

Interview with Mrs Ivy de Mussenden Morgan (26/01/07)

Ivy Morgan was born on 27th August 1908, the second daughter of Major and Mrs Cartaret de Mussenden Leathes, in Herringfleet, Suffolk. Her sister, Molly, was eleven years older. Ivy described herself as a 'country girl' who loved animals and appreciated 'being outdoors*.

During the First World War she went to a number of small schools in High Wycombe, Shifford in Suffolk, Clifton, and North Wales, before going to Cheltenham Ladies' College from 1921 - 1925. She felt she had not been particularly 'academic', nevertheless she went to Reading University, where she studied Agriculture and Dairying.

Ivy has been active in the British Red Cross for over eighty years, having gained her Red Cross certificate in First Aid in 1926, and throughout her long life she has been involved in a wide variety of voluntary work. She never wore uniform, preferring a formal jacket and skirt, with a white shirt and black tie.

She worked as a volunteer at Turner's Court, near Wallingford, and it was there, in 1938 that she met and married Revd. George Anthony Wright who was the Chaplain there. Tragically, Tony died of an infection only ten weeks after their marriage. Ivy bravely continued to immerse herself in voluntary war work: she drove the Red Cross ambulance in Wallingford, and she was the Air Raid Warden at Turner's Court, where one of her duties was to look after the rifles and ammunition for the Home Guard. (She recounted a story about a young boy who was interested in her collection of rifles: he pointed to a heap of Molotov cocktails and enquired what they were. Ivy replied, 'Aha, curiosity killed the pussycat'. Apparently, when the boy went home he told his family he had met a lady who 'kept stuff for killing pussycats'!)

Ivy longed to have her own home and, in 1943, she bought Mulberry Court, in Wheatley. This was a very large house with a range of stables, garages and other out-buildings and, during the war, the local fire-engine was kept in her yard.

In 1944, Ivy joined the Oxfordshire Branch of the British Red Cross as Transport Officer, under the Director, Mrs Foxley-Norris (known affectionately as Mrs F-N) who was married to Cecil, son of the Archbishop of York. Ivy used her own car to transport people to and from hospital, and also to collect visiting speakers and lecturers.

In 1947 Mr and Mrs Quarterman moved into Mulberry Cottage, which stood on the bank overlooking Crown Road. Mrs Ruth Quarterman was Ivy's daily-help, and Victor looked after the gardens. All three of their sons, Philip, Paul and Donald, were born whilst the family were in Mulberry Cottage. Later, Victor took on a job at the Cowley works (where he could earn more money), but the Quarterman family remained in Mulberry Cottage until 1960, when they were able to move into one of the new council houses in Elton Crescent.

Ivy worked as a Welfare Officer at the Military Hospital, and it was there she met Lt. Colonel Donald Morgan, who had a distinguished service in the Royal Artillery, and had seen active service in Norway, North Africa, India, and El Alamein. He was badly injured in India when he was thrown out of an army jeep. Ivy and Donald were married in 1948, and lived together at Mulberry Court until 1962 when they moved into Chestnuts, on Park Hill, in Wheatley. Ivy installed a lift to enable Donald to be transported, in his wheelchair, from the drawing room directly into his dressing room. He died in 1962.

Ivy served as a J.P. from 1957 until 1978, and she was a Prison Visitor for ten years.

There was also a detachment of the Red Cross in Wheatley, run by Mrs Fane who lived in Westland House, on Holloway. This group organised First Aid training, and encouraged people to collect 'Pennies for the Red Cross'.

Ivy and her friend, Betty Ronald, who lived at New Place, on the top of Ladder Hill, started the Not-so-Young Club, in the Congregational Church hall, for older, retired people. A chiropodist attended once a month and was available to cut the toe-nails of the members. This service was subsidised by the Red Cross but members contributed 2/6 (in 1961) towards the cost. The same service was

offered to housebound elderly residents and Susan Prest remembers going round to their houses to collect their contributions from (among others) Mrs Ivy Pratt, Miss Ellen Gunn, Mr Harry Fowler, and Alderman William Tombs. This club still meets for tea on the first and third Monday afternoons every month, but nowadays in the Merry Bells.

Other grandees' in Wheatley at this time were Mrs Margaret Godley, who lived in Wheatley House, at the bottom of Ladder Hill (she later moved into Mrs Fane's house, Westlands, in Holloway Road); Mrs Sillar, who lived in The Gables on Park Hill; Lt. Col and Mrs Hall-bare who lived in 1, Park Hill; and the Miss Savilles who lived at 5 Park Hill. The Misses Avery (Dorothy, who was a J.P., and her sister, Joyce) lived together at The Orchard, Holloway Road; Dr William (Bill) Hassall, one of the Librarians at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and his wife, Averil, who taught art at Holton Park Girls' Grammar School, lived with their four children in The Manor House, Dr Orchard, the local G.P. lived at 'The Doctor's House' in Church Road, and employed Ernest Painting as his 'dispenser' and also as his driver, Dr Orchard was followed by Dr Cox and, when Dr Cox moved to Little Milton, he was followed by Dr Roy Flury, who is still there in 2009, many years after his retirement.

Ivy celebrated her 100th birthday in August 2008 with a magnificent garden party for over 100 guests.

She died in March 2009 and her funeral was held at St Bartholomew's Church in Holton - where she had been a regular worshipper for over 65 years.