

Village of the Year 2001

Having won the Best Kept Village Award Shipton was nominated as Oxfordshire's representative in the Village of the Year Award sponsored by Calor Gas and The DailyTelegraph.

The judges in this competition look for well balanced, pro-active caring communities, which, irrespective of size, have made the best of local opportunities to maintain and enhance the quality of life for all residents. The criteria are Environment, Business, Older People, Younger People, and Community Life. The country is divided into seven regions –Oxfordshire being in the Central Region.

The first step is to complete a written submission to give the judges a taste of what goes on in the various categories. This proved to be a very interesting exercise. Having collected information from the various organisations a very comprehensive account of life in Shipton was produced and together with six photographs of our village (no problem producing these) was sent to the judges.

The next step was a two hour visit by the judges where a presentation could be made by as many or as few villagers and a tour of the village. One week's notice was given of this and no choice of time.

A Thursday morning is a very busy time in the hall with the Day Centre in the large room and the babies in the small one and this was our allotted time – so the babies very obligingly moved into the large room with the elderly and the presentation took place in the small room.

Thirteen villagers gave a brief account of the various aspects of the village from the hall and tennis club to the school to the church to the businesses and the environment. It sounded as though we live in the perfect village. (But we do – don't we?). The rehearsal we had the night before paid off as we finished our presentation on time. (A very definite plus). A display by the Local History Society, photographs and local publications were available for the judges to browse while coffee was served followed by a whistle stop tour of the village which ended the visit.

Then came the waiting for the results. The award ceremony was held at the Millennium Hotel in Mayfair. A splendid occasion compered by John Humphreys, attended by the dignitaries of rural organisations and the guest of honour – HRH The Prince ofWales. A delicious meal of Welsh organic lamb (produced in Ithon – the village that won the award two years ago) was served, followed by witty speeches and the announcements.

Shipton sadly came second in the region – so no award there – but they did win the regional award for the care of the elderly, a plaque and a cheque for £250!

Margaret Hartley.