

# Town pays tribute to retired butcher

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THE town of Witney has “lost a legend” as master butcher and great-grandfather Ron Hickman died at the age of 94.

Former army cadet sergeant major instructor, chamber of commerce president and husband of 70 years to Betty, Mr Hickman died last Thursday.

His daughter Jeanne Chattoe said: “My father was incredible. Everyone is saying what a lovely man he was.

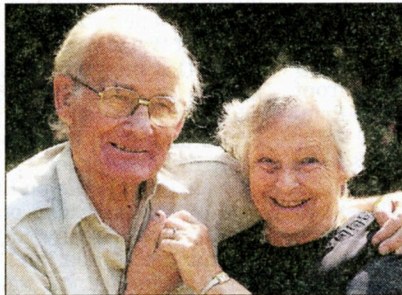
“He was such a practical joker as well and would do magic tricks for all our kids’ parties.”

The family announced the sad news to members of the community via Facebook page ‘Witney Memories’ and more than 50 people left tributes for the much-loved butcher, calling him “a true gentleman” and “helpful and kind”.

Ronald Herbert Hickman, former owner of RH Hickman and Son butchers in the Smith’s Estate in Witney, was born in June 1921 in Mill Street.

Educated at Wesleyan School, now part of the High Street Methodist Church, he lived in West Oxfordshire all of his life, apart from a nine-month period in Croydon.

His parents were Elizabeth Green, a parlour maid, and Herbert Hickman, a



**Ron and Betty Hickman**

glove maker in Witney, and he was the middle child with four siblings, Raymond, Bernard, Iris and Joyce.

Mr Hickman became a butcher straight after leaving school, working in Burford, Lechlade and Croydon before settling back in Witney, even meeting his wife Betty Long at WR Brookes butchers in the town where he worked as an apprentice and she was a cashier.

Their courtship was interrupted by the Second World War, but they got engaged while Mr Hickman was on a 48-hour leave.

During the war Mr Hickman was a private in the Fifth Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters, a regiment that served in Italy.

When he was able to return home, he and Betty married at St Mary’s Church

in Witney on August 11, 1945, and went on to have four children – Wendy, Jeanne, Laurence, and Delia who died at the age of 41.

Following the war, he worked at WR Brookes again for a while, then later bought the butcher’s shop on the Smith’s Estate in the early 1960s and became a well-known face in the town.

He was made chairman and then president of the Witney and District Chamber of Commerce due to his role in the business community.

After working at the butcher’s shop for about a decade, he and his wife bought another butcher’s in Bampton where they remained until retirement in the 1980s.

Once retired, Mr Hickman and his wife set up the Witney branch of the Italy Star Association, for veterans or family members of veterans who were part of the Italian Campaign in the Second World War.

He also developed an interest in antique toys, regularly exhibiting and giving talks, particularly to schoolchildren.

Mr Hickman is survived by his wife, three of his children, 10 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

His funeral details are yet to be announced but a service will be held at St Mary’s Church in Witney.