

Past and Present

When we first lived in Shipton, Mrs Wiggins, together with her sister, Miss Jessica Coombes, ran the post office in Church Street, while her husband George sat in the corner behind the counter, quietly mending clocks and watches.

It was Mrs Wiggins who first kindled my interest in local history. She represented a little bit of history herself, as Shipton post office had been in the hands of the same family for four generations. Not only that, it is mentioned in the Guinness Book of Records as the oldest sub-post office in England, and certainly the oldest surviving one.

Letters

The claim was based on letters written to her great-grandfather, Richard Cross on April 4, 1845 clearly addressed to him at 'Post Office, Shipton, Chipping Norton, Oxford', although Shipton was not issued with its date stamp until July 1847. He was



**Mrs.
Kitty
Wiggins**

also parish clerk and overseer, as well as being in business as a weaver.

Kitty Wiggins took over the running of the post office from her mother in 1930 and only retired in 1974. She told me that she had a life-long interest in Shipton's history, and had carefully preserved papers and a few objects from the past, some of which were given to me after her death in the late 1970's. Some of these are on permanent loan to the Oxfordshire County Museum and others are in the archives of the History Society.

I am sure it was this fascinating link backwards into Shipton's past which spurred me on to found our History Society, and I like to hope that its achievements over the last twenty-two years would have met with Mrs Wiggins' approval.

Dr. Margaret Ware

Wychwood Local History Society

The Wychwoods Local History Society is nearing the end of the 2002/3 season of monthly meetings. The new season begins on 18th September, at Milton when Russell Cherry will talk on 'The Thames from its Source to Oxford. Annual subscriptions, £8 for a couple or £5 for an individual become due at this time. Membership includes a free copy of the Society's latest Wychwoods History.

This latest edition, number 18, is

now available and contains articles on the first 21 years of the WLHS; properties in Shipton in 1911; local casualties in Mesopotamia in the First World War; the history of Chesnut Close, Ascott (now called Wychwood Manor) and part two of the Hartley Heritage.

