

We welcome Jo and Tim Vickers to the Wychwoods First thoughts on moving to Shipton under..Where?

Life in London

The first sensation to greet me when I opened the front door was that of blinding sunlight and its associated morning warmth. The second sensation was the incessant noise and the smell of diesel fumes being pumped out of the wall of cars impatiently crawling past our front door in Central London. The third sensation was that of being watched by the eyes of hundreds of passers by in their cars and buses, which would look at you without ever really noticing you were there.

The Daily Sounds

Our daily sights, sounds and smells are so different now. Back in London, the urban environment I walked around encompassed the ever changing skyline of Canary Wharf, the construction of Foster's Gherkin and the high-rise flats of some of the City's more notorious estates. A five minute walk from our flat the Thames provided a constantly changing scene: wide, fast flowing, smelling of salt and stale city air and providing a natural beautiful break in an otherwise concrete landscape.

A Move is Due

City life was always fast and sometimes fun. But with the arrival of our second child, the logistics of daily life were getting hard to cope with. This coincided



Tim and Jo with Anna and Toby Vickers

with a change in Tim's job which required us to live anywhere within two hours of Heathrow. So we started searching – north, south, east and west of London for a place to make our family home. In our dreams we were

often drawn towards the Cotswolds, but imagined it to be the unassailable bastion of tweeds and Range Rovers.

Arrival in Shipton

So it is almost by accident that we arrived in Shipton under Wychwood at the end of November 2003. Many of our friends when moving from London have run through endless checklists of the right sort of things to look for in a village – we came here with no checklists, just because we fell in love with it! So it has been a real bonus to find a great village school, good churches, the Beaconsfield Hall with all its activities, a wonderful collection of children's books at the library not to mention the odd pub and a nationally renowned cricket team. Pushing our children around the Wychwood villages has been a wonderful way to explore our new surroundings. We have watched nature crawl out of winter, with bright yellow aconite flowers and a carpet of snowdrops in the church grounds. Witnessed the excitement of the children, with a day off school, toboggans-in-hand

after a heavy snowfall (something we only read about in the papers before). We waited with anticipation for our neighbour's huge magnolia tree to blossom. And we love seeing our daughter's face fill with delight, each time she sees a tractor or passes a "quack-quack" or "cluck-cluck" on our walks.

Where are the Sirens?

It has also been encouraging to see our children surprised by the one police siren we've heard in three months, when previously our daily background noise was that of sirens, stolen cars and police helicopters loitering overhead. By contrast we now are only disturbed by the nightly hoot of an owl, or the occasional call of a pheasant, or the clattering of church bells on a Wednesday night! Here our neighbours are people rather than strangers, and their stable presence gives a sense of

belonging and security which we never could have felt in London.

Little Village with a Big Name

Of course I miss elements of life in our country's great metropolis, but in the last five months I have grown so fond of this little village in the middle of nowhere with its unusually long name. Every time I return to the village along the A40 I turn off towards Swinbrook. It is when I get to where the B4437 cuts across Swinbrook road that I have to stop the car and look across to the sweeping green landscape. The rolling hills in the distance and in the foreground our village nestled into the valley, protected and sheltered from the wind, church spire prominent. I get a wonderful feeling of being back home and I roll down the hill, back into the village with a smile on my face.

Jo Vickers

Parish Conservation Plans

Would you like to help write your parish conservation plan? If so, please come along to **the Committee Room, Beaconsfield Hall, Shipton, on Wednesday 23rd June 2004 at 7.30 pm.**

Parish Conservation Plans provide a record of wildlife habitats in a parish, and give useful indicators about the practical work needed - for example in managing areas of a churchyard for wildlife, restoring ponds, and suggesting possible sites for hedgerow and tree planting.

The Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum offers support to parishes which are managing their local wildlife. The Forum's aim is to get as many parishes as possible involved in this work. In the 1980's Sue Jourdan, Gwen Allen and others carried out a detailed hedge survey of Shipton, Milton and parts of Bruern. Mike Pearce and others have done a similar survey in Ascott. Their records provide a very useful source of information, and a basis for plans.

Alan Spicer, Chairman of the Wychwood Project, has great experience in writing Parish Conservation Plans. Alan will be at the meeting, and will explain to us what is involved and how we should set about our plans. You don't have to be a botanist to get involved, just someone with an interest in your parish. **Do please come along.**