

## The Small Tin Church Little Ben Rings Back

Some of the older inhabitants of Shipton can recall a small tin church up on Fiddlers Hill. Today nothing remains but a small, dense copse of trees sited somewhat incongruously in the corner of an extensive arable field.



Site of the tin Tabernacle Church

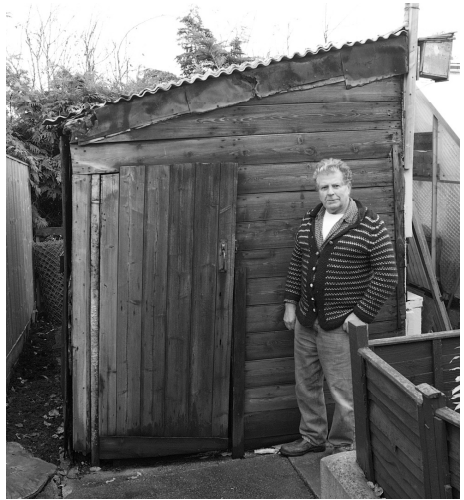
### What Happened to the Church?

The church is believed to have been built in the 1880s to serve Shipton inhabitants who could not easily get down to the Mother church, St Mary's. It had ceased to be used as a church before 1930.

Sometime in the 1930s it was bought by Dr Gordon Scott and used to store clothing during the Second World War under the *Bundles for Britain* scheme - hence the name given to it by some irreverent residents of 'moth hall'! In the period immediately after the War the building was used as a basic youth club for children living close by, run by Alf Clarke who had the small grocery shop opposite (now a garage). He ran a cable from the generator in his house to light the snooker table.

### Only the Shed Door Left!

By the 1960s the building had fallen into disrepair and Dr Scott could not get permission to develop the site. The tin church was therefore dismantled. Nothing remains, except the vestry door, from



Charlie recycles the old Vestry Door

the rear of the church, which was re-used as a shed door by Charlie Pilcher who lives opposite the site.

### The Story of the Bell



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This left Dr Scott with the problem of what to do with the small but solid church bell. The problem was solved when he gave it to Peter Coveney who lived nearby. But eventually Peter moved away to the outskirts of Oxford where he died earlier this year. His Widow, Margery, (cousin to Jim Pearse of Honeydale Farm Shipton), thought it would be fitting if the old bell could be returned to Shipton. She contacted the Wychwoods Local History Society and they now have it in their safe care and are looking for a suitable home.



### **Bells and Whistles?**

A suitable home for the bell could be the Wychwood School where presently a simple whistle is used to summon the pupils to their lessons. The school has indicated its interest.

Even the old Shipton school had a proper bell which would be rung by a well behaved pupil worthy of the privilege.

This bell could certainly be an improvement on a mere whistle! It bears the inscription of the maker J. Warner and Sons and the date 1883. Research has shown that this company also produced the first Big Ben. It was a Warner bell which was used as the pattern for the Paul Revere bell founding business in the US.

### **Gordon's Penance**

If it is eventually installed in the school, we hope the current pupils are better behaved than the young Gordon Duester who once rang the bell without touching it - by using his air gun from a safe distance!

As a penance the older Gordon Duester has kindly provided a sketch opposite of the outside of the old church, drawn from memory.

**Alan Vickers.**



## **Diggers Wood**

After some lengthy negotiations with the Woodland Trust, the Trustees of the Wychwood Wild Garden have reluctantly decided not to take over the long-term management of Diggers Wood.

The proposed lease imposed a number of liabilities on the charity which in the light

of the current concerns about Ash Dieback would have exposed the charity to unacceptable risks.

We will continue to monitor the position and if an alternative approach is offered that does not involve the same level of exposure we will reconsider it.

**Mike Watson**