

My Brother Alan Johnson

As Alan came to the Camargue over 50 years ago at the age of 21 many of you will probably have known him even better than I did, so I am going to say a few words about his earlier life.

We grew up together in Ruddington and when we were children we would put out food for the birds in the winter and watch them from the window, Robins, Blue tits etc. being frightened away by the Starlings.

As we lived in a village we had easy access to the countryside and spent most of our time exploring the fields, woods and brooks.

As we got older my own interest turned towards technical things but Alan's interest was always nature and especially birds.

He joined the Trent Valley Birdwatchers Club and made many bird watching friends.

I remember one occasion during his teenage years when he had a 35 mm camera and had found a Lapwings nest about 20 km from home in the Vale of Belvoir. He made a tripod from sticks which he placed some distance from the nest and cycled there each evening and moved the sticks closer to the nest. Eventually he replaced the sticks with his camouflaged camera and tripod. With a fishing line attached to the shutter he hid in a ditch and took photo's of the birds at the nest. They were black and white photo's and the film had to be manually wound on after each shot when the birds were away from the nest.

He left school and became an apprentice joiner and many weekends would be spent at Gibraltar Point nature reserve on the east coast. Sometimes he would even cycle there on Saturday, sleep rough in a hut and cycle home on Sunday, a distance of about 120 km each way. Later he bought a motorbike and he was then able to travel further a field to places like Blakeney and Cley on the Norfolk coast. He was especially interested in waders.

As soon as his 5 year apprenticeship was over he left his job and came to the Camargue and never looked back.

Dave Johnson