

Albert 'Bim' Champness

Ninety and Going Strong

Albert or 'Bim' as he is known will be celebrating his 90th birthday on May 2nd. He was born into a 'hoity toity' family with French connections in Limpsfield, Surrey. His unmarried mother never told anyone the name of his father. His grandparents wanted him sent away at birth, but fortunately his aunt had him fostered by a family in Wembley with relatives in the Wychwoods. Bim went to live with Charles and Martha Gee and their two children, Arthur and Lily, when he was six weeks old and there he stayed. He earned his nickname when he rattled the board across the gate, which prevented his escape from the garden and in his frustration shouted 'Bim! Bim! Bim!'



sweetheart, Joyce Smith, "the prettiest girl in the village". At the end of the war he considered signing on for a further 25 years, but he and Joyce had two of their five children by then so he chose demob instead.

Racing Around

He returned to work

at Bradleys' for a time and then went to work for Phyllis Smith at the till yard in Shipton. From there he moved on to work at British Leyland for 20 years. He was forced to take 'voluntary' redundancy and went to work for Jack Prew. Bim continued to do gardening work until he was 84 and felt it was time to retire properly!

Although he loved cricket and football he was seldom able to play for the local teams as he always had to work on a Saturday afternoon. He did enjoy cycling and in the early days thought nothing of a trip as far as Stratford and back in time to get in some courting in the evening. During his life he has driven everything from trucks to sports and rally cars. He would have loved the chance to be a racing driver.

Bim now enjoys the quieter things in life, like reading, playing his piano and attending chapel. He will be celebrating his birthday with his family.

Happy Birthday Bim from all your many friends.

Christine Halliday

Back to his Roots

On retirement from the Metropolitan Police, Charles Gee moved his family to Milton-under-Wychwood. Bim knew the area through visits to his Grandparents Gee. He was twelve years old then and attended Burford School. When he left school Bim was apprenticed to R.J.Bradley and Sons' garage in Station Road, Shipton. Finishing his apprenticeship coincided with the outbreak of war, so he joined the RAF and saw six years service as an engine fitter, working on Lancaster bombers. In 1941 he married his childhood