

Life as a Magistrate

Olive Clarke was born in 1922 and interviewed in 1997

Following my year as County Chairman of Young Farmers Clubs I became a magistrate. I was sworn in at Kendal on April 1st, 1960, an appropriate date you might think, and for the next thirty years I was a magistrate and my first appointment was to the Juvenile Panel. As time passed I was appointed to represent our Bench on the Board of Durham Prison and also the Review Committee for Parole going to Durham Prison every month. The work of the prison was of ceaseless interest to me and the changes that were made. Slopping Out (not a pretty sight) men twoed-up and threed up in a cell. Let us never forget, and sometimes I think that the do-gooders of this world do, that they are all volunteers who are in prison. They don't have to be there.

Today whilst magistrates have training, I went as a volunteer to Manchester to a course but I had no need to go and do training. The only training we had was perhaps the odd lecture. The school of experience, you know in life, is the best school of the lot in the end and I got a lot of experience. I sat too at Kirkby Lonsdale because they wanted a woman. Now that court is closed so is Sedbergh. Times have changed everything's come to Kendal.

There were a great deal of traffic offences that's what the old ward court did in the main because of Shap Fell. Then of course times changed and one can see the coming of the computer has done so much to do away with manual labour. In those early days the drunks who were really the rivals to the motorist for taking up time on the Bench. They got tight on Saturday night they spent the good wages they got on Saturday night on drink. Some of them a lot of drink. They came to court, paid their fine and off they went. I don't think there was a big increase in crime just a change in the crime. There is no work for these people and we all know that the devil finds work for idle hands.

I met Arthur, my husband, in Preston Patrick Memorial Hall at an Easter Monday dance. We married in 1947 and lived happily ever after, until he died in 1995. We came to Kaker Mill the day the Queen was twenty-one and she spoke from South Africa. I remember she made that famous speech about dedicating her life to the well-being of the people.

It was difficult to buy attested cattle in those days. We started going all over Scotland buy Ayrshire cattle to start with and then it became fashionable to cross them with Friesians which we did. I remember we bought one which did awfully well. We called it 'Ladybird.' It was an Ayrshire and it had beautiful horns. I remember it cost twenty-nine pounds. Remember we are talking 1947. We had horses but ultimately we bought a Ferguson tractor. It was a wonderful iron horse and they were very fashionable.

Doctor Beeching came along and cut railway lines. But buses also suffered. When I came here in 1947 there was a bus to and from Kendal to Kirkby Lonsdale via Endmoor every half hour. Now I think there are about three a day

Truthfully I owe the Westmorland Gazette a great deal because if I have had any success in life the Westmorland Gazette, with its pictures helped a great deal, starting in my days in the Young Farmers clubs, in a hat I might add, at functions. It started when I was asked to propose a vote of thanks at Newton Rigg to Lady Mabel Howard of Greystoke Castle who was then President. I would be seventeen. It was the first really big occasion for me in the Young Farmers Clubs, And this was the first time, that I spoke officially at a public function, other than when I won the public speaking contest when I was a kid, and I can see myself now wearing a pale blue "costume" as we called hats in those days. I was proud of that hat. It cost

my mother a lot of money. And I wore it for years that was the first time my photograph appeared in the Westmorland Gazette, the first of many.

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