

Richard Hartley of Green Acres, Upper Milton

17 April 1918 — 10 May 2001

There is something almost mystical about the sudden death of local farmer Dick Hartley. He had spent the morning of Thursday 10 May ringing round to friends and relatives with very happy news. Rachel and Richard Hartley had just produced his first great-grandchild. True to the fervent wishes of the expectant great-grandfather, the baby was a boy, named Richard Oliver.

"It's Richard VII, Trudy," cried Dick when I answered the telephone, "and I'm over the moon!" By 5 pm he was dead. It isn't often that one hears of a person dying from joy but Dick Hartley almost certainly did so. His family, while numb with shock and grief, understand this and are comforted.

Dick Hartley was the son of Richard and Dorothy Elizabeth Oldham Hartley. His parents came to Manor Farm in Upper Milton when they were married in 1916. "The Guv'nor," as Dick called his father, was a noted sportsman in the Wychwoods as well as a farmer and his cricket prowess was legendary. Dick was stoutly proud of this reputation but his own interests and loyalties lay elsewhere. He was an excellent farmer and business man but, most of all, a devoted husband and father.

Dick married Mary Wilson from Ilford on 6 October 1945 after serving in the Royal Air Force during World War II. Soon after the wedding, the opportunity arose for the Hartleys to buy Manor Farm which they had been renting from Brasenose College. "Mother told me that the Guv'nor wouldn't buy the farm unless I was coming back to work with him," Dick told me. He talked it over with Mary and the decision was made to return to Upper Milton.

Dick and Mary lived at Manor Farm at first and then built their present home, Green Acres, where their two sons Richard and Michael were born and grew up.

Over the years the Hartley family have increased along with the acreage which they farm. Dick and Mary's sons have married – Richard to Rosemary Joslin, Michael to Anne Curran – and raised their children in Upper Milton. Father, sons and grandson have formed a company and now own 800 acres and farm some 1300.

The extended Hartley family have been in the Wychwoods since Dick's grandparents came from Wigginton to Grove Farm in 1892. They have distinguished themselves in the local farming fraternity, in sport, in community service and in Milton and Shipton churches. Of this Dick Hartley was justly proud. He and his beloved Mary celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1995 and last week, at the birth of Richard Oliver, the continuity of the family to which he had dedicated his life was guaranteed. He will rest in peace.