

ESCAPE FROM THE "RAT RACE"

IT IS NOW FOUR MONTHS since we left Shipton and I have had time to reflect on our ten and a half years running Shipton House Stores.

Right from the beginning we were made to feel welcome and staff and customers alike were tolerant when we made mistakes as we regularly did. You see we were very green, new to the trade, and in our previous jobs (Keith was a Civil Engineer and I was a Physical Education Teacher) had never had anything to do with running a shop. This was our way of getting away from the rat race.

Little did we know what we were letting ourselves in for - it was hard work and long hours.

Money was always tight, so any improvements that were needed were usually done by Keith and I. Keith's plastering and plumbing skills were put to good use in the flat and we both (with Mum and Dad's help) did many D.I.Y. jobs and decorated throughout in our limited spare time.

The worst job I remember was replacing the floor in the shop. The wood blocks under the plastic tiles had rotted and customers high heels kept sinking into the floor so we could not put it off any longer. Keith and I spent every Sunday for about eight weeks digging out sections and then concreting it bit by bit. We could only do it in small sections because the area had to be ready to walk on when the shop opened the next day. Eventually it was done and the new tiles were laid - what a transformation!

Gradually over the years we learned how best to run our shop (though the learning process continues). We gained a tremendous amount of help

from our two longest standing members of staff - Mary Barnes and Margaret Janssen who were with us for the whole of the ten and a half years.

Staff came and went but mostly stayed and were all loyal and good at their job. Their biggest attribute was their ability to create a happy atmosphere and to laugh and joke with us and the customers but still get their work done - we miss them all very much.

The garden always gave us great pleasure though it was sometimes a chore to keep it tidy due to its size. It was a joint family effort - my mother and sister grew the flowers and planted them out with the help of my brother-in-law. All Keith and I had to do was water and weed them plus, of course, dig the beds and keep the lawn and hedges cut!

My mother spent many hours cutting cheese, tending the fruit and vegetable area and, of course, making her home made jams and marmalade. Our shop, like most independent grocers, was a real family effort.

It was a traumatic experience leaving Shipton as it had become a much loved home but, who knows, we may come back to retire!

Keith, Robin, Grahame and I would like to thank our customers for their support and to wish the new owners Keith and Jean Colledge, Craig and Karen Colledge and Robert and Amanda Schofield every success, and hope they will be as happy at Shipton as we were.

"THANK YOU SHIPTON"

Joan Fairall - (February 1993)