

TED SISSON

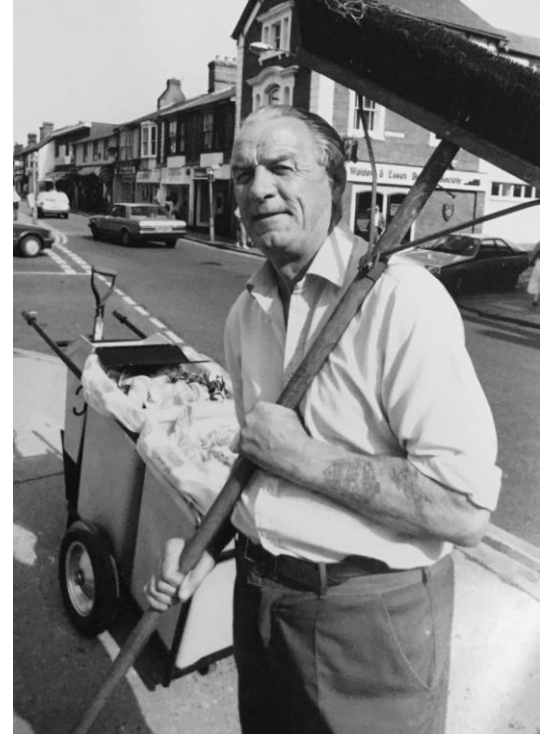
‘HAVE YOU HEARD THE ONE ABOUT...?’

Armed with nothing more than a barrow, broom and shovel, Ted Sisson swept his way into the hearts of Haverhill people. *(Photo right: Ted with his gear 1988)*

Edward (Ted) Sisson was born on 14th November 1927, the son of Jesse Royal Sisson and his wife Maud nee Goodchild.

Jesse was the son of William, a builder’s labourer who had been born in Norwich and his wife Maria who was born in Alpheton, Suffolk. The 1911 census shows them living with five of their children at 17 Meeting Walk. This census also tells us that William and Maria had been married for 27 years and had fourteen children, eight of whom had died. Jesse was, at this time, aged 17 years of age and working as a factory hand (cotton weaving), no doubt in Chantry Mill.

His wife Maude Goodchild was born in Cowlinge and in 1911, aged 19 she was employed as a servant to retired farmer, John Brown who lived at Myrtle Cottage, Little Thurlow.



Jesse and Maude were married in 1917 and made their family home for their six children in Hamlet Road. Ted was their youngest son, he had three older brothers, Harry (born 1919), Douglas (born 1921) and Kenneth (born 1923) and one elder sister Alice (born 1926) and a younger sister Lily (born 1930).

*L to R Back row: Ken, Lily, Mary, Ernie
L to R Front Row: Harry, Ted*

Growing up, Ted was not at all keen on attending school. He was a pupil at the Cangle School which stands opposite the Rose and Crown Hotel just a short walk along the High Street and Queen Street from Hamlet Road where he lived. It would seem that he had very irregular attendance and his family resorted to all manner of ways to get him to go to school including taking him in a wheelbarrow. In later life he often claimed not to be able to read and write but he always knew if he had the right change from his pint and was very quick to tell you on a Thursday morning who had died when he read the Echo.

Ted left school aged 14 and started his working life with Jimmy Woodward looking after the pigs and then on the land working for the Haylock family. Many a time he would say how he had ploughed the land around Haverhill that is now covered with houses. Moy's coal wagons and Project Office Furniture also had the pleasure of his employment but he disliked factory life and moved on to his favourite job as Haverhill's number one road sweeper, or 'footpath attendant' as he liked to be known when he was being posh! He spent 20 happy years pushing his barrow up and down the Haverhill High Street.

It was while Ted was doing his rounds on the coal wagon for Moy's Coal Merchants that he met Sheila Margaret Rose Price, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. R. T. Price, of 6, Hill View, Dorrington, near Shrewsbury. She came to work as a Nanny for Mr. and Mrs. MacDougal of Boyton Hall in 1955. Ted would ride over to visit her and one day turned up with his young niece Mary on the front of his bike. Sheila was very upset after he had gone for she thought she had fallen for a married man with a child. Fortunately for Ted the misunderstanding was resolved and he married Sheila in the Old Independent Church on 21 March 1959. Given away



by her uncle, Mr. J. Price, the bride, wore a ballet length dress of white figured lace over taffeta and carried a white prayer book. The hymns "My-Shepherd," and "Lead us, Heavenly Father," were sung and a reception at Haverhill Town Hall was attended by about forty guests. Presents included an electric iron from the 'groom's fellow members of the Australian Arms Dart Team.

Ted and Sheila enjoyed dancing and they often went to the dances held in the Town Hall and the Bigmore Hall. He was fond of band music and liked to listen to the Haverhill Silver Band when he had the opportunity.

Ted and Sheila set up home in a cottage in the Maltings, Sturmer where they spent all their happy married life and where Sheila still lives today. They had two children, Ian and Derene.

Although Ted never learnt to drive a car it didn't stop him getting about. He rode his pushbike for many years before progressing onto his moped, which was affectionately known to his family as Z Victor One. When his children were young holidays were either in a caravan in Felixstowe or with Sheila's family in Shropshire. Ian and Derene say 'He wasn't a Dad who read stories or played football, he left that side to Mum, he was strict but fair and always there when you needed him, like when your bike got a puncture.'



Ted described road sweeping as the best job he had ever had. He enjoyed every minute of it from the early morning when he changed the road signs to sweeping up the last bit of dust. He loved being out meeting people and brightened many dull mornings with his cheery whistling and cheeky chatter. He was infamous for his jokes and had the gift of making people laugh with his many amusing tales. How many people have seen his blue Bee in the matchbox? Friday being market day was a day he particularly enjoyed - a town bursting full of people to chat to as he made his way between the pubs for his lunchtime pints. You always knew which pub Ted was in as he parked his barrow outside.

With mechanisation due to take over, Ted decided to take early retirement rather than work with the new machines. He had kept the streets in the centre of town clean for 20 years. When Ted retired Mrs P Leishman from the Police Station wrote an ode to mark his departure.

Ted's philosophy was 'enjoy life while you can' and this made him a howling success at Haverhill Carnival occasions when he danced in front of the Band, jesting and encouraging the watching crowds to cheer.



*Top photo: Ted leads a torchlight procession through the High Street
Bottom photo: Ted with marching band 1986*

The Demise of our Road Sweeper, Ted

See him coming down the street,
Moving slow but sounding sweet
L-Plates to the fore.
'Morning Ted' someone shouts.
'Have you come to clean some more?'
Rubbish, litter, people's junk.
It's all the same to him.
You never hear him grumble.
Although the problem's grim.
He has a smile, a merry quip,
A joke that's near the mark.
And many a time the joke
Was on the borough's yellow cart.
The machine has come, it's
time for Ted
To take a well-earned rest.
No early rise on Sunday
To make Haverhill look its best.
So long mate!
Hang up your brush,
Your shovel and the rest.
For me and many more,
Ted – you are the best.
Mrs. P. Leishman,
Haverhill Police Station

Many people will have a tale to tell of Ted, from riding a horse backwards, to growing half a beard for a bet.

(‘Half a beard’ Ted photo right)

Early retirement gave Ted and Sheila the opportunity to travel. They went the length and breadth of the country on many coach tours. They cruised the Rhine in Germany; climbed Austrian mountains and marvelled at Niagara Falls in Canada.

Ted loved living in Sturmer where he was very much part of the community. The Red Lion played a large part in his social life but he was also involved with many other aspects within the village, especially the village hall. He never was, nor wanted to be, chairman of the many committees around but was always willing to help out where he could. Many will remember him directing the traffic through the floods in Sturmer looking like a large banana in his yellow waterproofs.

Life wasn't always a bed of roses. Ted had been a diabetic for the last ten years of his life. His diabetes and heart problems saw a gradual decline in his health. His body wasn't always willing but his eyesight was fine and his mind was still quick. Ted died on 12th June 2001 and was buried in St Mary's Churchyard, Sturmer.



After Ted's death the villagers of Sturmer had a collection in his memory and provided a bench which is located by the bus stop at the village war memorial. It is inscribed 'Ted Sisson 1927 – 2001 Happy Memories'





LtoR In later life, brothers and sisters, Mary, Ted, Harry, Ken, Lily, Ernie

Ted welcomed Ann & Kevin into his family and he loved his four grandchildren, Kelly, Craig, Sarah & Jonathan, dearly.

And finally.... Did you see the blue Bee in his matchbox?

Information and photos from Ted's wife Sheila, and children Derene and Ian.