

# Wheatley to buy Merry Bells

THE PEOPLE of Wheatley last night gave the parish council the go-ahead to borrow money for buying the Merry Bells, for years the "unofficial" village hall.

The council will borrow £2,500, plus £50 for legal fees, from the Public Works Loan Board. If repaid back over 30 years, this would mean roughly a halfpenny rate for the parish.

The Merry Bells, built in 1888, is owned by Major A. Miller, the local Oxfordshire County Council representative,

who lives at Shotover. For the past 20 years he has allowed village organisations, including the parish council, to use it at his expense. A management committee has looked after the upkeep and management of the building.

Now, with the help of a £5,050 Government grant, the council is to buy the building from Major Miller at a cost of £10,000, plus legal charges of £200.

Mr. Peter Audley Miller, vice-chairman of the committee,

told last night's meeting: "It is central, it is much used, and it shows a profit each year. This is unusual, because most village halls are a charge on the rates.

"Any rate would be about a halfpenny rate. The maximum a parish can impose, apart from the 4d. lighting rate, is a 4d. general rate. We in Wheatley this year have precepted for a 2d. rate."

Mr. Audley Miller said that the Government valuation officials had put a price on the building which was in fact

higher than that at which negotiations with Major Miller had started.

When asked how much a completely new village hall would cost, Mr. Audley Miller said that for a building about the size of the Merry Bells the bill would be about £18,000.

After the chairman of the Merry Bells Committee, Mr. F. O. Windows, said "It is the Merry Bells or nothing," the meeting voted 40—3 for buying the building.