure. He was born on November 24, 1930, in Wakefield, Yorkshire, the son of Harold and Joan (nee' Bayley) Johnstone.

He is survived by his wife Sandra, son Malcolm, brother Roderick (Patricia) of Ryde, Isle of Wight. Survivors also include cousins from both Bayley and Johnstone families in England, Australia and New Zealand, a sister-in-law, two nieces and three nephews and their children in Texas.



Although he was born in Yorkshire, David considered Bideford, North Devon his true home town. His family moved there in 1932, where his chemist parents owned pharmacies. David and his brother Derry spent their school holidays in the Isle of Man, with their two aunts, Margaret and Sylvia Bayley. When the war began in 1939, life changed for the brothers, now at the Bideford Grammar School. Their father, wounded on the Somme in 1916, was deeply

involved with the Home Guard while keeping the main shop going. Their mother continued as a locum chemist, travelling by bicycle to neighbouring shops, while maintaining their home which for a time included two children whose school was evacuated to Bideford. The family also welcomed Canadian and American servicemen, billeted in the area prior to the Allied invasion of Europe. Bideford Quay, on the River Torridge, was one of many sites for the elaborate D-Day preparation. David especially remembered being allowed to assist local ship builders and US Seabees assembling Mulberry harbour components.

When David was accepted for HMS Conway's merchant navy

training program, his father persuaded him to take the option of the first year at Gordonstoun School, temporarily in Wales at Llandinam. There he was able to participate in an early Outward-Bound program.

David felt privileged to be at Gordonstoun during the Kurt Hahn years, and stayed on for an extra term to complete school certificate. He was one of the boys who assisted when the school was re-established in Scotland, and helped sail the Prince Louis back to the Moray Firth.

When he joined Conway in September, 1946 it was something of an anticlimax – the food not so good, and the accommodation more spartan, but the Gordonstoun boys were up to par in navigation and seamanship. That year for David was a difficult one, his mother died at Christmas after a lingering illness. On completing his Conway training, he joined Pacific Steam Navigation Company, trading to the West Coast of South America.



His apprenticeship completed, David joined Shaw Savill & Albion, on the urging of his school friend, Tom Scilly, a ship's carpenter and son of an Appledore mariner and Harbourmaster. The 50s and early 60s saw him moving through several ships and the deck officer ranks to become captain of MV Aramaic in 1963. Shaw Saville's trade between Australia or New Zealand and the United Kingdom meant making new friends in many Down Under ports, especially when on the SS Esperance Bay. He also reconnected with family who had immigrated to AU or NZ earlier and called in South Africa during the brief time his father lived there.

In 1963, David was seconded to the Crusader Shipping Company, a subsidiary line to further trade between New Zealand and the Pacific Rim countries, as captain of the MV Crusader. She was

built in Helsinki, as a reefer for the banana trade, but modified for carrying frozen meat and dairy products from NZ, tuna from Fiji, and mixed general cargo from the ports of North America, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines.

During that time, David met his future wife Sandra in San Francisco, introduced by mutual friends. When they decided to marry, she flew to New Zealand for the ceremony, which took place at All Saints Church, Sumner, Christchurch, on 30 October, 1967. David's long time Kiwi friends, Gordon and June Dalziel, made the arrangements and held the reception at their home. William and Patricia Guilford of Oamaru were best man and matron of honour, with other NZ and SSA friends present. Crusader's voyage took the couple to Fiji, Japan and then North America, where the bride's Texan parents, R.P. and Marguerite Ainsworth, met David in Long Beach, CA.

With the Crusader's home port Auckland, David and Sandra found a flat in Mission Bay. Later in 1968, David accepted a shore position with Furness Withy in Vancouver, so he left the sea in December of that year. Malcolm was born in Vancouver General Hospital in December, 1969.

The 1970s saw many changes in the shipping industry. When Furness was sold, David joined the Bakke Steamship Company, a Norwegian outfit. In the early 80s, after Bakke closed its Vancouver offices, David and family felt it was time to make a real change, and began to look into farming. They had spent holidays on Salt Spring, one of the Gulf Islands, so when a small farm with orchard on North Pender became available, they bought it, calling it Iolanthe Farm. They moved in the spring of 1982, and it was a rewarding though challenging change. One new activity was brewing beer and making cider from his own apples. Owning several small boats through these years also brought David great pleasure, perhaps most from a Whitehall rowing boat and the 28-foot cutter, Nereia, which made the move to Victoria.

The new century meant both David and Sandra were then in their 70s, and the heavy work of farming getting beyond them. In 2004, they moved into Victoria. David enjoyed swimming at the Crystal Pool, then the Oak Bay Recreation Centre for many years, walking to both pools early in the morning to be one of the first swimming each day. His long often solitary walks took him within sight of the Juan de Fuca Straits, to the Oak Bay Marina, or other trails with marine views. There was more time for his favourite reading, which ranged from maritime exploration of the Pacific, Antarctic or Arctic through classic and contemporary mysteries. He always looked forward to the arrival of the Guardian Weekly, and had done so since the years it was provided for SSA masters. After all, he had deep roots in Manchester as well as Devon and Yorkshire.

A private celebration of his life will be held later in the summer. The family are grateful for the excellent care he received at Jubilee and Trillium Douglas Care.

A donation in his memory may be made to the Sail and Life Training Society (www.SALTS.ca) or a charity of your choice.

“The nights are drawing in” as David would say after the Solstice.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

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