

Gordon Duester 1930 - 2014

There are few left today of those 'good old boys' of Shipton, born and bred in the village before the Second World War, who spent their lives here, perhaps venturing as far as Witney to earn their living but returning every evening.

Gordon Duester was one such, a true son of Shipton. Even though he had an unusual surname - German in origin and meaning dark or sombre - Gordon was anything but sombre and an Englishman to his fingertips.

He was born in 1930 and lived with his parents, two brothers and three sisters in a small cottage at the top of Simons Lane (then known as Little Lane). His father worked in the original till-yard near the Lamb. Once he had reached seven or thereabouts Gordon would roam the village during his free time with his chums just like Richmal Crompton's heroes. When not attending Shipton School, they would play covertly in the Wild Garden, which at that time belonged to Shipton Court.

When he left school at the end of the War, Gordon joined his father to work at the United Woodworking Till-yard on Station Road. He went on to work for a while at



Groves before spending the rest of his working life as a storeman at Smith's Industries in Witney. He met his wife Joan, who had come from Manchester as a land girl in 1949, through a blind date at the cinema in Chipping Norton. They were married for fifty nine years.

Gordon had an excellent memory of life in Shipton before the War and knew who lived

where seventy five years ago and what they did. These memories were preserved in half a dozen well-received articles in the Wychwood, which are still available on the Wychwood website. One described his secret adventures in those Wild Gardens of his boyhood. Other articles recalled the many small shops in the village and the members of the Bowls Club and Home Guard. He was often reticent in offering a nugget of information saying, "You can't mention my name" or "you can't put that down. People will say - who is he, giving himself airs and pontificating like this?"

However if it was true, then we put it in and there were no objections. Gordon was a window into that idyllic and simple past, a window which sadly is now shut.

Alan Vickers