

RAY WEST (1943–2010)



Ray was born to an Oxford family in 1943, the only child. In the mid-1940s the family moved to High Street, Deddington; Ray's mother and father worked at the Manor, she as housekeeper, he as gardener. The family had a smallholding, where Ray kept pigs. He also bred rabbits, and became skilled in the care of animals, for which he had a great love.

Ray left school at 15 and went to work at Steeple Aston on a chicken farm owned by Spillers. He then worked as a fitter at Maybury's Coaches in Souldern moving on to Heyfordian. He became a highly skilled mechanic and also cultivated an interest in the workings of tractors and trains. After leaving Heyfordian he developed a small market garden and sold produce locally. He made holly wreaths at Christmas, a popular purchase in Deddington.

Outside work, Ray did bellringing and enjoyed authors such as Dick Francis and Colin Dexter, as well as his gardening and engineering magazines. Ray did not marry, but lived with and looked after his mother. He was a friendly and helpful neighbour, handy at all manner of jobs. Quiet and unassuming, he nevertheless had a good sense of humour. He tasked his executors with delivering lemons to a couple of tax offices, having felt himself squeezed dry by the taxman. Not a bad way to sign off!

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