

In memoriam - Dorothy Ruffles (04.10.1930 - 10.10.2020)

Dorothy passed away suddenly on Saturday the 10th October, having celebrated her 90th birthday less than one week earlier. Dorothy was born in Otley, the second child of Horace and Mabel Ruffles and sister to her brother Arthur. Her father was a farm foreman and his family moved in 1933 to Paris Farm in Helmingham where they lived until 1939 when they moved to a cottage in Pettaugh. Dorothy attended Pettaugh Primary school and then secondary school in Stonham Aspal. One of Dorothy's school friends was Sybil Bennett and she acted as her bridesmaid when Sybil married Fred Rowe. After leaving school she worked at Abbots Hall where she was the home help to the family of James and Laura Cutting. After the death of the couple, Dorothy continued to work for their children Kenneth and Winnie Cutting. She also helped David Cutting and his wife, who lived nearby, with their three children, Alison, Tim and Richard who visited her to celebrate Dorothy's 90th birthday. When Kenneth Cutting retired and moved to The Forge, Dorothy continued to be his housekeeper. When her cottage was sold in 1986 by Gibbons of Crowfield, Dorothy moved to Winston Green with her brother Arthur.

Dorothy was an accomplished cook, mastering the art of baking in a wood-fired Dutch oven before having an easier time with an electric cooker when electricity was laid on to Pettaugh in 1951. Without the aid of a modern washing machine, Dorothy had the weekly manually-demanding task of laundry on a Monday, using a hot tub and with a wooden 'dolly' to agitate the washing and then turn the mechanical wringer to remove excess water. Housework was physically demanding in pre-electricity days with no vacuum cleaners, no electric ovens, no refrigerator and no central heating. Fires in room fireplaces had to be lit and in the Dutch oven in which three bundles of faggots had to be burnt to heat the firebricks lining the oven.

Dorothy was a familiar sight on her bicycle with basket on the front, wearing a navy coat and white headscarf, regularly

pedalling down to Jan's shop for her provisions. Having completed her purchases and some friendly conversation, Dorothy would progress more slowly up the undulating road back to her home in Winston Green. Approaching the steeper inclines, she would dismount and push the bicycle. As she made her progress through the village, she would stop and have a chat with neighbours across the fence if they were working in their gardens. Dorothy worshipped at St Catherine's church until she moved to Winston Green where she regularly attended St Andrew's Church although she also joined services at Pettaugh and Debenham. She enhanced the services in St Andrew's by playing the organ. Dorothy possessed a quiet, humble and contented personality. She was very perceptive and an acute observer of people. Dorothy contributed to the proceedings of the Pettaugh History Society and, being blessed with a retentive memory, provided a rich source of memories of village life in Pettaugh during and after the Second World War. She recalled a German bomber dropping a bomb close to Stonham Aspal school; the children all dived under their desks when it exploded and brought part of the classroom ceiling down.

Dorothy had a friendly personality and joined in local activities and organisations. When new families moved into Pettaugh, Dorothy would be one of the first, if not the first, to knock on the door of the newcomers and give a neighbourly word of welcome. Dorothy was always proud of her Suffolk heritage. Dorothy will be greatly missed but the memory of a charming lady and dear friend will remain with us.