

Special Feature

Doodlebug Survivors Relocate to Shipton Court

It is early in the year 1945; imagine yourself living in a leafy London suburb; having survived the blitz and most of the war. You are holding a fund-raising party

to benefit Soldiers, Sailors & Airmen. After all the guests have gone home, and you are safely tucked up in bed in the reinforced cellar of the house, a German Doodlebug lands in the dining room, ricochets off a tree in the garden, and then demolishes the rest of the house.

The Move to Shipton

This was the event that propelled the Arathoon family to relocate to Shipton Court in 1947. By the end of the war, the Arathoons were an exclusively female family, four daughters and their mother living in Shipton Court. Three of the daughters married and moved away, leaving the youngest Olga (known as Oggie) at home with her mother. By 1976, after their mother's death, Oggie was rattling around in Shipton Court on her own and thought that perhaps it would be a good idea to sell the Court and move elsewhere.

Saving Shipton Court

However she found that her prospective purchaser was an unscrupulous developer whose intention was to allow Shipton Court to fall into disrepair, so it could be



Oggie and Helen

razed to the ground, to make way for executive housing. Oggie's heart and soul were in Shipton Court, and it was unthinkable to allow this developer to destroy such a

noble house and she felt strongly that it was her responsibility to prevent this happening at all costs. Oggie's sister, Helen, had returned from Nigeria by that time, and so the two sisters set about cancelling the potential purchase, and sub-dividing Shipton Court into the units it now contains. A couple of convent-educated women became developers overnight!

Securing the Future

The history of the development of Shipton Court from 1976 to the present day is really the story of Helen and Oggie's lives. Every tree, every urn, every aspect of the 5 acres which comprises Shipton Court is of intense and abiding interest and pleasure to both of them. The subsequent division into flats and development of the outbuildings has occupied the sisters' attention and flair for design since 1976, and not only have they preserved Shipton Court for the future, they have augmented their skills as designers, developers, and determined dames! Their legacy to the village is considerable.

Peggy Walmsley