

Ralph Howell and Margaret Bone

Margaret was born at Middleton, near King's Lynn, in January 1928 and moved to Manor Farm, now known as Church Farm at the age of seven with her parents Walter and Alice and her sister Dorothy.

The girls enjoyed an idyllic childhood in Cotterstock and there is a delightful picture of the family sailing on the River Nene near their house.



Margaret produced an interesting project on the village when she was 17 years old. In part of her project, she described the livestock kept at Manor Farm:

The flock of sheep has decreased greatly since the beginning of the war, partly because some of the pastureland has had to be ploughed

up. Today, the total number of sheep and lambs is only forty, whereas before the war it was nearly a hundred. The sheep are crossbred, and the lambs are sold at one of the neighbouring markets, when they are three or four months old.

The pigs, which are kept in the 'Top Yards' include two pedigree large Black sows, with litters. The large White breed of pig is also kept.

Lastly there are three horses, one a Percheron Mare, and the others, Duffolks, which are used mainly at hay and harvest-time, and for carting the farm manure on to the fields.

The poultry kept includes ducks, geese and fowls. The first two are reared on the farm, but the young chickens are usually bought in large numbers.

These are the two Suffolks working on the land.



After attending Fletton Grammar School in Peterborough Margaret went on to read art at Goldsmiths College in London. She returned to Norfolk in 1948 for her first teaching post at Dereham High School

Ralph Howell was born in Great Moulton in Norfolk, the son of a farmer. He was educated at Diss Grammar School in Norfolk and joined the RAF in 1941. He became a navigator and bomb aimer and was demobilised after the war as a flight lieutenant in 1946. Ralph followed in his father's footsteps and became an arable farmer in Norfolk and it was here that he met Margaret, his wife to be.



They married in St Andrew's, Cottertsock in 1950 and not long afterwards Margaret retired from teaching to concentrate on running the family home, then at Scarning in Norfolk. There followed three children Paul, Deborah and Robert. It was at this time that Margaret became a keen painter, particularly oil landscapes and a very talented pianist.



Ralph joined the Conservative Party and was councillor for Mitford and Launditch Rural District Council from 1961. He stood for Parliament in North Norfolk at the 1966 General Election but could not displace the Labour MP Bert Hazell. He won the seat at the 1970 General Election and his assiduous constituency work enabled him to retain the seat for the next 27 years.

Here are Margaret and Ralph meeting Lady Diana at the opening of Sheringham Splash swimming pool in May 1988



Ralph was a nominated member of the European Parliament from 1974 to 1979 and a delegate to the Council of Europe and the Western European Union from 1987 to 1997. Ralph Howell was knighted in 1993.



Lady Margaret died in 2005 and Sir Ralph died in 2008.

Information and photographs were kindly supplied by their son Robert Howell.