

Phyllis Webb (nee Langham) 18/1/1913 – 15/5/2006

Phyll was born in Faringdon, the middle child, with 3 brothers and 1 sister, to a strongly Methodist family, who were hardworking, regular Church goers and where temperance was expected (she signed the pledge when she was child) and where higher education was thought to be unnecessary for girls

She was christened and married in this church and was an active member all her life- it was hugely important to her. She talked of Social evenings, Choral society, playing tennis and swimming with other young people from all the chapels in Faringdon. She liked the way these churches worked together.

Although the younger of the 2 girls, Phyll said that her mother used to say when they went out 'look after Elsie' – 3 years older- but the intellectual dreamy one. Phyll was the practical, capable one - (a bit dreamy too) This was recognised by her father - he set her up in a greengrocers shop in Swindon when she was 17.

She dealt with all the day to day aspects of the business, and had an employee - impressive for one so young

Phyll applied for her driving licence as soon as she was 17- another fairly unusual skill for a female in the early 30's and this began a lifetime of driving (no accidents, no penalty points)- she drove many different cars -huge cars, old cars – some that needed cranking to start – one that needed help going up hills- she'd set it going, jump out and push, then get back in at the top of the hill.

Married to Reg, and later during WW2 she was an important part of the family taxi business. She drove all hours of the day and night, during the blackout- sometimes lively American servicemen, sometimes local celebrities (she drove John Betjeman. Lord Berners)

During WW2, living at Great Coxwell she cared for her mother in law, her step grandmother (who was an invalid), gave a home to 5 evacuee girls, had a husband and 3 children of her own -and a cow, a pig and some hens!!

She was the original super woman!!

When asked how she had done all this - her reply – oh I was young and strong – and I had some help in the house

Her energy was extraordinary- she talked of cycling to Radcot and back for a swim, and afterwards cycling to and from work in Swindon.

Helping and caring for people in and around Faringdon was Phyll's life's work.

During the 60s she nursed her mother for 2 years at home until she died.

She gave a home to her granddaughter for 2 years while her parents were abroad.

During the 70s and 80's Reg's elder sisters used to come and stay for a holiday- about twice a year – for weeks on end. Phyll, in her 70s, lovingly made them meals and took them on outings.

Countless others have been on the receiving end of Phyll's generous nature in one form or another –whether it was meals at her home, meals taken to someone who couldn't get out, doing shopping, car journeys.

She was a sort of one woman home help, dial a ride, meals on wheels, lunch club!!

With her positive 'can do' nature, nothing was too much trouble.

Even though Phyll and Reg retired from the taxi business in the early 70s, Phyll was still driving- she and Phil Langham (her friend and sister in law) would make trips around the town, collecting – in their words 'the old ladies' for the Wednesday Fellowship meeting. We would smile – they were both in their 70s

The Wednesday Fellowship meeting was so important to Phyll (her mother was one of the first organisers)

She never liked to miss a meeting. Over the years she was secretary- getting the speakers, treasurer- dealing with the Christmas club as well as outings organiser. With Chum and Phil she'd go early and get the room ready and of course provide teas and cakes at bring and buy sales

All 3 were key to making the meeting the success it still is

Delivering meals on wheels, taking friends and acquaintances to hospital appointments, or to catch trains, or go on holiday – all done because of her wish to be kind and helpful.

As a member of the Silver Threads, the WI and several lunch clubs she was a quiet 'doer'. She was happiest when she was giving rather than receiving.

She never sought recognition, she did these things to be helpful and friendly.

Phyll was a modern young woman, and as she got older stayed up to date in her attitudes, and tolerant of modern trends. She could handle home gadgetry pretty well and even thought she might get a computer at one time – she was 89!!

Her comment after a flight in a 2 seater Cessna for her 90th birthday was – it didn't go very fast!

Phyll's positive approach to life was wholly focussed on the immediate and extended family as well as the Church community.

Her goodness has touched so many people

Extracts from Mums writing about her life

I remember cutting Wally's hair. I had heard my mother say that he would need a haircut, his hair was fair and curly so I thought it would help if I did it – I can see his fair curls on the red carpet. I cut my own hair as well, but could only manage one side. How my mother cried when she found us

I went to school when I was five. The infant school was an old building where the Fire Station now is. I can't remember why but for some reason I started playing truant from school. I went to the park where there were swings and just played until the children came out of school

The 3 chapels, Methodist, Baptist and Congregational churches clubbed together to buy a field(at the end of Southampton St). There was a swimming pool, tennis courts, croquet lawn, football pitch and cricket pitch. During the long summer evenings we all gathered to play games- all very friendly

Other notes

Left school at 14

Enjoyed singing

Played the piano (a little)

Participated in the 'Bridging the gap' project- until age 90

4 children, 8 Grandchildren

Taught people to drive

Worked with Chum Langham in the Information Bureau

Enjoyed Women's Fellowship concert parties, competitions