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## Two Special Ladies - One Special Day

*Noreen Hartley and Sylvia Turner were both born on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1917 on opposite sides of the world. How amazing that they should both be here in Shipton-under-Wychwood to celebrate their ninetieth birthdays!*

### Noreen Hartley

Noreen was born in Karachi, which in those pre-Partition days was part of India. Her father was a civil engineer, working for the British Government and was employed building the canal system in what is now Pakistan. She was one of six children; the older boys came home to England to school but Noreen was educated, from the age of six, at boarding school in Quetta.



between the Prince of Wales and Wallis Simpson, long before it was common knowledge! In 1943 she and John were married. John was then practising just outside Lincoln; this practice was sold in 1949 and John moved to the city practice.

### Veterinary Practice

When she was 13 years old, her father brought the family to live in England setting up home in Lincoln, where she attended the Girls' High School. Noreen trained as a dress designer and cutter with Katinka's in London, but it was in Lincoln that she was introduced to her future husband John. John's mother suggested he should get to know Noreen, as she would be someone he could meet up with in London. He was then studying at the Royal Veterinary College. Meanwhile, after completing her training, Noreen worked for a famous couturier. Her clients were fond of gossiping as she worked, assuming that she would not be listening, so she knew what was going on in society circles, such as the affair

### The Colonial Service

Their two children, Gail and Ryan were born in the 1940s and in 1955, John joined the Colonial service in Tanganyika and the family moved there to live. They returned in 1962, when the country gained independence. John then became a Civil Servant with the MAFF and he and Noreen set up home in Sleaford, near Lincoln. Their son Ryan has carried on the family tradition and became a vet practising in rural Shropshire.

### And So to Shipton

After retirement, Noreen and John decided to move here to Shipton in 1986, quickly making good friends and adapting to village life in the Cotswolds. Sadly, John died ten years ago, but Noreen still lives in the 'granny flat' adjoining the house of daughter Gail (Huntingford) and son-in-law Jeremy.

## Sylvia Turner

It is quite fashionable to describe ladies as 'feisty' these days and, having chatted to Sylvia Turner for this article I now really know the meaning of the term! Sylvia is one of those ladies who has worked hard all her life, coped with the knocks that life has dealt along the way, and survived it all.

Sylvia was born Sylvia Crowdy in Lewknor, near Thame. She showed me a copy of her family tree, which she can trace back for several centuries. Her mother died giving birth to her sister and, at the age of three, Sylvia came to live with her Aunt Edith Dore at Rose Cottage in Milton High Street. She grew up with her cousin Harold, but it was not always a happy childhood. Grampy Dore, who lived with the family, only spoke two sentences to her in twenty years!

### No Piano Playing

Sylvia would have loved to learn to play the piano, like her mother, and the violin but there was no money to spare for such indulgences. She did sing in the church choir from the age of six years though. Educated at Milton Primary School, next to the chapel and then at the school by the church, she was expected to pass the entrance examination for Burford Grammar School but, knowing that her father would not pay for her keep once she was fourteen, she deliberately 'fluffed' the exam and left school. Like so many girls in the thirties she went straight into service and started her



working life at Grove Farm in Shipton. She went against her father's wishes and got married. Her good friend and neighbour, Rose Burson, made her wedding dress. After her marriage Sylvia lived in the house that is now the Library. She even had soldiers billeted on her, despite telling the Company Sergeant that she was not going to accept them!

Joining the Land Army, she worked for Mr Hall at Poplar Farm. When the milk roundsman was called up, Sylvia took over the deliveries. In 1943 she adopted her son Michael and was discharged from the Land Army. Her family was complete when she adopted daughter Marilyn. Sadly Michael was killed at the age of 17 when the tractor that he was driving crashed over a wall and crushed him.

### Expert Needlewoman

Sylvia is an expert needlewoman, turning her skilled hands to anything from tatting, to hair-pin crochet, dress-making to embroidery, cross-stitch pictures to rug-making. She is working on a tapestry of the Crowdy family coat of arms. Once she bred Pekinese dogs and amazed a shop assistant in Woolworths, Witney by asking to buy 45 dog bowls!

In 1963 Sylvia bought the almost derelict Blenheim Cottages on the A361 in Shipton. She and her husband restored them, creating three larger cottages. She lives there today, with daughter Marilyn and granddaughter Dawn next door.

**Christine Halliday**