

William Saunders

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Mr William Saunders

A MAN who built his own grinder and developed a flourishing knife-sharpening business has died, aged 77.

Mr William Saunders — Fondly known to many as Billy the Grinder — died at St Mary's Hospital, Newport, on May 17, following a short illness.

Mr Saunders, of Bellmead Lane, Newport, was born to a family of Romanies in Micheldever, near Winchester, and spent much of his early life travelling and was educated at many places, including Lyndhurst School.

After leaving school, he became a stable lad in the Lyndhurst area.

He later worked for his uncle on a fairground for a few years, where he learned to drive.

Mr Saunders drove lorries for a living prior to the second world war, when he joined the RAF.

He served as an airman first class for two years, prior to a freak accident while in Southampton.

A bomb blast during an air-raid in the city left him with a fractured spine and he was discharged from the air-force as being fit for special duties only.

But soon found his feet as a lorry driver on American air bases.

After the war, he married, Pat, and in 1945 the pair came to the Island to work at a farm at Merstone.

Stints as a Southern Vectis bus driver and a lighthouse keeper at Calshott Spit followed.

Mr Saunders then went back to farm work, before getting his own lorry and running a scrap business.

He built his own grinder barrel and developed a successful business sharpening knives, scissors, shears and other implements.

He was also well-known for making and selling traditional clothes pegs, wreaths and wooden flowers.

Mr Saunders was a member of the Southern Vectis Social Club and had recently been featured on Meridian television.

He leaves his wife, Pat, children Michael, Kathy and Sue, five grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and his sister Dorrie.

The funeral service last Friday at St Paul's Church, Barton, was conducted by the Rev Peter Rowe.

Transcribe by Roger O'Nions for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries © 2019)
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