

Notes on the Weedon Family at Mote End farm

NB: This collection of words and photographs is taken from an album about Mote End Farm. The photographs belonged to Freda Weedon and often the associated captions were in her own words. The album also includes some newspaper cuttings of the time, but the date and exact source are not available. This article has been put together by the Mill Hill Preservation Society using these various sources with the kind permission of the Hobson family who currently own the farm.

Freda Weedon and her sister Elsie ran Mote End Farm alongside their father Alfred and mother Elizabeth, from about 1904. The two sisters plus an older sister Dorothy were all born in The Rising Sun pub, Highwood Hill. Indeed their father had been raised there too by an Aunt and Uncle.



The Rising Sun public house as photographed by Gordon Smith – 1893

In 1895 their father Alfred married Elizabeth who did not like pub life so they took up the tenancy for Hendon Park Farm (now Mote End Farm) owned by Mr Frazer, living in Lilac Cottage on Highwood Hill. After Alfred's death in 1941, the two sisters continued to run the farm with their mother Elizabeth until she died in 1947.



Sidney & Muriel Box (pictured left) who bought the Farm in 1947, then named Hendon Park Farm, renamed it Mote End Farm in 1948. They constructed the majority of the current buildings. In 1951 Sidney Box's sister Betty Box, produced a film entitled "Appointment with Venus" - a light-hearted adventure story in which a cow 'Venus' is rescued from a Nazi kidnapping. Directed by Ralph Thomas, the film starred David Niven, Kenneth More and Glynis Johns, but also required a cow to play the part of Venus. 'Carrefour Buttercup', a pedigree Guernsey, won the part.



She became one of a herd of cows at the farm and she would be transported each day to Pinewood Studios. This is a charming portrait of 'Venus de Milko' who played the title role in Betty Box's "Appointment With Venus".

After 1947 the two sisters were allowed to continue running the farm, and they had numerous animals from cattle and pigs to ducks and hens. They revived the milk round originally started by their father that was done by horse and cart in his day - but in a slightly more modern fashion with four wheels instead of feet! They cut all their own hay on the fields and were also responsible for cutting other local areas of Mill Hill – for example, The Reddings off Lawrence Street, which were all fields during that era. They had excellent dairy herds and up-to-the-minute milking equipment which was installed in what is now the Old Barn. The current central concrete aisle is original. The Bull Pens housed the prizewinning bull, St George – and also the calving pens. The current changing rooms and workshop were also all calving units, as was the tack room. The current kitchen and Coffee Lounge was the Granary.



Freda and Elsie hold the cup won at the Herts Show 1959

Remarkably, the Weedon sisters ran Hendon's dairy farm with the biggest herd, and with the biggest grazing too. They owned all the cattle, totalling 110, including a Guernsey herd of 57, pedigree-attested; and there were heifers, calves, and a bull as well. Queen of the Guernsey's was a Guernsey native, Le Hamel Lassie III, of whom it was officially certified her yield of milk to be 1,075 gallons in 305 days – an excellent record. Lassie was hand milked whereas her companions were milked by machinery. Aged nearly 13, she was mother of Golden Robert, who in the age-class for the best Guernsey bull at the Hertfordshire Show in 1959, a class open to the kingdom, was second to the winner.



Elsie is shown Haymaking with 'Charlie' and perhaps 'Cyril' mowing the Park where the Tif was. Hendon Park Field was 46 acres before the road and the wartime anti-aircraft guns were moved in.

Elsie died in 1963 and her passing prompted the following article to appear in the local press:

“The familiar sight of a tractor parked in Mill Hill Broadway, while its owner did the shopping, will not be seen any more – for its well-known owner died last week. She was Miss Elsie Weedon, who, with her sister Freda, had run Mote End Farm, in Nan Clarke’s Lane, Mill Hill, for more than 17 years.

Elsie Weedon was one of the district’s best-known characters. One could never fail to notice her, dressed as she nearly always was in gum-boots, breeches, jacket and beret. It came as a great shock to hundreds of her friends to hear of her sudden death. Only two days before she died, she was delivering the milk, in the snow, the same as always.

Elsie Weedon was born in 1901 and was the youngest of three sisters. Her father, the late Alfred Weeden, was well known as the first farmer at Mote End. It was not until 1947, when both their parents had died, that the two sisters, Freda and Elsie, took over the management of the farm’s 220 acres. Before long, both were well known through delivering their milk around Mill Hill and Totteridge. More recently, among their 100 or more customers have been actor Ian Carmichael, film director Sidney Box, who now owns much of the farm’s land, Sir John and Lady Laing and Lord Justice Sellers.

Elsie’s working day started usually at dawn, and finished often late in the evening. She was heard to say that she neither knew nor wanted any other life than farming. But her interests were not confined to agriculture. She was a keen member of Mill Hill Preservation Society, and until 1941, took part in many of the Enfield Chase hunts. She was a lover of Gilbert and Sullivan and often attended ballet performances. She has been described as a survivor of the true rural days of Mill Hill during the 1920’s.”



Elsie haymaking in The Reddings with Lovell the Ploughman

After 1963 Freda continued on her own until her retirement in the early 1970’s after the farm was sold to Ronald Hobson in 1969. Ron and his wife Marina continued to farm the land with various arable crops and producing hay and straw. They also had successful breeding herds of over 100 beef cattle plus a smaller herd of Highlands. In addition they turned the original dairy barn into 16 ‘Do-It-Yourself’ stables, adding a further 6 on the far end. The bull pens were also turned into stables although the Highlands did live alongside the horses at times! What is now the New Barn was used as an indoor school and at some stage as a nursery for the cows while the current indoor school was also built for the cows. The current premises are known as Mote End Farm and Livery Stables.