

park *people*

A RAY OF SUNSHINE!

Returning to his roots in Exeter, Ray Bibby has moved to Exonia Park, in Devon, where he used to walk by as a small boy...



ABOVE: A smiling Ray and Margaret Bibby in Exeter on their wedding day way back in the 1960s

It's a privilege to spend time with somebody as spirited and entertaining as Ray Bibby. He spent his childhood years in Exeter, Devon, and has now moved back 64 years later.

Ray has enjoyed a rich and varied life: happily married, a keen sportsman and well-travelled in his work with the army. He joined the army in 1953 at the age of 17 and signed up for three years. He loved it so much he stayed on a further 20 years!

His initial motivation was two-fold - the ability to play sport and a higher rate of pay than the two-year National Service.

Where there's a will, there's a way!

His work with the army took him to a variety of countries including the Middle and Far East. It was in 1963 when he was stationed in Swindon, Wiltshire, that he met the love of his life, Margaret. She was a college lecturer and in fact the youngest lecturer in the UK at the time.

Prior to meeting Margaret, Ray had volunteered for the Arab Army and after eight months he was called up for the post in Aden, near Yemen. Margaret applied to the United Nations and was posted to Geneva.

Nine months later they were both due a two-week leave and arranged to spend time together in Swindon. He arrived back to find Margaret had gone out to a dance - in fairness she didn't know his train times! - and so he spent his first evening eating fish and chips with her father!

Ray immediately proposed to Margaret and suggested 'Saturday'. To Margaret's shock, he meant the next Saturday! The church in Exeter was booked and within a week the dress was sorted, cake made and with a little persuasion bingo was cancelled to free the village hall for the reception! Margaret's family and friends hired a coach and travelled from Swindon to Exeter.

After a four-day honeymoon, both Ray and Margaret returned to their respective posts for a further nine months. The next

time Ray was to see Margaret, he also had a beautiful baby daughter, Kim. In a frantic rush to return he arrived 20 minutes after her birth.

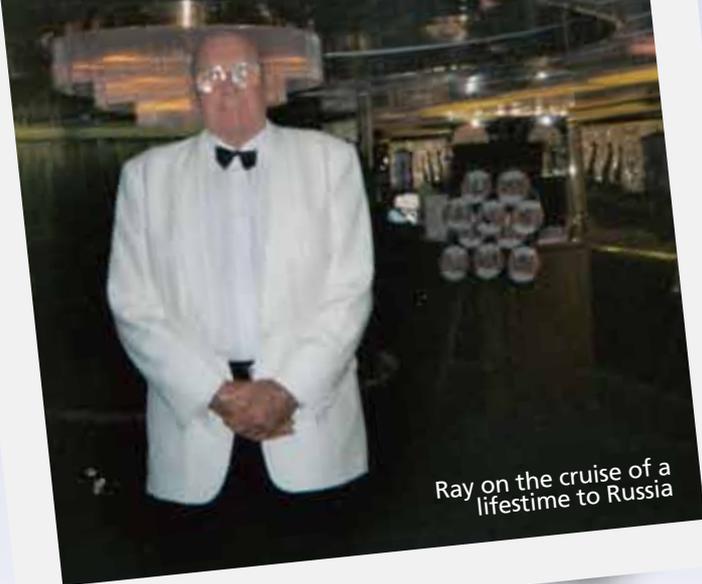
'I wouldn't change a thing'

That was the start of a very happy married life. Ray's work took them to Germany and Bahrain where little Kim started school. Margaret was employed by the Army Education Authority to teach army wives business skills and Ray was also involved in running a youth club.

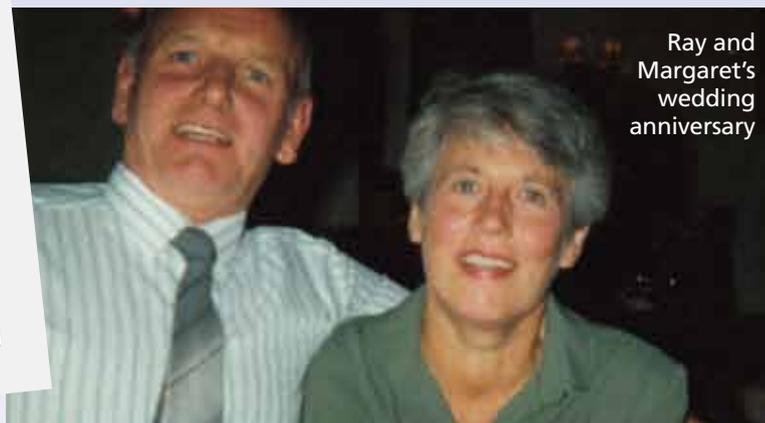
Sport has always been a big part of Ray's life. A keen footballer, cricketer and boxer he successfully participated in army teams.

He also ran the football team prior to retirement from the army. His other passion was table tennis (do not call it ping pong!), which he played for 60 years up until he was aged 74.

Ray's last posting was in Banbury where he and Margaret bought a house of their own. They sold this eight years later and



Ray on the cruise of a lifetime to Russia



Ray and Margaret's wedding anniversary

“The PHCS team is brilliant! They are smart and polite, as well as extremely knowledgeable.”

bought another house which they lived in for the next 30 years. Margaret taught at Banbury College and when Ray retired from the army at the age of 40 he set up a removal business which he later sold and worked as general manager for an office equipment and stationery company.

Ray and Margaret shared a passion for indoor bowling and were very involved in league games and club tournaments.

Ray confesses Margaret was probably the better of the two as the game was a bit slow for him! Now he claims he can't play because although he can get down, he can't get back up! (The same applies for communion, for which he has special dispensation!)

Sadly Margaret suffered a stroke on the golf course while on holiday in the Isle of Wight. Tragically, her health deteriorated with dementia over the next six years, during which Ray was by her side at all times.

New beginning

In those first few dark months, Ray decided he would return to his roots in Exeter. The house in Banbury was too large, and to be near his sister, with a change of environment, was what he decided he needed.



Little did he know all those boyhood years ago he would be living at Exonia Park! He didn't want a house or a flat and the purchase of his fabulous two-bedroom park home has enabled him to release equity to enjoy different things.

Exonia Park is ideally located five minutes from Exeter and five minutes from his sister's place. The home included Ray's prerequisite en suite walk in shower in addition to two bedrooms, a large lounge and dining room and a built in kitchen. The attractive outside space is reached through French windows onto decking – perfect for a sun worshipper like Ray!

No longer on tenterhooks

The park home is over 30 years old and Ray hadn't had a survey conducted when he bought it. While he was confident about the overall condition of the home, he always had the worry in the back of his mind about the condition of the chassis.

He called Park Home Chassis Services (PHCS) and couldn't be more complimentary about the company.

The initial survey by PHCS provided the peace of mind he needed. The en suite had been an extension to the home and it was this area that required additional support.

The PHCS installation team fitted new PHCS HD hot dip galvanised supports to fully stabilise the home. Ray said, 'The PHCS team is brilliant! They are smart and polite, as well as extremely knowledgeable.'

You never know who you may meet

It's hard to cope with loss and loneliness but Ray's determination to experience new ventures and meet friends is admirable.

He started 2017 by visiting his nephew in Adelaide, Australia, for three weeks. A chance meeting on the aeroplane with a vineyard owner even resulted in a personal tour in the Barossa Valley!

LEFT: Happy-go-lucky Margaret dancing the night away

Ray is integrating well in his local community. He attends the local Railway Club with his sister every week, he goes to the village hall (where he used to play football years ago) on a Tuesday, attends his local church and goes to the pictures – silver screen for oldies (he jokes that if it's not a good picture they'll all be found snoozing). He has also volunteered to work for Age Concern at the ripe old age of 81.

Travelling is in Ray's bones and he has also spent time in Cyprus with his sister and brother this year. He's shortly taking Kim, his daughter, to Benidorm for a beach holiday and then treating himself to a 15-day solo cruise. Last on the agenda is Christmas shopping with Kim in New York.

It's not easy to pick yourself up but Ray is a joy and inspiration to all. He has found a new place to settle and there's little doubt that, with his fun and upbeat approach, he'll be busier than ever with friends galore.

In a nutshell

- Ray has returned to his roots and is now living on Exonia Park in Exeter.
- Buying a park home enabled Ray to release some equity.
- Without a pre purchase survey Ray had a nagging worry about the condition under the home.
- PHCS expertise and workmanship has given him peace of mind.
- PHCS HD supports are hot dip galvanised, independently tested, and stamped with maximum safe working load, as stipulated by NCC Code of Practice 501.
- For further information on Park Home Chassis Services Ltd, please call 0333 456 3056 or 0118 984 3107. Alternatively, email info@parkhomechassis.co.uk or visit www.parkhomechassis.co.uk.