

Special Feature

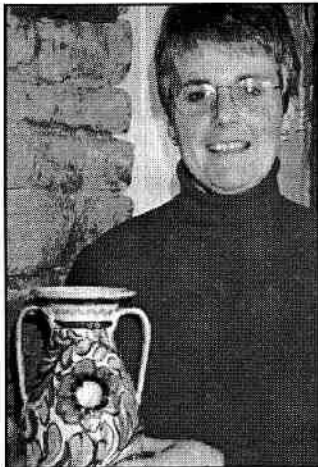
The kind legacy of Topsy Coombes

Christine Halliday reports on a very special find in New Beaconsfield Hall which hitherto was unknown.

When my husband returned from the New Beaconsfield Hall recently he brought with him a decorated, earthenware vase, which had been left in the office.

No-one had any idea why or by whom this vase had been given to the Hall. The only clue was a roll of paper inside it - a photocopy of a page of a will. Fortunately, there was a mention of 'a child (being known at the time as Topsy Coombes)'. A call to John Rawlins soon provided further information. Hilda 'Topsy' Coombes and her twin brother Leonard were born in Shipton in May 1907.

Topsy's father, Samuel, was killed in Gaza, Palestine during the First



Above: Christine with the vase and, below, Topsy Coombes with Edith Faulkner in fancy dress

World War. She was chosen, with Annie Honeybone, to unveil the war memorial on Shipton Green. The Bishop of Oxford officiated at the Service of Blessing.

Topsy died recently in a nursing home in Cheltenham. Although leaving The Wychwoods many years ago Topsy never forgot the village of her birth and left £500 for the up-keep of the memorial and her treasured vase to the New Beaconsfield Hall.

This is an extract from her will:

To the Trustees of Shipton-under-Wychwood New Hall Fund my pitcher which is signed on the bottom and decorated with a flower pattern which was valued by Arthur Negus at about one thousand pounds.

Christine Halliday

A warm welcome to Reverend Wendy

Reverend Wendy Callan will be the new vicar of the Wychwoods. Her ordination is at Shipton on 6th April. She is just completing a 4 year curacy with the Bicester team ministry.

Previously she worked in the English language teaching department of the Oxford University Press. She has three grown up daughters: Jasmine, Lydia and eldest daughter, Carmen, who will be joining her at the vicarage.