

## **Draft commemorative statement of Joanne Woolley regarding Norman Noah Dunkley**

My father, Norman Noah Dunkley, was born on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 1931 in Loughton, Essex. He grew up with a strong work ethic which defined much of his life. My Dad Norman grew up in Chingford with his mum, dad, and three sisters: Patties, Jean and Audrey. My dad was also brought up with animals, dogs, chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs which he used to help his dad look after. His dad had horses that they would ride and also drive in a horse and cart. My aunty Jean said they were the original Darling Buds of May like the television programme, as my dad grew older he said he would like a small farm of his town.

While my dad was out one night in the pub, the Fox and Hounds, Stewardson Road, he met my mother, Patricia Dunkley. They had a short courtship and they got married in 1968 and built a life together at Oak Farm where they raised my sister Sharon and me. My mum and dad decided they would like their own property as they were living with my grandparents. So, my dad had been working as a fork lift driver and saved all his money so he could buy a small holdings in High beech where he and my mum could live, with my sister. When my dad brought the farm there was nothing there, just 14 acres of pastureland. So my dad went to the local council and asked them for planning permission and they said he could put a caravan on the land to live in for him and his family, which he did.

The farm is what can be best described as an isolated farm on 14 acres of pastureland, with a bungalow built in the late 1970s. It was not just a family home, but the heart of

my father's life's work. My parents worked hard to develop the farm, turning it into a thriving business with horses, pigs, sheep and cattle.

The farm was the primary source of income, and my father would often turn the cattle out on the forest to preserve his pastures.

In March 1970 I was born, Joanne. My dad was still a forklift driver and now there was four of us living in a caravan. My dad started to get some animals on the farm. He had pigs, horses, sheep, rabbits and goats. My sister and I used to help out dad look after the animals. As we got bigger, we loved it, we also had horses that we use to ride, it was idyllic. As things progressed, mum and dad decided they would like to build a bungalow for us all to live in. So dad went to the council and asked for planning permission, as we had lived in the caravan for 9 years, and it was granted. So dad built the bungalow also stabled to rent out for horses, with my mum, right by his side helping all the way. My dad then bought cattle for beef, which he would graze out on the local forestry and then take them to the market for beef cattle. This is how my mum and dad made their living, with my dad renting the stables out for horses and taking the cows to the market. My mum used to do all the book work for the farm and also look after us all. My mum and dad loved living in Highbeech as my dad now had what he always wanted. Sharon and I had a lovely upbringing and she wants to be part of this story as well. Like, also, Paul Dockley is such a big part of ours. Paul has known my dad for 60 years and we look at Paul like a brother. Paul wanted to be a part of this statement too and help write this statement.

In 1962, our father hired a then young, Paul Dockley. Paul cared for and rode our father's horses, and over a period of 60 years, he would become a close family friend, and a reliable source of support. I would say that our father wasn't the easiest man to deal with at the best of times. Though, Paul was able to act as an intermediary on occasions in which our father would disagree with my sister and I, as he had known and accommodated our father's strong viewpoints, since before we were born.

My sister and I spent all our childhood through to adulthood on the farm. Oak Farm was a place of warmth and hard work. My sister and I grew up alongside the animals, spending our days exploring the fields, learning about farming, and being surrounded by nature. We built many happy memories.

[My sister, Mrs Sharon Ann Bramman wanted to say the following]:

*I am the eldest daughter of me and my sister, growing up on dad's farm was lovely childhood memories. I would go with him mostly everywhere for example to collect the hay and straw for the farm for the horses and cows he had and going to the market with him to sell his cows he had brought up. The highlight of going to the market was to get a sausage roll with him (hahaha). Another one was he would ride his push bike and I would ride my horse and he would follow behind so I could take the horse out for a ride and another one he would take me and my sister, and mum to the ridgeway park on a Sunday afternoon, and we would go on the rides.*

*(words from Mrs Sharon Ann Bramman)*

As our parents got older, it was evident they would need to be cared for. They had cared for Sharon and I so there was no question in our minds that we would do the same. We agreed that I would be the primary carer for our mother, and latterly our father, during the week and at weekends my sister would cover to provide me with some respite. In 2000, our mother was diagnosed with Lung Cancer, which she endured for 10 years, until she passed away in 2010. Within weeks of getting the news of mum's illness, I decided to do reduced hours at work so I could look after mum and be there for dad, as he was devastated at the thought of mum being ill as we all was. I cared for mum for 10 years going to every hospital appointment and doctor's appointment with her and then nursing mum at home with palliative care.

Our mother's passing left our father deeply heartbroken and lost. Their marriage had been a strong partnership, and without her, he struggled to adjust. Nevertheless, he continued to live at Oak Farm, determined to maintain the life they had built together, from nothing.

My dad was so lost when my mum passed away. She was the love of his life, that's what he said. They was always together and worked hard. They loved living in Highbeechee and all what they had achieved, to build a bungalow and to bring me and my sister up. We are very close family and always looked after each other. We couldn't have had a better mum and dad. That's why when mum passed away, I knew dad wouldn't cope, so I would go every day and cook and clean for him and make sure he was ok, and at the weekend my sister Sharon used to go while I was at work. But, although he had me and Sharon he was still lonely and missed mum terribly, and never got over mum passing away.

Up until his early eighties my father successfully held the reins on running Oak Farm. However, over the next decade, his health began to decline. He suffered a triple heart bypass in 2005, which marked a significant turning point in his ability to manage the farm. Although his mind was still sharp, physically, he could no longer work as he once had. I took on the role of his primary caregiver, travelling by bus and bike (as I did not drive) to the farm, every day to cook for him, manage the house and the farm's administrative tasks. On weekends, Sharon would help to relieve me.

As time went on dad's health deteriorated, he had already suffered a triple heart bypass back in 2005. We think that was the stress of mum being diagnosed with lung cancer. I was devastated when mum passed away, we was so close. We would be together all the time, she was a lovely caring mum to me and Sharon. I found it hard when mum passed as I did everything for mum, and it left a big hole in my life. Mum said to me, look after dad when I pass away and I said of course we would as dad couldn't cope without mum, she did everything for him, he was not used to being on his own.

As his health continued to deteriorate, my father began to experience mood swings and confusion. It became increasingly difficult to care for him. Looking after my dad was not easy but we loved him and would not see him being not cared for. As time went on my dad's health got worse and I was with him every day helping him to dress and wash as he was unable to do this for himself. Then the unacceptable became the acceptable as how could I leave him to care on his own because clearly he couldn't cope.

In 2019, we noticed a marked deterioration in our father's mental health. One incident that particularly stands out was when he started seeing people riding horses around the paddock close to the house at night. To allay his fears, we installed a CCTV system, but he was still adamant that there were people outside the house. When the CCTV showed evidence to the contrary. Sadly, these hallucinations continued time and time again in our father's mind. His hallucinations grew more frequent, and he would sometimes call the police late at night, convinced that intruders were trying to harm him. He would explain to them that sirens should not be used on their arrival, but when the police arrived with sirens, he would say the people (in his hallucinations) had disappeared.

By October 2021, our father's condition had worsened significantly. One night, he went outside during the night and fell, spending hours lying outside the bungalow unable to get up. The following morning, my husband and I rushed to the farm after my father had managed to call. By October 2021 my dad's health had become a lot worse he had a fall outside. I was visiting him as I did everyday, he had not been able to get into the bungalow. So my husband and I got him in and settled him and I stayed with him to make sure he was ok.

There was another incident, the last one when my father had been up all-night saying people was trying to kill him, and he locked himself in and he called me from his phone indoors. I don't know how he remembered my number because he was in a state, when I arrived, claiming that people were in the house and were trying to blow it up and kill him. When we arrived, my father was locked inside and unable to get to the front door, so I managed to get him to open a window and I then climbed inside. It was

devastating to see; his eyes were black, and he was covered in sweat as he had obviously been up all-night panicking, thinking these people were going to blow up the property. He looked so ill. It was evident that all that he reported was a figment of his imagination.

We eventually calmed him down and rang for an ambulance. My sister also came up to the farm. The ambulance advised my father needed to go to hospital. He was taken to Whipps Cross Hospital, where we waited for fifteen hours in casualty where several doctors saw him. The doctors initially wanted to send him home, but on my insistence that he needed to stay overnight, they agreed. The next day he underwent further assessment by a member of the mental health team who diagnosed him with Lewey Body Dementia and said that he was more ill than he presented. Our father was then moved to the Mental Health Unit at St Margaret's Hospital in Epping. During this time, our father kept talking about his property having been blown to smithereens, and people from his past who had died.

This was an incredibly difficult time for our family, as it was the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown, and we were not permitted to visit him. Once the restrictions were lifted, we were able to visit again.

When dad was hospitalised at St Margarets, Epping, mid October 2021. We visited him regularly every week and weekend up until January 2022, then lock down began and we could only speak to him on the phone which was very distressing for our dad and us as well.

Dr Shiraz, Mental Health Doctor, rang my sister and said that dad was diagnosed with vascular dementia. We asked for a meeting which took place early December.

In January 2022 we had a meeting with [Personal/Sensitive] adult social working care. Our dad was moved into a home as they said he was not palliative care. He was in the home a week (Wensley House, Epping) and dad passed Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

Dads one wish he always wanted was to pass away at home which was 'Oak Farm' [personal/sensitive] Essex, which he was denied [Personal/Sensitive] as they said he wasn't palliative care.

It was evident that there was significant deterioration in our father's physical condition and wellbeing. His mobility was reduced, and he had become withdrawn.

After a month of being in hospital, I received a call from the Occupational Therapist treating our father, to consider our father's future care; and whether he could return home to Oak Farm or accommodated in a care home. I knew for certain, that my father wanted to return to the place he loved most, the farm. Despite expressing our and our father's wishes for him to return home, he was moved to Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow. I was never told why he was moved to this hospital, and it only added to our sense of confusion and frustration. Throughout this period, we struggled to find clarity about his care. Despite raising concerns about his mental and physical welfare, it felt like his wishes were not being fully considered. In late 2021, a mental health doctor at



St Margarets advised he should go into a care home. It was clear that from the symptoms my father was displaying, for many months now, that he was not receiving the correct care and was becoming very insular. This was heartbreaking to see.

Paul and I attended a meeting with the doctor regarding my father's care. We raised several issues, including his mental welfare and medical care. I also asked about Palliative care, having been through the process whilst caring for our mother. However, we were told he was not a case for Palliative care and a Care Home would be the best option. This was disheartening, as we felt it would have been the best option for his dignity and comfort towards the end of his life.

In January 2022, Sharon, Paul and I attended a meeting with an adult social care representative. She raised the of social care for people at St Margarets Hospital, but once again there was no option in relation to Palliative care. My family wanted our father to return home with support, as this would have suited him best, but this option was never discussed or encouraged. We left that meeting feeling further confused and concerned.

On Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March, my father was taken from St Margarets to Wensley House Care Home. Sharon and I went to see him on the Tuesday, and it was clear that his condition had worsened. He was uncommunicative and physically frail. It was heart-wrenching to see him in such a state. Finally, the Head Nurse agreed that he should be administered Palliative care, and in consultation with the doctor, it was agreed that the process of Palliative care could be initiated immediately. But this was actioned too late.

We had one weekend where all my father's family and friends came to see him, and on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 he passed away. Although his final days were difficult, we are comforted by the fact that he was surrounded by those who loved him. It pains me that it took so long for medical professionals to respect our father's wishes to return home, where he could end his life in the place he loved, with dignity. Our father was a man of strength, pride, and dedication. Oak Farm remains a testament to his life's work and the love he poured into every aspect of it. We miss him deeply, but his memory lives on in the fields, the animals, and the home he cherished so much.