

OBITUARIES



LOVED NATURE: Pamela Henderson with two of her dogs

Pamela Henderson – love of life endeared her to so many

MORE than 150 people, from all walks of life, crowded into St Oswald's Church at Thornton Steward recently to remember Pamela Henderson, a woman of enormous character, whose love of life and people had endeared her to so many.

Gamekeepers came from the old family estate in Northamptonshire where, surrounded by centuries of history, she had grown up to love nature, wild flowers, horses and sheep. She had been born in India, the oldest of the four children of Col Thomas Thornton of the 7th Hussars.

Sadly, both her brothers died young, one in the last week of the Second World War, bringing to an end the Thornton connection with Brockhall near Weedon, which dated back to Elizabethan times.

While at Brockhall, she joined the Pytchley Hunt and was one of the four women who gained the highest honour of being awarded the hunt's white collar.

During the war, she joined the ATS and so met her first husband, Gerald O'Grady, an Irish chieftan, and became Madam O'Grady. When he left the army, he returned with his wife to his family home in County Limerick. She left Ireland in the early Sixties and was later divorced.

She then married Hugh Henderson who bred and trained labradors.

They first came to the dales to assist with picking up at grouse and pheasant shoots and then moved to the Gatehouse at Jervaux. Then, a year or so before his death 20 years ago, they bought The Manse in Thornton Steward.

Mrs Henderson enjoyed picking up at the shoots, mixing

happily with everyone, because of her great love for people and the great interest she took in each person. With her cocker spaniels, she continued until about two years ago and even raised a litter of puppies when she was 83, about the same time that she stopped breeding Welsh Mountain black sheep.

For many years, she had won awards at the Great Yorkshire Show for her sheep, including gaining a first prize.

She was also a keen gardener as well as a self taught, very knowledgeable botanist, which led to a memorable occasion at a garden party at Buckingham Palace when she dived into a flower border to point out that there was a very rare "weed".

Until recently, Mrs Henderson wrote a regular, popular, nature column for the parish magazine, *The Bridge*, which was distributed throughout Coverdale and Middleham.

She believed that it was important to be totally involved in community life. She was a church warden at St Oswald's for about ten years, which included ringing the church bell. She continued to help with the flowers in the church and at the village institute until recently.

Each Thursday she went to the old people's luncheons at the Middleham Key Centre and was renowned for her eclectic style of dress, from her hats to her odd, striped socks. "She liked to deliberately down dress," said a friend, "but that was all part of her being so young in spirit."

She retained her good memory and continued to read the newspapers almost until she died and so could discuss the finer points of farming and

Mrs. Pamela Henderson Resided at The Manse Died July 22nd 2003

horse training with her daughter and son-in-law, Catherine and Peter Player, who run a stud farm for flat racing horses in Nottinghamshire, and her nephew, Nicky Henderson, who trains horses for jump racing.

Mrs Player was very grateful to her mother's neighbours in Thornton Steward who had enabled Mrs Henderson to retain her independence and stay in the village. "She loved Yorkshire people," Mrs Player said.

A neighbour, Julia Waterman, and Virginia Henderson, one of her step-children, said: "We are

lucky to have known her. She will be greatly missed."

A few days after her death her scrapbooks, and one of her mother's, were on view at the library day at East Witton parish room, to help raise funds for Yorkshire Cancer Research.

She was a great collector: of regimental badges, postcards, gun cartridges, and stones from all over Britain and other parts of the world. She was a member of the Rare Breeds Society, the Fell Pony Society and the Wild Flower Society, as well as supporting the British Legion

throughout her life.

Coming from a military background, she asked for the Last Post to be played at her burial. She organised her own funeral, at which the Rev Brendan Giblin officiated and the Rev David Eyles gave the address. Her two grandsons took part in the service.

Her close family at the funeral were: Catherine and Peter Player (daughter and son-in-law) with their son, Edward, and representing their daughter Alice; Madam Mary O'Grady (daughter-in-law) with her chil-

dren, Henry and Olivia; Caroline Keith with her daughters, Susanna Soames and Arabella Prideaux; Virginia Henderson with Brigadier John Symons, Mr and Mrs Richard Henderson with Robert, Horatia and Christian, and Mr and Mrs Alistair Grant with Louise and Mr and Mrs Charles Inness (stepchildren, their partners and their children); Mr and Mrs John Henderson (brother-in-law and his wife) with their children, Mr and Mrs Nicky Henderson and Mr and Mrs John Read; and other relatives from Ireland.

