

## A tribute in words and pictures - Don Cousins

(16 April 1929-10 January 2020)

We are saddened to report that Don Cousins has passed away at the age of 91 years, leaving behind a rich legacy of memories of his early life in Pettaugh which he was able to recall with great clarity and in remarkable detail. Don was a keen and active member of the Pettaugh History Society. He regularly attended meetings which he enlivened with his cheerful personality and infectious laugh. Don drew a sketch map of houses in the village, based on his memories of the families who lived in the houses in about 1937. He also wrote a document listing the various aspects of farming, including crops, wages and seasonal activities. These memories have provided us with an accurate record of Suffolk village life in the past.

Don was born in Mill Cottage, Pettaugh in April 1929, the third son of Ben and Violet Cousins. His elder brothers were Ernest and Len and the two younger brothers were Cecil and Rex. Ernest, Len and Cecil have all passed away. The families of Ben and Violet (née Wilby) have deep roots in Suffolk going back many generations. In their younger days, Len, Don, Cecil and Rex formed a singing quartet of, named the 'Cousins brothers'. The quartet performed locally and were well known for their fine voices. The brothers were members of the Pettaugh Brass Band which was in demand at events in the region playing at village events and religious meetings. The band members, plus instruments, would cram themselves into motorcars which would not have complied with modern safety requirements. The five brothers all attended Sunday worship in the church as well as the Sunday Mission services and weekday meetings held in the Pettaugh Mission Hall. These services which imbued Don and his brothers with a strong faith and Don remained active in his local Baptist church, leading services and providing support for the community.

Don attended Pettaugh Primary School and was bright pupil. He was a popular boy and the boys enjoyed fun-filled times in the village after school. Don was the second pupil to be awarded a scholarship to Eye Grammar as his teacher, Miss Garnham, aimed to get her pupils to the grammar school. Don would leave home at 7.45 to cycle to Debenham and then catch the bus to Eye. After leaving the high school, Don worked from 1946 to 1949 at Abbots Hall, then from 1949 to 1955 for Cecil Turnbull at East End farm in Stonham Aspal. At the age of 26 he left farming to work for the grain merchants, Clark's Grain Merchants in Framlingham. This was the year that Don married Helen. After working for Clark's for about 6 years, Don worked for the Manganese Bronze company in Ipswich and continued to do until he retired aged 64 in 1993.

Don Cousins fully deserved the title of 'gentleman', being a quiet and kind person, motivated to do good deeds for his fellow citizens. He enjoyed visiting Pettaugh from his home in nearby Wickham Market and he a great time meeting up with his childhood friends at meetings of the Pettaugh History Society. A couple of years ago, he was invited to visit his childhood home as 'Mill Cottage' was undergoing a major restoration and he had much delight in pointing out all the familiar features of the cottage and the garden. He was keen to point out that his mother hung the laundry out on the 'linen' line, not the 'washing' line.

Our deepest sympathies are sent to Helen and the family as his passing will leave a huge void in their lives. The stories of his childhood and life in Pettaugh will endure and add an abundance of wonderful memories to our history.



Don at Pettaugh Garden Party (2012) Rex, Cecil, Len, Ernest and Don at Pettaugh fete (2009)



*Pettaugh Mission Band (Circa 1945)*

*From (L to R)*

*William Moyes, Derek Moyes Leonard Cousins,  
Raymond Lockwood, Norman Bennett, Wilfred Hart,  
Kenneth Cutting, James Hart, Donald Cousins, Cecil Cousins*

*Front Row (L to R)*

*Derek Self, Gordon Page, Allan Page, Rex Cousins*



Boys on the steps of the Pettaugh windmill (Cecil and Len upper right, Don and Rex lower right; George Forsdike upper left, Arthur Ruffles lower left)



Don driving the Fordson tractor on Abbots Hall farm, October 1945



*Pettaugh School*

*Circa 1938*

*Back Row (L to R)*

*Miss Garnham, Jackie Brown, Ronald Lockwood, Basil Taylor  
John Clifford, Dennis Mayhew, Derek Byford, William Carless*

*Centre Row (L to R)*

*George Forsdike, Henry Pratt, Joyce Keeble, Ruth Boyes,  
Margaret Keeble, Myrtle Parker, Sybil Bennett, Betty Brown,  
Doris Easter, Norman Bennett, Donald Cousins*

*Kneeling (L to R)*

*Cecil Cousins, Raymond Lockwood, David Boyes, Grace Peck,  
Olive Keeble, Peggy Forsdike, Daphne Wells, Malcolm Lane,  
John Lane, John Whiting, Alan Page, Ronald Easter,  
Gordon Page, Leslie Carless*