

TALES FROM THE HILLS
(Ashmansworth and Crux Easton)

On a foggy morning in November 1943, Diana Mosley, "the loveliest of the Mitford girls", was led out through the back door of Holloway Prison to a waiting car. At the front gate of the prison a lynch mob had gathered; such was the feeling against her.

She had been locked up without trial for three years with the complicity of Winston Churchill even though, as a child, she had often romped through his house – Chartwell – with her cousin Randolph. Free again, she was now on her way to the rectory at Crux Easton to re-join her children. She had been breast-feeding the youngest, Max, when she was arrested three years before. Max, who died recently, is famous for his Formula One racing empire.

"Diana loved Crux Easton at first sight. The rectory was a large south-facing manor house which had been abandoned by its owners as too big for wartime; for several years its only inhabitants had been a rapidly increasing population of rats." (de Courcy). It had cost the Mosleys £3,000.

They bought a cow and grew vegetables on their eight acres with the help of one of the villagers. A Mr and Mrs Nelson turned up and offered their services as domestic help; they had probably been sent down by MI5 to keep an eye on things.

How ironic that the leader of the British Union of Fascists, Sir Oswald Mosley, could gaze across from his windows to the refugees from European fascism at Church Farm, Ashmansworth!

Meanwhile the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, was bombarded with protests from around the world at his release of the Mosleys. To his credit, he stood firm for justice and for Habeas Corpus; but, unfortunately for his reputation, he is remembered today only as a type of air-raid shelter, and as a relation of the Labour politician Peter Mandelson.

As soon as the war was over, the Mosleys hankered after their old haunts in Europe, but Clem Attlee, the new prime minister and a socialist, refused them passports. Undaunted, they bought a boat: the *Alianora*. When Attlee then refused them any foreign exchange, they stocked her up with food. He finally relented and they got their passports, but they sailed off in the boat anyway.

Agricola