

May Belles and Wedding Bells in Sixties' Pilton - Susan Roscoe

Ask any sixteen-year-old whether they want to upstake and emigrate to the Antipodes, and the chances are that the response is less than enthusiastic. So it was with Susan Roscoe (now Houston), daughter of Sheilah Mary and Robert Roscoe. Together with her parents, brother and five sisters, Susan left the family home at 4 Fair View, Pilton, for Australia in 1970. Susan recalls that their house in Fair View was rather small for nine, especially when the large front room was kept for 'best'



and, therefore, out of bounds unless there were visitors.

Before leaving Blighty behind, Susan did make an appearance in the local Press. In 1968 she was elected Pilton's May Queen (in the centre of the photo, left) and was crowned by

Mrs Keigwin, wife of Tim Keigwin (who had replaced Jeremy Thorpe as MP for North Devon). The young lady to the right of Mrs Keigwin in the photograph is Linda Morgan, one of Susan's friends from Barnstaple Secondary School.



The May Day

celebrations were held, as usual in the Sixties, in the grounds of Pilton House.

[*Editor's Note* : You can see in the photograph (above) that Rotary Gardens did not yet exist.] Mrs Hill, the teacher in the 1961 photograph [in this archive](#), was still teaching maypole dancing seven years on, and Susan's twin sisters, Lynn and Lesley, were dancing when Susan was crowned.



Eleven-year-old Susan and younger sisters, Janette and Carol, were also bridesmaids with Maree Day on the occasion of Susan's Aunt's wedding. Janet Gratton married Richard Day at Saint Mary's, Pilton (photo left). Note the wonderful Sixties' hairdos! The little boy in the picture is William Gratton, grandson of Sam Gratton, Susan's Granfer. Both Sam and his son, another William, were thatchers (photo below). Sam and Bill practised their trade all over Devon and Somerset. Sam was known affectionately to his friends as 'Shilling Sam' because he spent so much time at auctions. His brother, Doug Gratton Snr. owned much of Butchers' Row in Barnstaple but sadly died in May 2014.



Susan's first return trip to Pilton came twenty years after leaving, and five years later she brought her parents back to see the places and people which had been such a familiar part of their life in North Devon. She also went to visit Pilton Primary School, only to discover that times had moved on and it was by then a business. She had attended the school with her five sisters, and remembers being taught by Mr Marshall and also Mrs Hill. Her late brother, Kenny Roscoe, had attended the Blue Coat School and is buried in St. Mary's churchyard.



Susan Houston now lives in New Zealand, where she works in planning.