



THE LAST OF THE TOWN'S GREAT GARDENERS

June 2024

NO! He wasn't a **Cobbold**, and he doesn't feature on the family tree, but we are keen to tell his story because it is an object lesson for us all in devotion to duty.

We have recently posted in our Series Gallery, 30 post card pictures of **Christchurch Mansion**. They have been kindly provided by **David Miller** from his collection which is dedicated to his father **Anthony George Frederick Miller**. He is today's subject.

Tony, as he was always known, was Head Gardener of the **Upper Arboretum in Ipswich** for a quarter of a century, from 1966 until 1991. In December of the year of his appointment he married and moved into the Arboretum Lodge, off Henley Road opposite Ipswich School. His second son, David was born there a few years later. By this stage Tony was already at the top of his game having cut his teeth in the Corporation's nurseries producing big floral displays for the Suffolk Show and the Ipswich Horticultural Show. Those were the days when Ipswich employed 75 gardeners!

Anything but a fair-weather gardener, Tony rebounded after the Arboretum's darkest hours – the once-in-200-years storm which hit Britain on the 15th/16th October 1987. 48 of his trees were destroyed that night including almost the entire avenue of Limes and six out of seven of the collection's Monkey Puzzles. Unusually, the arboretum had to close while Tony cleared up the mess. He is probably best remembered for his annual carpet bedding displays; containing 10,000 plants each featuring a different image of commemoration every summer. To all of this he voluntarily added the provision of copious flowers for **St. Margaret's Church** and the maintenance of its churchyard. The graves of **Robert Knipe** (1731-1801), #783 (**Elizabeth Cobbold's father**), his wife and daughter were tended by Tony Miller.

When Tony died, having lived stoically with Parkinson's and cancer, tributes poured in; they mentioned his dedication, his high standards, his extensive knowledge, and his sheer kindness. It was **Don Hubbard** of Chancery Park who said simply that "**Tony was the last of the Town's great Gardeners.**"

They don't make 'em like that anymore!

Anthony Cobbold