

Eric Wickham-Ruffle

The office has been notified of the death of Eric Wickham-Ruffle, Vice President GCCF, on the 11th August 2021.

Janet Ashman attended Eric's funeral, which was held in a beautiful church in Wendover, on the 31st August.

Below is an extract from the tribute printed in the Order of Service as written:

"His devotion to the cat world gave him much pleasure, despite long car journeys , and long international trips abroad, to many countries including Russia, judging and writing extensive reports after shows. He devoted time to committees in various positions ; chairman, secretary, vice-president of the governing council, he sought to improve standards on the show bench. He was pleased to have achieved publishing a cat book and his involvement in television work."

Thomas and I were deeply saddened to hear the news that Eric had passed away after a long, successful and very full life.

I can't remember the first time I met Eric, but I do remember speaking to him on occasion at shows when I began judging in the 1990s and Thomas stewarded for him a number of times. He was always polite, patient and very willing to share his knowledge and experience – a real gentleman. It was when Thomas and I joined the committee of the Kensington Kitten & Neuter Cat Club (as it then was) that we became friends and I well remember the committee meetings held at Eric's house, and the wonderful lunches that followed. He was interested in art, a pianist and a great fan of classical music, he had known Benjamin Britten and Peter Piers, so this was another common interest we had alongside our mutual love of cats. He also kept and occasionally bred peacocks, something I've always had a hankering to own, when he found this out, he even offered us one, but I didn't think our neighbours would appreciate peacock's screaming in our garden (and probably also invading theirs).

Eric was well known for breeding Chinchilla Persians under his prefix, Silvermist, and was a highly respected judge of Persians, publishing his book "The Complete Persian" in 1995. He followed this with the publication of The International Encyclopaedia of Cats in 1998. He was the only GCCF Judge given the accolade of honorary FIFe All Breed Judge and judged in many different countries, giving him a breadth of experience and many overseas friendships. He was also a fellow of the Zoological Society.

Eric was involved with several clubs either as a committee member or officer, or in more recent times as president. He and Rosemary Gowdy founded the Bucks, Oxon & Berks Cat Club (BOBCat) and he has been the club's President for many years, he also helped found the Long Haired & Semi Longhaired Cat Club. Over the years he served as a member of the Executive Committee, Secretary of the Longhair Joint Advisory Committee and a Trustee of the GCCF.

Eric was forced to give up his beloved judging when he began to lose his eyesight but always remained in close contact with GCCF, he became a Vice President in 2012 and was as active as he could be, attending Council whenever he was able to travel into London. I remember when he could no longer attend in person, he always sent a note to me when I was Chair asking me to pass on his

good wishes to delegates for a successful meeting. After he retired from judging, Thomas and I remained in touch with Eric and his partner John, very occasionally visiting them for lunch or dinner.

I know we speak for all Board members and many members of the cat fancy in sending heart-felt condolences to John. Thank you Eric for all you've done for cats, clubs and GCCF.

Steve Crow & Thomas Goss
On behalf of the GCCF Board

It was with great sadness that we received news that our club President had died.

For many of the older members in the club Eric had been an ever-present presence. He had served the fancy as a judge, secretary of the then Longhair JAC, member of the executive, Trustee of the GCCF and during the past few years as one of the Vice-Presidents, as well as being associated with numerous clubs and societies. A formidable record of service.

Even after his eyesight began to fail and he could no longer judge Eric continued to support and on occasion visit our show or AGM and was always a welcome visitor accompanied by John Strang. He even made his home available for committee meetings or an AGM, such was his wish to continue to be involved with the fancy although he could not take the active part that he had in the past.

We give thanks for his service to, support and interest in the Blue Persian Cat Society and send our heartfelt condolences to his partner, John Strang, on his loss.

Blue Persian Cat Society

I was very saddened to hear of the passing of Eric Wickham-Ruffle on 11 August. Eric was President of the Black & White Cat Club, the Red, Cream & Tortoiseshell Society and Vice-President of the Chinchilla, Silver Tabby & Smoke Cat Society, and was also connected with many other clubs in various sections of the Cat Fancy.

Eric had bred Chinchilla Persians under his Silvermist prefix, and was greatly in demand as a judge, especially of his first love, Persians. He was the only GCCF Judge to be given the honorary accolade of FIFe All Breed Judge many years ago. Eric was also an author of several cat books, including *The Complete Persian* and *The International Encyclopaedia of Cats*. Before the inauguration of BACs, he had served as Secretary of the Long Hair Advisory Committee for many years.

Although he had retired from judging due to his failing eyesight, he retained a keen interest in the Cat Fancy, and attended club AGMs until the last few years. He generously hosted AGMs at his lovely home in Wendover, including a delicious lunch – lovely memories!

His knowledge of the Cat Fancy, his judging engagements in many different countries and the many great personalities he had met during his years as a breeder and judge meant that a conversation with Eric was always fascinating. Although we stayed in touch, I last saw him at the Black & White Cat Club show around 4 years ago, and it was wonderful to see his face

light up as he admired a beautiful White Persian. I feel privileged to have known him, and stewarded for him on several occasions, and his loss will be felt by all those who had the good fortune to have known him.

Rosemary Fisher, Hon. Secretary, The Chinchilla, Silver Tabby & Smoke Cat Society

I came into the Cat Fancy in the late 1960s and in those days Eric was "Mr. Wickham-Ruffle" one of the Judges to whom deference was shown by all as was the case in those days. I started stewarding in the 1970s with a view to applying to become a Probationer Judge of Persians one colour at a time according to the rules of the day, and I was lucky enough to steward for Eric on many occasions. He was always patient, courteous, and genteel. He was also a specialist on the subject of Persian cats, information which he passed on willingly, and I still consider it a privilege to have been trained by him.

In those days he was Secretary of the then Longhair Joint Advisory Committee and when in 1980 I applied to be a Probationer Judge of Blue-Cream Persians Eric was both encouraging and supportive, as he has been ever since until he unfortunately had to retire from judging on the grounds of ill-health. What a loss for the Cat Fancy! Since then we have exchanged correspondence at Christmas and the topics covered ranged from the decline of the number of Persians on the show bench to Brexit and the present sad state of this country about which he cared very much. I still have the last of these letters which I will treasure and I will miss hearing from him this coming Christmas.

He was President of the Blue Persian Cat Society, along with the many other offices he held in the Cat Fancy, and on several occasions he generously opened his beautiful secluded long low house for our committee meetings. The sumptuous buffet lunch was always spread on a polished table, the silverware gleamed, and the crockery and glassware were of the best quality: memories of those events will always be with me.

Having written the above it is not surprising that sadness swept over me when I heard on 18th August that he had died exactly one week before. He had been educated to a very high standard, was erudite, accomplished as a writer and pianist, and had impeccable manners. He uplifted the world while he was here and I am proud to have known him. Last but not least I send my sincere condolences to John.

Mrs. Janet D. Ashman

The Chairman and Committee of the **West of Scotland Club** note with sadness the death of our President, Eric Wickham-Ruffle, on August 11.

No one seems to remember a time when Eric was not President of the West of Scotland Cat Club, so long has he held that position. When he was still judging, he came to Scotland every year to judge at our show - he had a long memory and wide experience of the cat fancy for us to tap into. He was also the author of two books on cats. When he retired as a judge and loosened his ties to the cat fancy, he still maintained an active interest in the club. Every year he sent a letter of good wishes for a successful show and apologies for

absence from the AGM, written in his fine, meticulous hand. In the time he has been President, the club has had its ups and downs and Eric was always there with congratulations or commiserations. With his loss, go so many memories of the club and its story.

It was a lucky day for the West, Eric, when you chose to accept our invitation. Sleep well, and thank you.

It is with great sadness that we heard of the death of our President Eric Wickham Ruffles. Eric was one of the founders of Bucks, Oxon & Berks Cat Society together with John Strang and Rosemary Gowdy, and he took a great interest in the club and attended the AGM whenever his health permitted, the most memorable of these when he and John welcomed us into their beautiful home.

Eric was a gracious and charming true gentleman and we were very fortunate to have had him as our President for so many years. Our sincere condolences to John.

The BOB Cat Officers and Committee.

There are some very poignant tributes to Eric which is very fitting for a gentleman of his standing and one of GCCF Vice Presidents. Despite his health issues Eric always took an interest in the workings of GCCF and always gave some input for Council meetings.

I did not know Eric as well as some of my peers, whose tributes are made with more knowledge re his past than I can claim to know.

Eric was yet another long term staunch GCCF supporter and his knowledge will be missed. On behalf of GCCF and the Board, thank you for your many years of service. RIP Eric.

Condolences to his long term partner John.

John H Hansson
(Board member)