

JOHN "TONY" HARVEY (46-53)

From an obituary by David Green in the East Anglian Daily Times.

John 'Tony' Harvey was one of Britain's best known countrymen, a farmer, engineer, raconteur and traditional singer – a Suffolk man who loved horses and hunting. He lived at Tannington, not far from Framlingham and rode with every mounted pack in Britain during a lifelong love affair with hunting. He was Master of the Easton Harriers Hunt for two periods, 1963 -1968 and 1971 – 1989, and was out following the hunt the day before he died.

After being introduced to hunting in the Lake District he heard people singing hunting songs in the pubs and soon had his own repertoire, later extended by other traditional folk songs. He sang in East Anglia with John and Katie Howson's Old Hat Concert Party and was trustee of the East Anglian Traditional Music Trust.

Tony was in the first intake into Brandeston in 1948 and, while still a schoolboy, was using horses on his father's farm and came to regret their rapid replacement as tractors soon dominated the Suffolk farming landscape. When he left school he became a horse dealer working in partnership with Jack Steel at Bulls Hall Bedfield.

From the end of the 1960s Tony collected horse drawn carts and carriages, gathering with friends and vehicles on Sundays at local pubs such as the Worlingworth Swan, Brundish Crown and Hoxne Swan. Eventually he started a business from Tannington Hall, driving guests around the local countryside in horse drawn carriages, employing friends who were retired horsemen, as drivers.

He made two epic journeys aboard his traditional gypsy wagon, one from Suffolk to the Appleby horse fair in Cumbria and later to Epsom for the Derby, via central London and Trafalgar Square. "He knew one of the Queen's equerries and as a result he stayed at Buckingham Palace for one night during the journey. Everywhere he went people knew him – from dukes to dustmen," said his daughter Bridget. Tony's Epsom trip raised £25000 for the Thomas Wolsey School in Ipswich where one of his grandsons, Wilfred, was later to become a pupil.

His second wife, Lydia and daughters Bridget, Judith and Charlotte paid tribute to a sociable, charming and enthusiastic man whose love of horse and hunting inspired many others.

Mike White (R62-70) wrote:

I came across this charming obituary to Tony Harvey while browsing an auction catalogue. I had the pleasure of riding and driving at Tannington Hall in the autumn of last year.

From a foreword in the catalogue of Thimbleby & Shorland of Reading in connection with the sale of his collection of horsedrawn carriages on 2nd June 2007:

Tony Harvey's untimely death in 2006 was a great loss to many worlds, not least those of carriage driving, hunting and farming. A wonderful character and true countryman, with boundless energy, there was little that this practical and clever man could not turn his hand to.

Born to a farming family, Tony took on the beautiful Tannington Hall and the farmland surrounding it. He not only farmed crops and livestock, but founded a thriving business which included running a job master's yard in the summer months, while indulging in his first passion of hunting during the season.

As Master of the Eastern Harriers for 23 years, he had an unrivalled knowledge of the land he hunted, as well as the harriers and the horses he rode. This enthusiasm for hunting was to lead him to fulfil a unique challenge – to hunt with all 286 mounted packs in Great Britain, as well as join other packs on foot. This monumental task was one which he diarised and in due course, was persuaded by friends to turn into a book. Supported by his good friend and fellow Master Paul Rackham, who backed and kindly published the book, 'If St. Peter Has

Hounds' is a remarkable and always frank account of his experiences and the people he encountered along the way, usually with great generosity and kindness. Tony's next book, 'Not a Penny in the Post' has been published posthumously and will be available in the autumn.

As a carriage driver, Tony was a fan of working traditions, preferring older vehicles to the modern ones with all their 'fancy fittings'. Nearly all his carriages were equipped with bits of bailer twine which would always come in useful, plus the odd dog lead to harness one of his faithful terriers. From Tannington, Tony ran pleasure drives for guests at the house which would usually entail a stop at his pub, the Kings Head at Laxfield. He also did numerous weddings and provided carriages for any other occasion that was called for.

A tireless organiser of both events and people, Tony co-ordinated wonderful meets for driving enthusiasts, including the 100 carriage meet and parades of carriages at the Suffolk Show. He just loved being out on the open road with his horses and would go off on driving holidays round East Anglia, often providing turnouts so his friends could join him.

These philanthropic and organisational skills were put to great use and Tony raised large sums of money for charity. His most famous charitable drive was in March 1984 when he set off from Tannington with his 1912 Reading Gypsy Wagon to the Epsom Downs in Surrey for Derby week. This 120 mile one way trip was done in aid of the Great Thomas Wolsey School at Whitton, to raise money for a swimming pool for special needs children. The drive entailed negotiating central London and having met Prince Phillip at the Sandringham Driving Trials, he was cheeky enough to ask if he could lodge overnight at the Royal Mews in London. He was granted permission to do so and duly arrived with his gypsy turnout.

As an enthusiast for all things related to gypsies and travelling life, Tony collected memorabilia and literature connected with this now nearly forgotten way of life. He loved to take his wagons and cobs out on the open road and in 1980, made the round trip of 600 miles to Appleby Fair and raised £8,500 for Driving for the Disabled.

Always a true horseman, Tony bred many of his driving horses, preferring the more traditional British breeds, with their good bone, stamina, pace and character. All his horses were used for working and pleasure.

Although the circumstances by which this sale has been organised are poignant, the collection is a wonderful testament to a remarkable man.