

villages. Under the guidance of his father he learnt his craft in a number of gardens, nurseries and 'big houses' and his first position as head gardener was in 1936 with Lady Henderson at Barnsley Park. At Val's request she kindly gave enough land to make a cricket ground which was laid out under Val's guidance. After sixty years, to the best of our knowledge, the cricket field with the original square is still used by Barnsley-Beeches C.C.

Val moved to Bruern in 1955 when he became head gardener to Mr. Michael Astor. Once again cricket became an interest for he had much to do with Bruern Cricket Club which was sponsored by Mr. Astor. Val played until he was fifty, but continued with his work until well beyond normal retiring age.

He married in 1937 but sadly his wife died suddenly in 1951. He subsequently married Nancy in 1954.

When hostilities broke out with WW2, he chose to be a soldier rather than remain in a reserved occupation growing potatoes, in his estimation an indignity for a head gardener!

A gunner during the war, he was firstly engaged in the defence of Bristol. Later, in 1941, he and many thousands sailed from Liverpool in a troopship, via Freetown, Capetown, and Durban heading for Singapore, which fell before they arrived, and so they were diverted to Bombay before finishing in the Middle East, where he remained for 31/2 years.

So much more could be written of this amiable man, of his family life and many interests outside gardening but, unfortunately, space is limited. So, on behalf of the people who run this magazine and of his many friends and readers, Val is thanked for all that he has done for us and good wishes are extended for a very happy 95th birthday and in addition the prospective enjoyment of many more years with good health, happiness and peace of mind.



Wychwood Playgroup

The festive season ended with the end of term party and saying goodbye to six children who were starting at nursery. The New Year has seen seven new children starting and are settling in well.

The theme for this half - term is letters and numbers. With the encouragement of Karen, Lesley and Wendy the playgroup performed the Nativity for parents and grandparents in December and many a tear was shed.

We have had successful fund-raising events in the past couple of months and would like to thank all those who have supported the Playgroup.

For more information regarding Wychwood Playgroup please see our advert or contact Karen 01993 831269 or Alison on 01993 830669.