

Northall, Fletching

As Told to Jill Rolfe by Hylda Rawlings

This story concerns Margaret Holt (who was the then president of the Danehill Historical Society) and Hylda Rawlings (who is the current president).

Margaret was always very interested by Northall which was a small, old cottage and at that stage had not been extended or renovated. At this time the property was empty and up for sale. Margaret made arrangements with the estate agent to have the key for the afternoon and enlisted Hylda's help in holding the ladder steady and assisting in making measurements.

When they arrived at the cottage the door was already open and there were two ladies (probably mother and daughter) downstairs measuring up windows and they didn't look too pleased when they saw Margaret and Hylda, but Margaret, diplomatically as always, ensured them they were not rival buyers but were simply looking at this interesting house to see what they could uncover. As the two ladies were downstairs Margaret said they would go upstairs and make a start.

The roof and attics are always the best place to start to trace the age and history of a house as the timbers and construction reveal a great deal. Access to the roof was along a small corridor and into the 2nd bedroom where there was a little cupboard at the end through which was the narrow entrance to the loft. With Hylda holding the ladder steady Margaret managed to push the loft door open but the entrance was too small to get through, so Margaret came back down the ladder, stripped off to just her trousers and bra and climbed back up again. She gave instructions to Hylda to give her a big shove to push her up and through. This was accomplished but then Hylda heard a squeak and a breaking noise so Hylda climbed up to see what was the matter. Margaret gasped that the whole roof was full of stale pigeon eggs and she had fallen straight into a lot of them. She smelt of rotten eggs - in other words she stank.

Margaret couldn't possibly put her clean jumper back on, the state she was in, so she suggested to Hylda they get out of the house

quickly, before the two ladies could see them. They opened the bedroom door, listened and heard nothing and were about to make a quick exit when the other bedroom door opened. They came face to face with the two ladies who had expectant smiles on their faces as they thought they were about to learn more of the house's history, but at the sight of Margaret and Hylde, they froze, so Margaret explained about the stale pigeon eggs into which she had fallen. They in turn hurriedly returned to the bedroom and shut the door very firmly.

They rushed outside to Margaret's car, and fortunately she had several newspapers in her car. They laid them out where Margaret would sit and drove back to Hylde's house - which was nearest - where Margaret had a bath and washed her hair and borrowed some of Hylde's clothes, albeit that Hylde was a good size or two smaller.

Hylde then resumed some housework chuckling to herself at the day's events when the phone rang. Margaret had returned the key to the estate agent, where she got a very frosty reception. The two ladies had already beaten the path to the estate agent's door and had withdrawn their offer. The estate agent was not best pleased.