

AMY FOREMAN

Mrs Foreman, Amy to those who know her, is small, brisk purposeful lady walking down the Hempton Road, crossing at the lights, making for the Banbury bus stop or out on old folk calls.

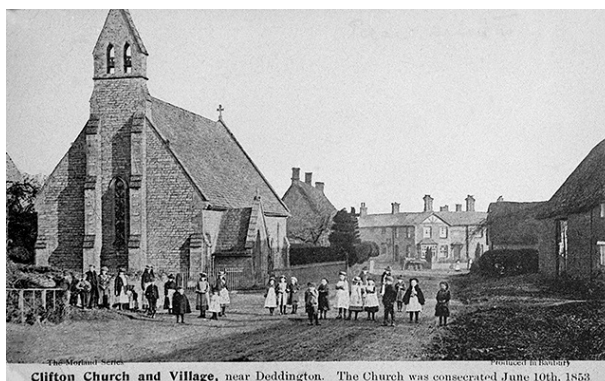


A Londoner by birth, she was one of a family of three sisters and a brother, the brother being born in the First World War and killed in the last War. Her family upbringing was the foundation for her attitude to life – give and take, sing and play. They all had jobs to do, made their own entertainment and respected their elders. Amy quotes how when visitors came to tea her mother would indicate a plate of cakes as 'FHB' meaning 'family hold back'. She speaks highly of her father who wouldn't sell in his butcher's shop anything that was processed or food that he himself would not eat. This attitude to food has been dominant in Amy's life: all good plain food, naturally grown, your own baking because you know full well what

goes into it, and guidance from reading of numerous books on nutrition.

In September 1934 she married Lewis Foreman, a signalman, later Clerk to the Deddington Parish Council. Their first home was in Bicester, then after 12 months Lewis was moved to the Aynho signal box (a rise of 5s. per week) and they moved to a cottage in the High Street: 'No No' – no name, no number, close to Greenwood's Garage. They then moved to Clifton and here this village has happy memories for Amy: 'the people were so friendly and really we were one big happy family'.

At that time there were two places for worship – a small Church of England Church and a small Wesleyan Hall close to Welford's farm. Clifton had its own Post Office and a small grocer's shop. Anything else one required you simply walked with your pram to Deddington where there was a good chemist shop, Mr Shaw being the last. Next door was an excellent ironmonger, Beasleys, who sold everything, and Ticky Wells, the draper in the Market Square, who couldn't be surpassed.



There was a small break in their stay in this area when Lewis was promoted to a signal box at Snow Hill, Birmingham. Amy simply hated Small Heath; nostalgia won and they were back to the peace and friendliness of Deddington, taking up residence in Castle Street. Amy makes a great point of the friendliness she has Deddington folk this belonging and to do something in the Church where she was the Treasurer for 15 years special occasions was the Church full but the Gallery as well. At this time she helped with school dinners and as a home help for the elderly Deddingtonians such as Miss Turner, Mrs Holloway and Mrs Crowe.

Chatting in the butcher's shop one day Reg Powell, the butcher, asked her if she would care for a change of job which resulted in Amy keeping his books for 15 years. During this period she was assistant librarian with Mrs Doris

Phillips for nine years, and reflecting she states how she admired Doris Phillips so much, loved the job of meeting people and dealing with books.

The pressure was now on her to give up much of her work and retire, which she was persuaded to do. The next few months she felt empty and useless and, as things happen, she read in the *Banbury Guardian* an advertisement by the Banbury Social Services wanting voluntary workers to help in the centres for the blind, handicapped and old age pensioners. Amy wrote offering her services free in any capacity for two days a week provided they transported her or reimbursed the bus fare. She was immediately accepted and on Thursday 4th September 1975 helped at the Day Centre for the Elderly. The next Tuesday she was helping the blind and the handicapped and by now she felt she justified her living and her pension.

A stickler for routine, accuracy, good food and exercise, I wondered how this attitude to life developed and casually she told me as a young girl she was a wages clerk in the Head Office of the large Vesty Brothers in London, being promoted some years later to top paid job of Company Cashier, a job she really loved. I could now see how this natural ability for accuracy, pride in maintaining detail and the pleasure she obtained by helping people, based on her family life had developed over the years.

Amy's weekly commitments are: Monday – Salvation Army, Over 60s; Tuesday – blind and handicapped people, Banbury; Wednesday – Deddington Holly Tree Club and visits; Thursday – Banbury OAP Woodgreen Hall; Friday – Deddington, house work and visits; Saturday – Bodicote with her son's family; Sunday – morning Wesleyan Church, evening Congregational Church. Believe it or not this lady is all of 80 years of age – that's Amy Foreman.

Bill Marshall