

Horst Mix 1926 to 2013

When Pastor Witts chose the word “gentle” to sum up Horst Mix’s character you could feel the nods of agreement rippling around the Wychwood Baptist Church during the service to commemorate Horst’s life. Probably everybody in the congregation was thinking too what an amazing journey this ‘gentle’ man had made from pre-war rural Germany via the army on the Eastern Front to become a pillar of a Cotswold community and well-loved grandfather and great-grandfather.



Horst was one of 13 children living an idyllic but hard life in the small village of Gnewikow near Lake Neuruppiner, North West of Berlin. He received agricultural training and enjoyed working with animals on the local estate. His big mistake was to be too assiduous in his military training, winning the silver medal when called up at the age of seventeen. As a result, he was drafted into the elite Waffen SS and in January 1944, aged only 18, was sent to the Eastern Front. While there he was captured by the Russians and was the only one of several dozen soldiers to escape from a cellar wired with explosives. Eventually he made it back to German lines and was evacuated by sea to Stettin in January 1945. In Stettin he was stabbed with a bayonet. In the last month of the war Horst was awarded the Iron Cross for

bravery and leadership. At the end of the War he headed westwards away from the advancing Russians. His mother took her own life by walking into the lake with the three youngest members of the family just one day after he had spoken to them for the last time. He was not to see the other members of his family or his home village again until 1958.

He had to face further tribulations - for example three days in a freezing train with nothing to drink and that was at the hands of the British, before eventually coming to the UK where he was a prisoner of war until the end of 1948. After a period in Devon he was sent to Scotland where he worked as a coal miner for fourteen years and met and married Ruby. They had two sons Wolfgang and Hans. In the mid-1960s the family moved to Northampton where Horst became a gamekeeper. He then moved to Swinbrook followed by Shipton where he worked on Home Farm for sixteen years. He had returned to his agricultural beginnings. A capable handyman, Horst would often carry out work for the community, for example refurbishing Vant Well. He never took any payment because as he said, “this community has been good to me”. An amazing journey from the East Front to peace and acceptance in West Oxfordshire.

Alan Vickers