

Stratton St. Margaret



Charlie, 96, still takes charge of family shop each morning

DESPITE almost reaching his centenary, shopkeeper Charlie Reynolds still delivers a first class service. Reynolds Newsagent, in Ermin Street, Stratton, opened its doors more than 50 years ago and the original owner, Charlie, now aged 96, can still remember when a loaf of bread cost the equivalent of just 5p and people smoked Woodbines. The shop, which has become a hub of the community, used to be like something out of the TV programme Open All Hours serving everything from washing powder to candles. Charlie, who was born in 1922 in South Marston, grew up in Swindon and worked as an apprentice boiler worker in the railways before heading for the south coast to work for Saunders-Roe flying-boat Company on the Isle of Wight. When the Second World War broke out his boiler welding experience was invaluable to the war effort and he was moved to the shipyards helping to build motor torpedo boats. In 1948, he returned to Swindon where one of his sisters had married a Swindon newsagent by the name of Samworth. Now every morning for two hours between 7am and 9am, Charlie takes charge of the family shop which he bought in 1961 and handed down to his son, also called Charlie, back in 1979 Charlie senior became famous as the oldest paper boy in the UK in 2004 at the ripe old age of 88. Now he uses the same bike he used for his rounds to get to work each day. He said: "I really enjoy it and I shall miss it when I have to stop. "I did retire in the 80s but the workload was a lot for my son, so I offered to help out every morning to give him a couple of hours off from work. "I enjoy the customers they are very friendly and I think they have all got to know me over the years." In July Charlie junior, 64, of Nythe, will have been working for the newsagent for 50 years. He left Kingsdown School, in Stratton St Margaret, in 1962 and went into the business, helping his father before taking it over. Charlie junior said: "The shop has become a heart of the community, especially in the mornings when we have the breakfast club, a group of two or three who stand outside the shop in the morning catching up on all the gossip. "I remember when we used to get deliveries on the train for the national papers and the Adver was delivered by bus. "There used to be three editions of the Adver a day and the pink for the football results on Saturdays. "We must be one of the oldest newsagents in Swindon and we really enjoy what we do."

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