

Eric Chase 13.02.1925 – 30.09.2023



My father, Eric Charles Harry Chase, who farmed at Hatt Farm, Mottisfont was born on Friday 13th February, 1925, the youngest of three with his eldest sister Jean and brother John. His roots were in Romsey, where his Grandfather owned a bakery and restaurant (on the site of what was Pearce's bakery). His father Harold farmed at Burley and then moved his family to Hatt Farm in September 1925.

At the age of 12, he was sponsored to go to King's College Taunton as a boarder. His farming ability started to show through even then. During the war years, he persuaded the headmaster to let the boys grow vegetables and keep chickens on spare ground around the school. He was interested in livestock from an early age, and won cups and medals for showing cattle in the 1930s. He studied for a Diploma in Agriculture at Reading University, and then worked as a Livestock Officer for Berkshire WARAG (War Agricultural Executive Committee).

His father wasn't well, so Eric came back to Hatt Farm around 1947 and the partnership H.J. Chase and Sons was formed with his father and John – tenants of Mrs. Russell and then the National Trust after the Estate was handed over. Eric was a keen member of Romsey Young Farmers club, and that is where he met Margaret. Married in 1949, they had five daughters, and the partnership lasted for 72 years.

In 1952 he won a scholarship to study farming in America. On his return he was keen to introduce new methods to the farm, and even made the papers once by installing one of the first herring-bone milking parlours.

He was constantly on the go. He played cricket for East Tytherley, and was an enthusiastic member of the Growmore Club. He also helped run Lockerley Scouts for a while. He was Chairman of Mottisfont Parish Council, and also helped set up the Broughton & Mottisfont Community Bus. He was an active member of Romsey National Farmers Union and eventually became Chairman of Hampshire NFU. He was also in later years, heavily involved in setting up a very successful grain marketing group.

He loved all animals, but had a passion for heavy horses: his Shire horse Dolly was his pride and joy, and driving her around the village with a cartload of Carol singers is a particularly fond memory of Christmas at Mottisfont. Unfortunately, he struggled with arthritis at a relatively early age (he had 5 hip operations over his years!), and so retired from farming and moved to Whiteparish in September 1986. Eric was a fun and charismatic man, telling dodgy jokes right up to the end. This sense of humour and his ability to get on well with people from all walks of life was a very special gift.

Hilary Chase