

## ROBERT EDNEY

1956 - 2020

Coming from an Island family, Bob, from Wootton, started work for the Isle of Wight County Council in 1980. He worked in the countryside service for over 39 years until his death in March 2020. Almost everyone on the Island will have benefited from Bob's work. He had many job titles over the years but all of them involved caring for the council's range of country parks, nature reserves and green spaces. Bob's careful stewardship of these local havens for wildlife and people was a mainstay of the council's countryside work for nearly four decades.

As well as the usual ranger skills of visitor and habitat management, Bob was particularly good at working with other landowners and agencies to find agreement and move projects forward. He had a particularly longstanding involvement with and commitment to the Wight Nature Fund, a local charity that for many years managed several small reserves around the Island. His wise advice and gentle persistence delivered much to benefit wildlife and landscape work across the Isle of Wight. Bob will be greatly missed as a friendly, reliable and helpful face of the council by many landowners, parish councils, schools and charities.

Although he worked across the whole Island, Bob was most strongly associated with Fort Victoria Country Park where he began working in 1982 as Fort Victoria Ranger. He continued to manage the country park throughout most of his career, seeing it through many challenges and developments. He was particularly proud of the big improvements to the park and its facilities that were carried out in 2013-14 as part of the lottery-funded West Wight Landscape Partnership. Many thousands of schoolchildren and students over the years enjoyed learning about the countryside and coast from Bob at Fort Victoria, and the park continues to be a popular attraction today.

Bob's affable enthusiasm, alongside his extensive knowledge and understanding of the Isle of Wight's countryside also inspired many others: rangers who worked for Bob have gone on to work for the National Trust, the Wildlife Trust, and many other organisations. Bob trained and encouraged hundreds of volunteers, some of whom went on to find employment in the countryside field.

Bob was a member of the Society for very many years and has always been very helpful to the Society and to members. He led many meetings around the Isle of Wight Council's reserves which he managed. Golden Hill and Freshwater Marshes were particular favourites of his and he was involved with the management of these sites for almost as long as the Society has had an active involvement; key members of the Society were instrumental in setting up management committees for these sites. Bob helped the Society in many ways over the years and he will be sorely missed for his diligence, his skill and knowledge, his quiet patience, and above all his rich and genuine love for the countryside of the Isle of Wight.



### The Bob Edney Countryside Conservation Award

On 29 September 2021 over 50 people attended a gathering of family, friends and colleagues at Fort Victoria Country Park, one of the many locations that Bob looked after for so long. Joining Bob's family and colleagues were current and former councillors, charity workers, contractors and volunteers. Tributes were paid as Bob's life and work were celebrated and a new award named in his memory was announced.



Friends and colleagues of the late Bob Edney gathered at Fort Victoria Country Park

The Bob Edney Countryside Conservation Award is an annual award, supported by the Isle of Wight Council, to reward an individual or organisation making a contribution to conserving and enhancing the Isle of Wight's countryside.

The winner of the inaugural award, presented in 2022, was the Isle of Wight Green Gym.

**Author:** Matthew Chatfield