

## Well Remembered



### Don Walker (1934-2024)

Don was born in 1934 in the house next to the then Post Office on the Bullring run by Mr and Mrs West. His father, Percy, was well known for his singing and instigated 'Carols in the Market Place' on Christmas Eve in the late 1970s. His mother, Freda Gardner, was a butter-maker who grew up in Orchard House on Hopcraft Lane. Her grandfather Fred made the weathervanes on the church tower.

The family moved to No 5 Hempton road just before WWII started. Don clearly remembered standing outside the house watching the sky turn red over Coventry as it was blitzed. His memories of his wartime school days under the headmastership of Mr Wing and village life were sharp. The children were sent out to collect rose hips which were taken by Fred Deeley to Aynho Station in his horse and cart to be sent off to make rose-hip syrup which they then all had to take for their health. Troops were billeted in the village and were welcomed into their homes. The Walkers were members of the Wesleyan Chapel and Don helped his mother with running a canteen for the soldiers in it; no doubt missing his father who was away serving in the army. When talking with me in 2010 he said he was always reminded of his wartime childhood by a ship-in-a-bottle he still had which had been made by a PoW from Middle Barton camp who worked for Fred Butlin at Grove Farm.

He left school aged 16 as was quite usual in those days and went to work for the building firm of Hinkin & Frewins where he fulfilled 50 years continuous service. He and Ruth were married in June 1955 and lived in Fritwell ever since. They have two children, five grandchildren and five great grandchildren. He was a pillar of the community, particularly with his support for Fritwell Chapel which he and his family regularly attended. The honesty box beside his glorious and very abundant garden - noted and envied for its spectacular Dahlias - raised thousands of pounds to keep the chapel well maintained; and still he had time to help with other peoples' gardens.

In retirement he continued with his dry-stone walling. Granddaughter Kim, like all his grandchildren, learnt the art of stone-walling as a nine-year old helping sort stones into sizes. His love of horses – he hunted regularly - was passed on to his family and his well-mowed paddock (on his prized but aged ride on mower 'Billy'\*) was put to good use for assorted ponies. But he did not suffer whinging. Kim remembers coming off her pony with blood everywhere. Her 'Grampy' insisted she got back on immediately.

As a person he was full of humour, immensely proud of his family and always there to offer practical support and emotional guidance. He loved singing like his father before him and his voice on Sundays in the chapel he loved was an inspiration to all and a powerful demonstration of his strong and abiding faith. It was standing room only for his funeral in Fritwell Chapel – testament to the great affection the community had for this Oxfordshire countryman.

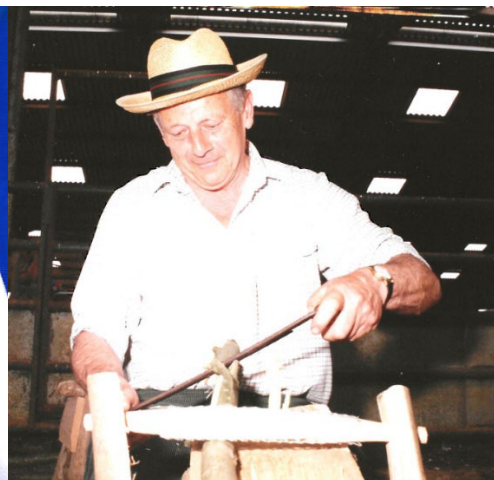
*This obituary was compiled by Rob Forsyth with the kind agreement of his family as a tribute to Don with whom he enjoyed talking many times about old Deddington. Don's memories – often delivered as poems – were published in the Deddington News and can be found on the Parish Archive History website, along with some family memories of Don, at:*

<https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/people/donwalkersmemoriesofdeddington>.

**\*Billy the ride-on mower.** At his funeral the Minister Chris Bazely told this story “Don had a prized possession, and aged ride on mower which had been in the family so long it had acquired a name, Billy! Don enjoyed nothing better than to sit on Billy and mow the paddock behind the family home. He would go round the edge twice to set it up then the rest was easy. Sadly, the time came when Don was no longer fit enough to mow the paddock so Mary was allowed to do the job but Don still edged it! Then came the time when Don could no longer even edge the field so Mary was entrusted with this special task, but Don stood in the doorway watching. Mary went very carefully around the edge of the paddock, remembering all the instructions to mind the tree-root here and be careful on the rough piece of ground there. She had almost completed one circuit when she stopped. Don said “Very good...but it would have been even better if you'd lowered the blades and actually cut the grass!”



*Don & Ruth celebrating....*



*Don in his workshop*