

Obituary – Stanley Dunlop

Stanley Dunlop, who has died aged 92, was the life and soul of North Edinburgh's Starbank Park and Friends of Starbank Park.

When the charity was formed in 2013, Starbank Park was in bad shape. But by 2018, it had won the UK [Neighbourhood Park of the Year](#) award. Stan, as he was affectionately known, was instrumental in this transformation. A quietly charismatic people person, he drew people together.

Stan was a knowledgeable and experienced gardener and a former council employee who lived in the house in Starbank Park following his retirement in the 1970s. Over 50 years, he contributed his time, knowledge, energy, skills, and paid for equipment and facilities.

A visitor would quickly spot 'Stan of Stanbank'. He'd be sitting contentedly on his blue bench in front of the old house where he lived. Watching, thinking, in rapt conversation with fellow volunteers, toddlers and their parents. Or else, tending to the birds and his adventurous cat, Smokey.

Such was Stan's character and force of spirit, he latterly took on an unofficial ambassadorial role for the park. At fundraising events, he was happy to appear as Batman, or even Dracula. Anything for his beloved park.



Starbank Park's Stan celebrated his 90th birthday PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter
Together with gardener and close friend, Janet McArthur, Stan also latterly traveled as far as London and Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire to attend prize givings. No mean feat for an octo- or nonogenarian with macular degeneration.



Prince William and HRH The Duchess of Cambridge visit Starbank Park in Edinburgh.

When Prince William and Duchess of Cambridge visited in 2021, Stan was asked: “Are there any deer in the park?” He thought hard for a second, then ventured: “I once saw a Muntjack (deer) in the garden across the road. It might have been a pet!”

This was a characteristic attempt to put someone – in this case, the Duchess of Cambridge – at ease. Something Stan always did. An autistic local mum, I received the same treatment.

Stanley Dunlop was born in Edinburgh on 30 July, 1931. His

parents, Jessie (nee Simpson) and Alan Dunlop, met while working in a local biscuit factory. But his father then worked as a watchman.

As a teenager, Stan would go cycling for miles with friends to go fishing and then stay overnight sleeping under the stars.

Stan's mother died when he was 13. Aged 14, he left Niddrie Marischal Secondary School. He initially found work as a van boy delivering bread and cakes. Then worked as a trainee mechanic in a garage.

Aged 16, Stan became a cleaner for British Railways. But he then qualified as a steam engine fireman and remained in the fire service for 8 years. His 2 years of National Service involved a stint in the Royal Air Force in England and working as an officer's batman.

Aged 24, Stan moved into farms and market gardening. For three years, he worked for MacFarlane Bros. in Liberton.



Starbank Park's Stan Dunlop celebrated his 90th birthday PHOTO

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There followed 6 months as a nurse for children with infectious diseases. Based at City Hospital, Morningside, he hoped to gain the experience required to work abroad. But the work took its toll and he left after 6 months and took a gardening job at a cemetery in the Grange, South Edinburgh.

Aged 28, Stan joined Edinburgh Council and stayed for nearly 40 years. He was a tractor, lorry and minibus driver, a market gardener, a groundsman. Even a gymnastics coach at Meadowbank. But he would inevitably be drawn back to gardening.

Stan officially retired at 65. But he remained physically and mentally active for the rest of his life.

In retirement Stan remained an early riser. Woken by his cat, his day began punctually at 6am with a digestive biscuit and a cup of tea. He'd circle the park to check all was well. Then feed "the bairns" (the local birds) and refresh the water bowl for visiting dogs.

After tea and toast upstairs in his flat, he'd clean and replenish the bird feeders outside and generally oversee the garden. He was every bit the retired head gardener. Only more active. Aged 90, he was still very independent and cooked for himself.

Stan was a father, a son, a brother, a husband and a very good friend.



Starbank Park's Stan Dunlop celebrated his 90 th birthday in 2021 PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter



Starbank Park's Stan Dunlop is 90 today PHOTO ©2-021 The Edinburgh Reporter