

Herbert J. Woodend, 1943 - 2003

Herbert John Woodend MBE died on 29th July 2003. Herb, Bert, or Herbie, as he was known to all his friends fought a 12 month battle against cancer.

For the last 30 or so years Herb was the Custodian (Curator) of the British Pattern Room. First at Enfield Lock and later in Nottingham when the collection was moved with the factory. Herb retired in 2002 after the government decided to move the collection to the Royal Armouries in Leeds - rather than dumping it into the North Sea as had been previously proposed.

Herb re-created the Pattern Room collection from a small British only collection, to weapons, ancillary equipment, manuals, and books from all countries. The Pattern Room became world famous, for being the best and most comprehensive in the world.

It was for his utter dedication that he was awarded Member Of The British Empire (MBE), presented to him by the Queen in 1995. Other official recognition came as the [Freedom Of The City of London](#) and election to the [Worshipful Company of Gunmakers](#) in 1999. Herb was made an Honorary member and Vice President of the [Historical Breechloading Small Arms Association](#) in 2000, and awarded a Medal of the [Arms and Armour Society](#).

Herb, to all those who knew him, was a complex person; generous, sly, devious, fastidious, paranoid, cantankerous, lovable, witty and Great fun to be with. He was always late with no sense of time or urgency for planes or ferries, much to the exasperation of those who he was with. He was a very private person who shunned publicity but loved his daughters and family.

Herb was born in Northern Ireland at Kilrea, Londonderry on 28th April 1943. He was educated locally at Coleraine Academical Institution, where he attended from 1954 until 1960. His father Bertie and Uncle Tommy had the local garage, but it was Tommy that started the HERB going. Tommy repaired guns as a side line so Herb was taught to repair and taught to shoot guns. Herb was a quick learner, and spent his early days sketching detailed drawings of odd guns, initiating the collecting bug. Very soon the house started to fill with guns, cartridges, and militaria.

As he grew up, his desire became to work with guns and not in the family garage. So in 1963 he came over to London to attain his dream, with his then girlfriend Evelyn. They married in August 1964, but sadly divorced 20 years later.

