

DAMERHAM POST OFFICE - 1972 – 1982 THE POST OFFICE STORES - HIGH ST.

By Jan Gardner

We came to Damerham in 1972 after a long search for a post office in a rural area and knew instantly our search was over. It had the business a good home, a large garden plus the Allen River across the boundary as a bonus.

Our two daughters, Gillian and Susan soon settled into the local schools spending a couple of years, one at Burgate and the other at the village school.

Having come from a large town we found life very different and soon realised that everything seemed to revolve around the agricultural calendar which we knew very little about but soon learnt.

We found all the villagers very helpful as we felt our way around running a post office for the first time. It took a little longer to get to know my way around all four corners of the village and learn who lived where, as my husband Alan went out on postal delivery when Mary Colbourne was on holiday. We had to find all the outlying properties some of which are well tucked away!

We became involved in the village activities and Damerham always had something in the

pipeline. Even now with a different generation running things the enthusiasm is still there: we hear about it on the grapevine.

One memory we have and often refer to is the making up of weekly grocery orders and delivering of same. This must be a dying service now from the smaller shops but many of the older village residents were more than grateful in our 10 years. Some were housebound and relied on these deliveries. We were told that back in the past Damerham boasted several shops all specialising in their own trade which seems incredible for a small village - now sadly only one remains.

February 1978 comes to mind with deep snow, roads out of the village closed for a few days and shoppers turning up on tractors where cars could not get through! Luckily we had a good stock and did a roaring trade especially in soups. The following winter we had snow followed by a big freeze and we had the longest icicles we had ever seen hanging from the guttering of our bungalow.

Life in the country was so different, we still have some lovely photos of our adopted duck family down on the river and many little ducklings that arrived strutting in our garden. It was all such a novelty to us 'townies' and I never could adjust to the lack of street lighting. The evening walk from the village hall up the High Street seemed endless in the dark on one's own but luckily there was usually someone else going the same way.

During our time in Damerham the face of the High Street changed drastically there were many empty properties along the south side when we first arrived and they became more and more derelict. Things started to happen

when we all started to complain and now it is completely unrecognisable from those days and life has been brought back to the High street again. We have seen an old photograph of the High Street before the properties became empty and it looked so quaint and attractive we could not understand why the problem ever happened.

I always said I could write a book of our time behind the counter - we were counsellors, advisers, 'form fillers' etc. We learnt to listen, never pass judgement or anything on we were told in confidence and hopefully in doing so we earned respect and trust. We like to think so and will always look back on our 10 years with fond memories.