

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 the 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 weather vanes on the church tower.



The family moved to 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 headship 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 on 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, 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.

Don left school aged 16, as was quite usual in those days, and went to work for the building firm of Hinkins & Frewin, where he fulfilled 50 years continuous service. He and Ruth were married in June 1955 and lived in Fritwell ever since. They had 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 abundant garden – noted and envied for its spectacular dahlias – raised thousands of pounds to keep the chapel well maintained; and he still had time to help with other people's gardens.

In retirement he continued with his dry-stone walling. His 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-mown paddock (on his prized but ancient ride-on mower, Billy,) was put to good use for assorted ponies. But he did not suffer whingeing. Kim remembers coming off her pony with blood everywhere. Her Grampy insisted she got back on immediately.

He was full of humour, immensely proud of his family and always there to offer practical support and emotional guidance. Like his father before him, he loved singing 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.