

Cynthia sees a century

"I don't look back, and I don't look ahead. I take things day by day," says Summerset at Bishopscourt resident Cynthia Dwan as she celebrates her 100th birthday with a party at the village this week.

The spritely centenarian says laughter and her sense of humour is what has helped her to see 100 years – more than 40 of which she donated time and energy to The Order of St John's.



"My humour got me through the hard times. You have to laugh at life. We all have hard times, you just have to keep going and don't let it get you down," says Cynthia.

She also jokes her nightly wine may have played a role – "I had my glass of wine at 5pm every single night. I honestly think that helped, as you relax!"

Having grown up in Dunedin her whole life, Cynthia lived through two world wars and the great depression as an only child – her father died in the First World War and her mother never remarried.

After leaving school at 16 and spending 18 months at secretarial school, Cynthia was lucky to land a job at a chocolate importers during the great depression.

During this time she met and married her husband, had a daughter, and said farewell to her husband when he was sent to World War 2 for the next four and a half years. On his return the family moved to and purchased a business

selling electrical items in Balclutha, which grew to become very successful, before returning to Dunedin a few years later.

An avid pianist, Cynthia won a number of medals for musical competitions, and says music was a very big part of her life.

"I should have kept playing, but I hated practicing! Music has been my main interest in life, and I could listen to it all day, every day."

Cynthia also donated a large amount of time to The Order of St Johns.

"It had just started when I joined. I helped out for 44 years, and volunteered until I was in my 80s.

"We made jams, pickles, and baking. Once a year we held street stalls which raised thousands," tells Cynthia.



“I loved it, it was such a good time! People don’t realise the pleasure you get from volunteering. You meet great people and make friends.”

Her daughter has lived in the United States since her twenties, so Cynthia feels lucky to have travelled there for many years – adding that on one visit, she did a Greyhound bus tour of the country.

“I’d never imagined I’d live to be 100. At 80, I didn’t think of it – I always thought, ‘no way!’ Even now I can hardly believe it, it’s a long time.

“You take things day by day. I enjoyed life, and I still do.”

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