

Ivy Whittle - North Dean Days.

The most senior resident of North Dean - Ivy Whittle - celebrated her 90th birthday on 28 March 2011. With the exception of a few short periods living away in outlying villages, Ivy has spent her entire life growing up and living in North Dean. Born in Great Kingshill in 1921 and being a girl from 'local stock' - Ivy's father was born at Piggots and her mother moved from Brill to a farm in Stocking Lane. Ivy moved to North Dean aged four and a half and spent her early childhood living at Upper North Dean Farm where her father was a tenant farmer (now the home of Peter and Judy Keen). She has fond memories of playing with Joyce Rogers who lived opposite at the Turnery (now the home of Ivor & Janet Beeks). The little girls would play happily in the lane with only the worry of a passing horse and cart to interrupt their game - possibly the milk man from Flowers Bottom? Ivy remembers the excitement of hearing an approaching lorry, when the little girls would run down to the lane for a chance to catch a rare glimpse of the new phenomenon - an automated vehicle! A far cry from the lane as we know it today. Having contracted scarlet fever at the tender age of three years old, Ivy sadly lost the sight in one eye - but that didn't stop her enjoyment of life. Early childhood memories of her infant school days in Speen were not her happiest however. Ivy recounts the extremely strict regime of the late 1920's classroom. An era of school discipline that would perhaps be welcomed back by struggling teachers of today - or maybe not? The Penn Green Bus company eventually set up a service through North Dean to Speen and Ivy remembers being tempted to attend school with the lure of an exciting bus journey - for the incredible price of 1d. School days settled down by the time Ivy reached the juniors and she has fond memories of a teacher cycling to school every day from Downley - whatever the weather. The family moved to Tarsia (Ivy's current home) where her mother Martha sets up a small grocery shop in one of the front rooms of the cottage, where Ivy can often be found helping her mum. Basic provisions were on offer to the local community who at that time didn't own a single car between them. With the onset of war and the introduction of rationing, sadly the convenience of the village shop was short lived. However, a shop soon returned, but this time in the home of Nellie Hat - Ivy's second cousin - who lived at Dean Cottage (now the home of Karen & Jeremy Mudie). The village hall played an important part in the community during Ivy's early adult years, with dances being held almost every week. Fred and Lydia Ayres (parents of Rene Ayres, formally from The Cottage) used to run the popular dances. Ivy remembers the local lads having a few beers in the The Sportsman's Arms next door, which at the time, was run by her Uncle John Hat - currently the home of Sarah and Kevin Booth. The young lads, full of bravado and daring, would then join the girls for a

dance in the hall. Dutch courage being needed even in those days before the young gents would flex their dancing feet.

With her school days behind her at the tender age of fourteen, Ivy starts her working life at Harrisons printing factory where she worked for a short time before going onto work in the Reliance Building in Oxford Road (the ex co-op laundry site. The workers joined the war effort during the second-world-war and Ivy found herself involved in the munitions effort - making casings for bombs. Hardly a glamorous occupation for a young woman of that era but a worthwhile occupation and one that she could be proud of. It's not long before romance blossoms however and she meets James (Jim) Whittle who moved to North Dean from Lancashire as a farm worker, formally of Margaret Cottages. Jim was a regular customer at the Whittle grocery shop and often popped in for a packet of cigarettes and would be served by Ivy. Young love developed and they marry and move out of North Dean for a short time but soon return to live at Lower North Dean Farm where they go on to have two children, Pat and Colin. Ivy's husband Jim was also involved with the Village Hall in the 1950's and was the local Youth Group leader. Youngsters from Naphill, Speen and North Dean frequented the group meetings, as facilities for young people were few and far between in those days (not much has changed there I hear some of you saying!) The young family eventually moved back to Ivy's childhood home of Tarsia in the mid 1960's where Ivy still lives today. Ivy has seen some incredible changes - both in North Dean and the area as a whole - and has lived through some difficult and challenging times. Having reached the grand age of ninety years old, we, the villagers of North Dean, offer congratulations to her and hope that she enjoys many more years in the village.

Julie White, former resident & neighbour, North Dean