

## Miss Dagmar Hyacinth Smith

Miss Smith came to the school as headmistress on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1939. Rumour has it that she was the daughter of a ship's captain who named her after his ships, but she was **NEVER** addressed by her Christian name, not even by the people who knew her best. One of the sad things about the end of her life in Winchley Home was the loss of her dignity as the young carers called her "Dagmar".

Unmarried and an only child, Miss Smith used her energy for serving the village. Bruce Taylor thinks she may have told his wife that she'd been engaged but that her fiancé had been killed in the war. She joined the Parochial Church Council in 1940, organised housing for refugees and evacuees, played the organ in church, ensured that the area's footpaths were recorded and so preserved, was a trustee for the East Winch Charities and a District Councillor. It was she who made sure that a memorial to Walter Dexter was placed outside the east end of the church.

Besides that, she kept bees. Bruce remembers her inviting his wife to help with them. Obviously they both wore bee hats. Trouble was, when the tops were taken off the hives, some children in the school playground threw turf over the hedge. Some of it fell into the hives, maddening the bees. Mrs. Taylor was horribly stung and suffered an allergic reaction, so was unwilling to repeat the experience. However, Miss Smith persisted and eventually the Taylors had two hives of their own.

It seems difficult for the people who remember Miss Smith to describe her clearly. She was efficient, kind and fair, but also a very private person. There are very few photos of her, and David Brasnett did not think she liked being photographed. Geoff Bunting remembers her wrath on only one occasion when, as a schoolboy, he was playing football in the lane. The ball rolled into the main road and the boy who ran after it was knocked down by a car and broke his leg. As Geoff was the oldest, Miss Smith thought he should have been more responsible.

Miss Smith retired as headmistress in 1964. As she got older, she became very infirm and even stopped going to church because she wouldn't use a wheelchair. She still liked to be involved however, and the Parochial Church Council began to meet at her house. On one of these occasions we were discussing whether to support the ordination of women priests: in those days the PCC was divided on the issue. "Over my dead body!" croaked Miss Smith, and indeed, that proved to be the case.