

HERITAGE CIRCLE

Linda Scoles, The Yanks Are Coming

Linda Scoles entertained the Heritage Circle at its Christmas Social at Rickinghall Village Hall with a series of very amusing stories about how she and her family settled in Britain. She is a popular speaker and did not disappoint her audience.

Linda's husband, Jim, was posted to Lakenheath in 1971 by the US Air Force. The whole family was excited by the prospect of living in Britain. They saw it as an adventure and an opportunity to travel in Europe. However, Linda was not quite as well prepared for the experience as she thought, despite reading all of the Catherine Cookson novels! The family had to adjust to a very different culture.

Within days of their arrival, Jim managed to find a house to rent in Great Barton. Their landlords ran the village Post Office and helped the family to become actively involved in village life and to become assimilated into the community. They were pleased to be invited to attend church on their first Sunday in Great Barton. Afterwards, Jim was taken along to the pub for a lunchtime drink. This was almost shocking for the newly arrived Americans but they came to see that it was almost a British institution at the time. A little later Jim joined the bowls club. He was a very good sportsman, but very competitive. He adapted to this quaint, new game very rapidly and won the club championship in his first year. However, soon after this triumph, Jim returned home from a match against another club very angry. He threw his woods into a cupboard and never played again. He had been beaten by a woman!

Through her children, Linda was drawn in to support the school and joined the village hall committee. She spoke very affectionately about the community which had welcomed her and her family so warmly. She told a series of stories about village life. In one, Linda made friends with an elderly woman who babysat for her children. This woman loved watching wrestling on the television and so she decided to take her to a wrestling match in Bury St Edmunds. It was quite an experience as she was astonished by the outrageous, baying behaviour of the largely female audience and the antics of the wrestlers.

Linda has always enjoyed singing and so she was pleased to act as director of a Christmas concert at the church. It was a successful event up until the last performance when the vicar shocked the very conservative audience by singing a Christmas song in a strong Welsh voice to the music of the 'Red Flag.' Further stories about village life involved meeting 'characters', buying an unreliable car, and a disastrous amateur dramatics performance at Walsham le Willows on a very snowy night.

This was a very enjoyable evening where the Christmas Social was complemented by some very funny stories delivered without a script.

The next meeting of the Heritage Circle will be at 7.30pm on Wednesday 28 January at The Village Hall, Rickinghall IP221HD when Tony Diamond will give a talk about Oliver Cromwell. Further information about the Heritage Circle is available on its website, www.heritagecircle.onesuffolk.net.

Gerry Gurhy