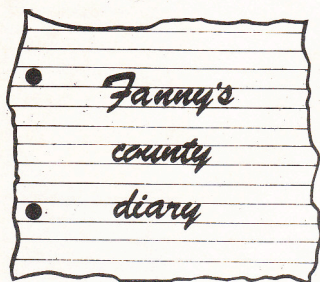


A Royal honeymoon

“OUR little baby,” wrote Queen Victoria from Buckingham Palace on May 16, 1843, “is to be called Alice, an old English name...”

Nearly half a century later Queen Victoria wrote to Lord Mount Stephen, expressing her gratitude to him and his wife. Her Majesty's son Leopold Duke of Albany and the Duchess often spoke of the Scots-Canadian millionaire peer's charming



ways with their children, the eldest of whom was a daughter named — Alice.

Lord Mount Stephen and his first wife were childless and when they adopted a daughter, her name was — Alice.

The wedding that took place in the halcyon Edwardian days of 1904 was a magnificent one. It was February and the weather was cold, drizzly, sunless — but the bride was radiant, lovely, 21 years old and of royal blood, daughter of Leopold Duke of Albany, Queen Victoria's granddaughter: Her Royal Highness the Princess Alice. The bridegroom was also royal, a tall handsome man in the uniform of the 7th Hussars, his fine-drawn aristocratic features adorned with a splendid black moustache, his black head distinguished by a widow's peak: His Serene Highness Prince Alexander of Teck, later the Earl of Athlone.

Two charming adult attendants; three adorable child bridesmaids. The scene was St George's Chapel, Windsor, the ceremony solemnised by the Archbishop of Canterbury before a congregation composed of European royalty. The carriage drawn by four

pair out of the castle grounds when King Edward VII spoke a few farewell words to the bride and groom. He exhorted them to go to church wherever they might find themselves — His Majesty was not in the secret of the honeymoon destination.

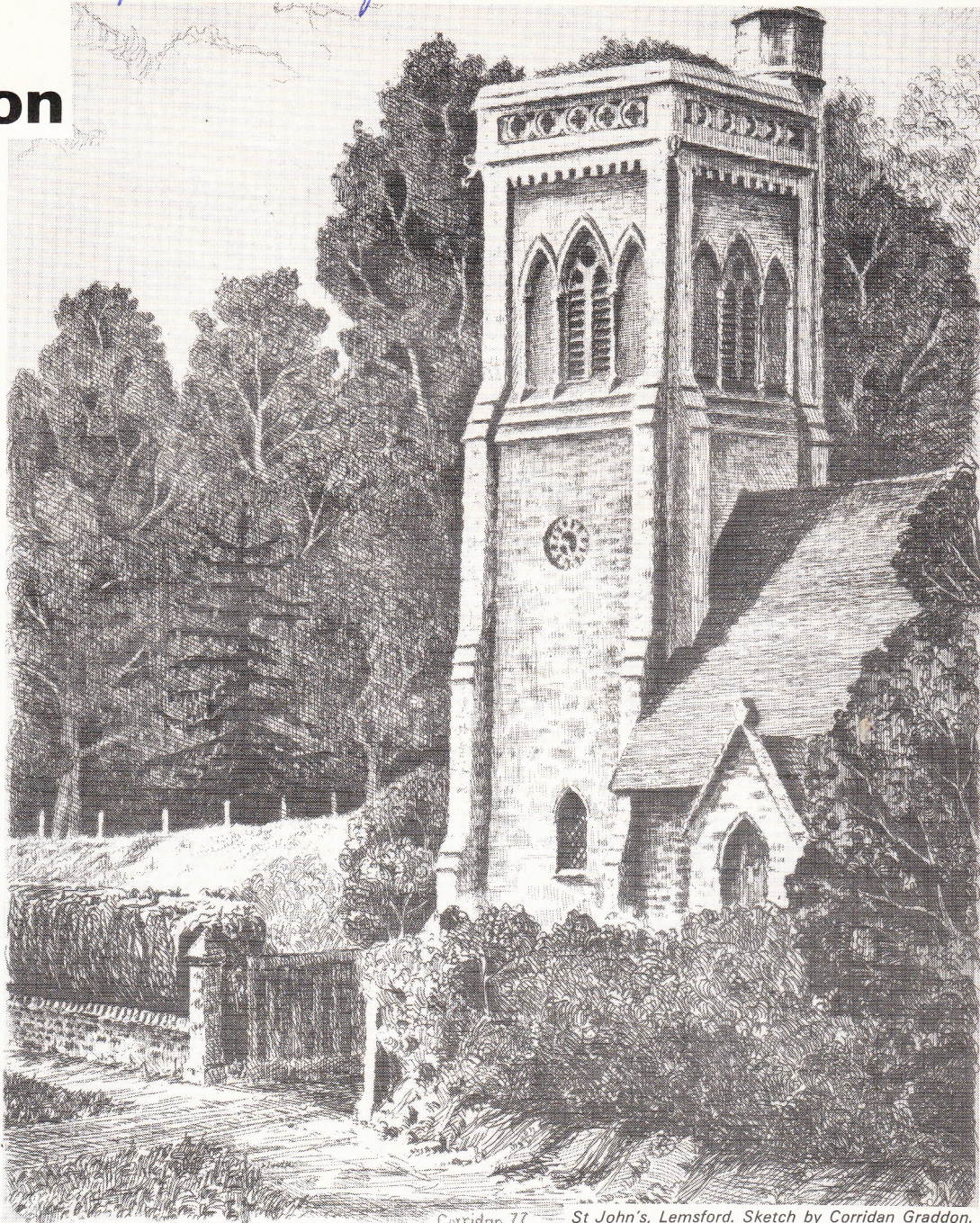
From leafy Buckinghamshire the carriage drove through the darkening February afternoon; reached Watford and St Albans. On it went, across country now to the little village of Lemsford where on the corner the small stone church of St John with its square bell-tower is a landmark, and through the wrought-iron gates between the twin red-brick doll's house

Prince Alexander had been to Brocket before, since his mother the Duchess of Teck and his sister Princess May of Teck, were friends of Lord and Lady Mount Stephen who occupied Brocket at that time. Lord Mount Stephen had lent Brocket to the Prince for his honeymoon. Princess Alice found Brocket “a most adorable place.”

In February early morning mists wreathed the ground in mysterious veils; from the invisible lake duck and moorhen called and when the mists rose, dispersed by the gentlest of winter suns, a thousand yellow daffodils were revealed trumpeting the triumph of the coming spring

More than yellow — there was blue — down by the lakeside near the Syllabub House the first fragile scyllas were found shaking their heads above the rime; snowdrops streaked snow white beneath the great cedars and oaks. Deep among the trees where the honeymooners strolled, wood violets shrank from notice beneath their feet.

And on Sunday, mindful of the King's advice, the carriage took the newly-married couple out of the drive and over the bridge between the pierced stone balustrade that was almost a hallmark of James Paine's architecture —



Corridan 77 — St John's, Lemsford. Sketch by Corridan Graddon.