

The Reverend Donald English

The Today programme on Radio Four rarely speaks directly to the people of the Wychwoods. But on Saturday 29th August on the eight o'clock news, came the voice: "The Reverend Donald English has died after a short illness at the age of sixty eight."

The report continued, but already minds tuned in to his achievements. To thousands around the world he was known as the Chairman of the World Methodist Council and the only man ever to be appointed to two terms as President of the Methodist Conference in Britain. To others in this country he was the wise and gentle speaker on Thought for the Day. But to many in the Wychwoods he was known simply as a friend.

He and Bertha, his wife, had owned a house in Shipton for several years, but it was rented out, reserved for their retirement. So after years of Christian service, they retired to live in the village in 1995. It was a tragedy that their time here should have been so short and so interwoven with sadness. Within months of their arrival, Bertha was seriously ill, and in the summer of 1997 this wonderfully warm and elegant lady died of cancer. The retirement party never got off the ground. After thirty five years of marriage, Donald was devastated. Bertha was buried in Shipton churchyard. Donald carried on, reading, writing and travelling the world, but Bertha was never far from his thoughts. Heart trouble, which had affected him for years, finally claimed his life, but as a Christian with a "sure, firm hope", he knew where he was going and the prospect filled him with joy.

After only three short years in our community, why will he be so sadly missed? To those who knew him he was very simply a wonderful man, a man of warmth, integrity and wisdom, and maybe the finest Christian we will ever know. Often he could be seen walking to and from Shipton post office, newspaper in hand, cap on head and followed, at a respectable distance, by his beautiful doe-eyed golden retriever. Nobody was too much trouble for him. He had time for anyone and everyone. He had that rare gift of making others feel good about themselves. And he had the absolute humility which belied all his titles and honours.

Shipton has been privileged to know such a gracious and deeply-caring man.

Bob Forster

**St. Simon & St. Jude
CHRISTMAS FAYRE MILTON VILLAGE HALL
on Saturday November 28th. at 2 p.m.
Stalls, Raffles, Cards & Decorations, Tombola
To be opened by Father Christmas
after his "Ride round the Village"**