

A quiet corner of Northamptonshire

Norah Anderson

It had stood there from time immemorial. It is probably mentioned in the Domesday Book. It has seen Kings, Queens, Rulers of State come and go. Over hundreds of years, little of significance has changed - a gentle progression from medieval times. But over the last few decades, some more significant changes have occurred.

In 1964 Shand Kydd, whose firm manufactured wallpaper, built houses. An influx of people came from far and wide. Some integrated, some did not. A farmer, whose way of life had been the life-blood of the village, was heard to say *"These people come - upset the balance and take off again"*. Alas, all too often this is so.



Mrs Shand Kydd, who had previously been married to Earl Spencer, was the mother of Diana, Princess of Wales. The hysteria following her death illustrated a changing world. This little corner, situated in south Northamptonshire, absorbed these events, but was not unchanged by them as it brought people, traffic and commercial pressures.

Hundreds of years ago, Elizabeth I had stayed at Grafton Regis, a few miles down the road, on her way to visit Bess of Hardwick. No doubt Elizabeth set up her court there and it is easy to picture the ladies strolling in the grounds, and the gentlemen out hunting for pleasure.

In earlier times, of course, they would have hunted in earnest; going out into the cold

countryside to find food for their families. Not so different from today, except that livelihoods are now made in cities, businesses and offices.

But in those lush green fields, the heart of the country is still beating. It remains the case that cows turned out after milking still block the main road - with a fast car not more than an hour from London - and the traffic has to wait. Those of us who love the countryside rejoice that time has not changed this!

The 'incomers' have demanded new facilities. A Spar grocery has appeared along with a hairdresser and a Veterinary Surgery, the latter catering as much for the welfare of household pets as for farm animals. Even so, and despite the great advances in technology, cattle, horses, pigs and sheep have their part to play.

What greater pleasure can there be than to see a newly-born lamb get on to its unsteady feet and start to frisk and gamble in the grass? Or to watch the birds soar high in the air - high into the clear, blue sky?

Many poets have sung of enviable occupations. Surely one of the most satisfying must be to be a farmer's wife? To nurture all those newly-born creatures and to see them grow to maturity. Admittedly, some do not have a long life, but that is how nature works. The important thing is that they are kept fit and cherished. Thank God for the Elysian Fields he has given us.

