

Hopefield's Ernie Clark - life devoted to animals

HOPEFIELD'S staff and patrons have paid tribute to Ernie Clark, who has died at the age of 84.

An animal sanctuary statement said: "Ernie was the backbone of Hopefield. When times were hard, he was always there, fighting for the animals he loved.

"Both Paula and Ernie touched the hearts of people they met and were inspirational to many. If only there were more people who had the courage to do what they did.

"Ernie was incredible with the animals. We would see him in the field dancing with the horses and playing with Bertie the bull - the animals truly loved him.

"When Ernie became ill, his bravery was amazing. He never let it get him down. He was more concerned about the animals.

"He remained upbeat throughout and even towards the end, he



Devoted: Ernie and Paula

was cracking jokes. Ernie was such a strong character. He will be missed by supporters and animals alike."

Ernie was born in Mile End, East London, where he grew up before moving to Rush Green, near Romford, with his parents.

At 16, he joined the Army a year before the Second World War. After the war ended he joined the Merchant Navy and it was when he left that he met

Paula. He had a number of jobs, including two stints at Fords in Dagenham and 20 years as manager at a container depot at Chobham Farm, Stratford, now the site of the Olympic Stadium.

Son Lee explained his dad, and grandad to his three children - Bradley, 25, Scott, 22, and Jordan, 19 - retired aged 62 and the financial package he was offered was ploughed into the sanctuary.

He added: "They always were animal lovers. Mum was more passionate at first, but that drew my dad in and he went along with it - he was so devoted to my mum.

"He was always the man in the public eye, he was the face of Hopefield Sanctuary and mum was the push and go in the background."

Ernie's funeral will be held on Wednesday, September 21, at Corbets Tey Crematorium, in Upminster, at 1.20pm.

'Lovable charmer' remembered

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can to keep such a special place that's saving animals' lives going."

Paula died in 2009 after losing her battle with cancer, but the couple's only child, Lee, 51, who lives in Dagenham, said his parents died knowing the sanctuary was in good hands.

Six trustees, including Lee and his wife Gina, have taken over the running of the sanctuary.

Lee has many good memories of his dad, who was a big Tottenham Hotspur fan, but said he will be remembered as a "lovable charmer".

"He was an absolute gent and

always had time for me," he said.

"There was no hidden agenda with my dad, he was very polite and hospitable. My mum used to always say 'your father is such a charmer'.

"He said to everyone 'I'm not frightened of dying, I've had a wonderful life'. He lived it to the full and had no regrets."

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