

## A festival to put Shearsby on the map

SHEARSBY Festival opens on Sunday, not in a blaze of publicity or artistic greatness, but with an air of eager determination not to be outdone by any of the big cities with a claim to "festival" fame.

For those who have never heard of Shearsby, it is a small village with less than 300 inhabitants, nine miles from Leicester

It is a quaint place, with a character and a history which the people are proud of and which they aim to show anybody who is interested. But essentially Shearsby Festival appears to be a festival for the people of Shearsby. No mere village gala for them, they only settled for a six-day festival because they thought a pageant would be just a little too much to handle.

Outsiders searching for a place in the country have settled in the village over the past 15 years, and it is these people who are largely responsible for the festival. Up to their arrival, population in the village had been gradually declining for the previous 100 years.

"An exhibition is going to be held in the village hall and we



are having a flower festival in the church. One of the most interesting things to see in the village is a renovated 17th century house. It is lived in, but the man will show you round for a fee," said Mrs. Mary Walker, secretary of the Community Organisation of Shearsby.

The exhibition consists of village records, photographs and as many workaday implements of rural life over the past two centuries as could be found in the village. It promises to be quite an interesting one, for as well as its agricultural background, Shearsby also had a brickworks and spa baths.

Also included in the festival are a "Music Through the Years" concert by Wigston Ladies Choir, and "Modern Gospel Music" by another local singing group, the Risen Sound.

To commemorate the occasion a well-documented and illustrated booklet, prepared by the villagers under the editorship of Mr. R. Southerland, has been published.

For many the highlight of the festival will be a visit to Yeoman's Cottage, built in 1669, restored and occupied by Mr. Norman Cross. The cottage, thought to have been a coaching inn at one time, is one of the finest old buildings in the village.

"We have been planning this for three years. There has never been anything like this in the village and we hope this will really put us on the map. The committee consists largely of newcomers, but older people in the village are just as enthusiastic. We are all proud of the village and its history," said Mrs. Walker.

*Mrs. Mary Walker, secretary of the Community Organisation of Shearsby, photographed with Mr. Norman Cross in front of his home, Yeoman's Cottage, built in 1669, which is to play its part in the Shearsby village festival.*