

On understanding Kingston, one must remember that travel was not what it is these days, and besides normal small village tendencies to regard everything that you do not know as strange, or downright bad, as I say, we were a motley crew. South Devon did not go in for goats, so many had not seen one. Certainly Pekinese dogs were not an everyday sight, even a canary was somewhat rare in isolated district places back then. We were regarded as foreigners to the day we left 21 years later. We had Doris from the village working for us in those early days. Hilde insisted that she and any other villagers that she had anything to do with called me Miss Bee-Ann. This fact coloured my relationship with many of my peers and their parents for most of my stay there. The fact that Gabberwell, for this is what we called the house / smallholding, was a little bit out of the village, added to its mystique. The local residents called it the house on the hill. But regardless of the natural suspiciousness of the rural English, we did have two Germans (well, Germans to all intents and purposes) in the household and England had just started a war with Germany. Then there was this devilish creature with a beard prancing around the place. "They say it is a perfectly natural farm animal in some places, but neither my father nor grandfather found such a weird creature necessary", was the generally held opinion.

We had our ways for finding out what the generally held opinions were. Any visitors from elsewhere that we had, were sent to the local pub and there they would just sit quietly and listen to the local gossip. One conversation - after Doc had treated one of the farmer's cows for some udder complaint with Bonnies Blue, an application much used in those days for fungal infections - went like this. "E in af a funny old doctor that one, e been an painted all of faaarmer Frood's cewws tits blue."

Other livestock included two calves' Molly and Fanny, Geese, and a lamb with a ribbon around its neck. When the lamb was a baby it was my job to feed it from a bottle, so of course it quite believed that we were bound in an unbreakable relationship - we played well together, and she would come in the house with me time to time. Probably winter then intervened and, come next summer, the time naturally came when my mother left the door open, and next found a full-grown sheep lying resplendent on the sitting room floor.

The calves were around growing quietly long before we became resident, and were forever escaping. Doc had to chase and retrieve them when he came down. It is told that he presented quite a picture haring around the lanes in his doctor's pin stripe suits chasing a cow or two. I don't think that anyone in the household was all that used to farm animals actually. Before the cows were mature enough to supply milk, the goat was! What a performance trying to get milk out of that extremely reluctant goat.

Time came when the 'powers that be' ordered that no one who was not English should live within so many miles of the coast. That of course included Hilde. I don't think anyone bothered much about Betty. So Hilde had to be sent away. I really don't know what was done with these folk, but I think they merely had to live inland. Anyway Hilde, seeing she had fled before Hitler, thought this to be unjust persecution; which in some ways it was. I believe she was just about suicidal, being by this time very fond of our family, although she and Doc fought like cat and dog most of the time. I think they were both jealous of my mother's attention.

This is where another aspect of Doc comes in, because due to his extra-ordinary influence, he got her into a munitions factory - of all things. And more to come. That was only a stepping stone, for he ended up getting her into the W.A.A.F. in the medical corps. Hilde battled a bit in the air force with her German accent and all - more persecution! But it seems that after a few Christmas concerts where she donned a moustache, pulled her black hair down over her forehead, strutted around raving and shouting in a fair imitation of Hitler, she was more or less accepted by her peers.