

At peace with the world.

"IT IS EXACTLY ten to eight and time for Thought for the Day. The speaker in our Oxford studio is the Reverend Dr. Donald English, Chairman of the World Methodist Council".

"Good morning".

But this good morning began neither in Oxford nor at 7.50 a.m. but rather in Shipton-under-Wychwood soon before seven o'clock, when Donald English was taken from his new home in the Cotswolds and into the recording studio.

For this household name moved to Shipton a year ago, together with his elegant wife Bertha and their charismatic old golden retriever, Abi, exchanging a life of constant travel and engagements for one based around books, rest and gentle strolls with the dog.

Shipton may be the end of the journey, but the route has been circuitous in the extreme.

The son of a colliery electrician, raised in Consett, Donald attended the local grammar school and Leicester University before turning his talents to sport, playing football for Sunderland and Leicester City. After time spent in the RAF as an education officer and at Cambridge University he was ordained and worked in a succession of livings and colleges, preaching, serving and lecturing in that familiar style, a style both homely and challenging, which has been heard across the airwaves.

His next call was to life overseas tutoring at Trinity College in eastern Nigeria. Here the two boys were born, both destined for places at Oxford University before making names for themselves in academic and business life.

In 1978 he was elected President of the Methodist Conference, at forty-seven one of the youngest men ever to hold this distinction. Then as General Secretary of the Home Mission Division, Donald settled for the rest of his working life in Surrey where Bertha was a secondary school R.E. teacher for many years.

The final honour came with his appointment as Chairman of the World Methodist Council in 1991, a post he holds until the Rio conference in August 1996.

And so they came to Shipton. Ten years ago they bought their new home here, letting it for the first nine years before extending it to house an extensive library and moving in on 3rd August 1995.

Their initial love for this corner of the Cotswolds has grown and deepened. This appreciation is rooted in spiritual gratitude for creation, a gratitude that so many take for granted. Now there is time to garden, time to read, time to walk the dog and time just to stare and ponder.

Success for this most unassuming man for whom the word "gentleman" was surely invented, is no longer measured in terms of lectures or

addresses but in terms of planting a beech hedge or erecting a hanging basket on the wall.

Life has slowed down. In Donald's own words "We're getting used to the idea that we can take holiday at any time of the year, that stopping for coffee in the morning need not be a 'coffee break' but has time and value of its own".

All of a sudden, life is gentle, life is kind. Indeed gentleness marks both their natures, yet gentleness whose warmth and welcome don't hide the challenge which their beliefs hold for others. They are the perfect neighbours, neighbours with time for all and with a smile for all.

The Englishes feel part of the scenery, part of the landscape, welcomed by neighbours and footpaths alike.

If you see them strolling down the lime avenue to the ponds late one afternoon, Donald in his familiar navy cap, Abi sniffing from verge to verge, reflect on their contentment and on the fact that here is a couple who are just as 'at home' in this world as they no doubt will be in the next.

Faith and love walk hand in hand towards the setting sun.

Bob Forster.

The Royal Air Forces Association

The following letter has been received:-

In September this association is making an extra effort to maximise the support for the National Battle of Britain Wings Appeal. Witney branch has the responsibility of fund raising throughout almost the whole of West Oxfordshire.

I have undertaken to write to every town and parish council in an attempt to recruit at least one local collector or organiser (not necessarily connected with the R.A.F.)

If you know of anyone who might be persuaded to volunteer perhaps you would pass on this letter. I would be happy to talk about the aims of the appeal and the sort of help we need with any interested person.

We have a West Oxfordshire District Council approval for a house to house collection from the 2nd to 13th September and for a street collection on Saturday 14th. The latter would only be considered with the additional approval of the local authority. Any help you can give will be very much appreciated. Thank you.

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Telephone 01993 706664.

Any takers?