



Speaking to a friend some years ago he asked me where was it that I now stayed - Deddington, says I, and then was quite ready to explain where this delightful village was - Deddington, says he, that's near Oxford where Bletsoe the National Hunt jockey farms.

Now that should indicate to all but the old residents how horses are all important at Park Farm. Peggy's uncle, John Bletsoe, farmed the 150 acres of Park Farm, attached

to The Manor and here he bred thoroughbreds and, of course, rode in the National Hunt races; he died in 1963. John Bletsoe was a Church Warden and never missed a morning service for 60 years.

At the outbreak of the Second World War Peggy was in the Territorials and up to 1946 was a WAFF Officer attached to the Maintenance Transport Division.

In 1961 Peggy bought Park Farm from Mrs Gubbins of The Manor. Peggy remarks "I started farming with two things - a mortgage and a cow". It has been a self-supporting cropping policy at Park Farm and at present there are 70 Hereford and Hereford cross cattle and 2 milking cows. At present Peggy with her employee, Mr Colman, and a student, are involved in lambing the 40 Suffolk x Border Leicester ewes tupped to a Suffolk ram. All the spare spaces that can be bedded are inhabited with mothers and lambs. Brood mares occupy the numerous loose boxes although no ponies are now kept. Peggy is recognised nationally as a competent judge of horses and is most complimentary of how the Royal Highland Show staff look after the judges.

A mare bred from the Wyfold stud produced Elbolt which has won four races, one of which was at Epsom on Derby Day. This mare produced five other winners including Noble Heir who won four flat races and two hurdle races. The mare died three years ago but has a filly now in training and it is hoped she will be running at the Cheltenham Festival meeting in March.

There are six thoroughbred mares at Park Farm some covered by winners and the others bred winners. One is in foal to the famous stallion Vaguely Great - blood stock breeding is a most expensive occupation, a cover fee for a mare alone can be anything from £1,000 to £3,000 - there is a 340 day pregnancy. Everything in this blood stock breeding business is a constant authentic recording of happenings, a foal with its breeding is a very important part of the cycle. In many cases your mare is not allowed to foal on your premises and has to be taken back to the stallion's stud where she foals, in a maternity box, this also is for early covering. Soon after the birth the foal is sketched for all birth marks, colouring, etc. for life identification. The stabling fee for an in foal mare can be £9 per day. The foals are born March/April and are weaned at six months and it is at this age that Peggy Pacey sells her foals at the Tatteshall Newmarket December sales. Needless to say, entries have to be made eight months before the sale, and not everyone can enter a foal, in fact, there is a waiting list.

You will see at once that the sale of this foal is all important in an endeavour to cover the high costs and though there was a Park Farm foal which fetched £8,000 and a yearling £11,500, these are memory figures in this expensive business.

It is necessary that a foal fetches at least 800 guineas, and I am told one has to sell at the sale, no matter what the price, as it is more costly to take the foal back, and wait for the classified yearly sale.

John Bletsoe's uncle bred Grudon and trained Rubio and both have won the Grand National.



*Snap Dragon - Champion Cup and The Mills Champion Cup for Hacks
International Horse Show*

Peggy tells the story of Sir Aubrey Hastings, phoning her uncle early one morning to ride his horse at Liverpool the following day because his jockey had gone sick. Her uncle immediately cycled to Banbury caught a train to Liverpool, arriving late that night, saw the horse for the first time and rode the horse to win the following day.

Peggy also relates how Stanley Hall, the Deddington garage owner, having the only car in the village, was booked to collect the Prince of Wales from Banbury Station to take him to Park Farm, where he bought a horse, had afternoon tea in the parlour and then went back to Banbury Station in Mr Hall's car.

Everyday is a full day for Peggy, up at 6.30 am (not bad for 64 years of age) to feed her animals - horses, foals, cows, calves, steers, sheep and lambs. The two cows are milked by hand and who milks them at the weekend? Peggy.

Peggy loves all her animals especially her cats. It is a pleasure to talk and listen to such a pleasant lady.



Bill Marsh