

May Cartwright's newsagents remembered

by Janet Wynn (nee Cartwright)

I'm Sedgley born and bred. I'm a retired teacher and used to teach at Alder Coppice. May Cartwright was my father's sister (I was Janet Cartwright, I'm now Janet Wynn). I lived with Aunty May for five years of my life from when I was ten to when I was fifteen, so I was very close to her.

My aunt's shop was a double-fronted building. It was built by my great-grandmother, Elizabeth Cartwright, who started the newsagents. She bought a lot of property in Sedgley. Aunty May took it over, but she wasn't just a businesswoman, she was also a brilliant pianist. The shop was on one side of the property, and on the other was what they called the 'front room' where she gave piano lessons. Where the shop was there was a yard and there was an old shed and outhouses, and the village pound next door.

My granddad used to serve in the shop as well. He lived there with Aunty May and Uncle Harry. My aunt Dorothy who was married and lived in Queens Road used to come up and help her, and I used to help in the shop and deliver papers.

Aunt May was quite a character. I'd always laugh because if the doctor came in she'd say: "Oh, good morning doctor!" in her finest accent, and if the roadsweeper came in she'd say: "Alright Joe, 'ow bin yer!" - she'd pander to the customer whoever they were!

There was a bench and we had all kinds of characters come and sit on it and chat. There was a wooden counter and a glass case at one end where they kept the cigarettes. There were two other cases at the back and a row of shelves where they kept all the cards (she sold birthday cards and all kinds of other cards). Tobacco was kept at the back and there were all kinds of nick-nacks on the other shelf – drawing pins and other items of stationery.

She used to always open up at six o'clock in the morning. She'd make the policemen who were coming off duty bacon butties and a pot of tea! At her funeral in 1984 there was a large wreath from Sedgley Police. She'd have been born in 1910 as she was 74 when she died.

When I was growing up there was one other competitor in the village – Mr Cann in Bilston Street. Just before my aunt died though, Mr Haden opened up. Aunt May had a Morris Minor (she had several over the years) and she was quite a character because she'd take her car and deliver papers, but she'd always leave the door wide open while she was doing it - she was a terror to motorists!

[See also: Jeff Dunning on Dudley Street in the 60s](#)