

Things I Remember

Page 1

We lived in a row of houses & our house had one living room, a small back kitchen, 2 small bedrooms & an attic. The one bedroom was only like a landing at the top of the stairs & the only thing in it was a bed pushed against the wall & a chair at the side. We had outside toilets with wooden seats. Large one for adults & small for children. These had to be shared between 4 houses, so sometimes you could be desperate to go & someone else was in there, so you just had to cross your legs & wait or call out to them to hurry up. They had to be emptied once a year & this was always done after we had gone to bed.

We had an oil lamp for the living room & the wick had to be trimmed to keep the flame even. You carried a candle in a candlestick when you went upstairs to bed & the least bit of draft would blow it out.

All our water had to be fetched from the Springs & stored in a bucket & bath in the back kitchen. Our coal and food was kept there as well. Cooking was done on the living room grate which had an oven on the side. The grate had to be cleared out & blackleaded every morning before it was lighted & until then you couldn't even have a cup of tea.

Page 2

Milk was delivered to the door by the milkman who had a yoke on his shoulders to carry the buckets and ladles. 1/2 & 1 pint & you just took your jug to the door & told him how much you wanted. He always put a drop extra for good measure.

The baker came 3 times a week with the bread, driving a horse and cart & he carried the bread in a large wicker basket

Pigs were killed by men holding them down on a wooden bench & one man cutting their throats till they bled to death. We all used to go and watch!! The squealing and kicking just fascinated us. We never realised how cruel it was! Then they put straw over them and set it alight to singe all the hair off their skins. They used to take the chitterlings(*def. small intestines of swine*) down to the springs to clean them, turning them inside out with a cane. The smell of chitterlings being cooked was wonderful & the taste even better. My mother used to buy some "flick" (some sort of fat from their insides) boil it down & make lovely lard which we used to have on our bread. It was a real treat just lightly sprinkled with salt. By the way when you wanted salt you just asked for a pennoth (pennyworth) & it was a large block which you just took bits off as needed.

Page 3

Faggots made from the fry & the bacon which they cured themselves were something too delicious to describe.

During the summer holidays we used to go "wooding". To collect enough dry wood to kindle the fire all through the winter. We took pieces of string or rope to tie up our bundles. I used to start off with a big bundle & then kept having to take a few sticks out as it got too heavy to carry. We also gathered blackberries to make jam & nuts to store in tins for Christmas. Often , on the way over the fields, we would steal a turnip, peel it with our teeth & eat it.

Such happy days!!

The two nearest doctors were one from Chalford & one from Eastcombe. & if they visited you, you then had to go to their surgeries in the evening to collect the medicine which they dispensed themselves. Often on a winter's night we would set off with a lantern (3 or 4 miles) to collect someone's medicine for the princely sum of 3d (equal to about 1p). If you had to collect for two or three people you thought you were in clover! but you never told them in case they gave you less.

We never had pocket money, just anything you could get from doing errands or carol singing at Christmas. Yet we were always happy & I can ...

Page 4

.. honestly say we didn't even know the word "bored". Getting into orchards & stealing apples and pears was exciting.

My friend & I used to have great fun playing tennis with two old frying pans for racquets.

Friday night was bath night. A large tin bath in front of the fire, we went in one after another, & then had our hair washed. How I hated it, with the soap getting in your eyes & then your hair all done up in rag curlers.

Dad used to get up at 4.30 to do his post round. He then came home for his breakfast at 7.30 which was always bacon & eggs. We used to shout as we got up - "bacon rind", "bacon fat", "dip round the pan", & whoever shouted first had the choice & so on. Every night he would get his cycle lamp ready for the morning & the smell of the carbide was awful. He finished his post round at midday and then he worked for farmers in the afternoons & evenings. I loved to take his tea out to him in the fields. The tea was in an enamel can with a cup on top. I loved the cold tea!. He could do thatching or "hedging" which consisted of half cutting through the branches & then threading them along between an upright one so that a nice thick hedge was made.

Page 5

Dad used to bring us wild strawberries or the first violets or primroses when he came back from his round & sometimes mushrooms on blue legs (another kind of mushroom which come much later in the year.) Sometimes apples or pears which people had given him.

In the spring the lambs had their tails cut & dad would bring some of them home. They were then put on the stone floor in the back kitchen & left for a day so that the fleece could then be plucked off easily & then "joy of joys" we had lambs tail pie. It was delicious.

Dad would buy a large piece of leather from the saddlers & cut out soles & heels to mend all our shoes. To stitch them he would get 2 or 3 strands of hemp, tie them to the inside door handle & then keep rubbing them all over with a piece of warmed beeswax until it became a really tough thread. "heightones?" used to send us to the pub with a jug to get a pint of beer or stout & I always used to have a swig on the way home.

There were no motor cars on the roads & so we played "hopscotch", marbles, rounders, hoops etc wherever we wanted to and never had to worry about traffic.

Winter evenings we used to have singsongs around the fire & also mother would play "hunt the thimble" with us. Mother would put a brick in the oven..

Page 6

..to get really hot, wrap it in a piece of cloth and put it in our beds to keep us warm. (No such thing as a hot water bottle). And a baked potatoe to put in our pockets/ or muffs to keep our hands warm when we went out.

I well remember when the snow was thick on the ground, my cousin Tom & I hit on a good idea. I had to make the ammunition (snowballs) & he would put them down the blacksmith's chimney & put his fire out. We were up on the bank & the blacksmith's forge was below. At first the "smithy" couldn't make out what was happening, but when he did!! He chased us and was so angry that when he caught Tom he whacked him good and hard & then rolled him very roughly down the bank. Luckily he didn't catch me, but I was afraid to go past his place for a long time afterwards.

We had to take turns each evening to either fetch the water, chop the wood, to light the fire next morning, clean the shoes or wash up. All the water for washing day had to be fetched. The

copper filled and 4 baths; one for washing the clothes before boiling; two for rinsing and the final one for "blueing". Then starch was made in a bowl & table cloths, pillow cases, collars & pinafores were starched ready for ironing. Irons had to be heated in the open fire, held in place by a poker.

Page 7

Auntie Nell was cook at the mansion & sometimes, after they had a big dinner party she would tell us to call round at the kitchen door & she would give us a basin of dripping & sometimes some pudding, a piece of tart or cake. "Such luxuries"!! How hard she worked. She was a widow & had one son Tom and had to work to keep him & herself. No pensions in those days & she was certainly too proud to ask for help. In addition to her job as Cook she did lots of sewing on her treadle even making shirts & coats. My mother would buy ladies coats at rummage sales and Auntie Nell would wash them, unpick them & turn the material inside out and make us lovely new coats. I loved her & spent many happy hours with her. She taught me many things & one of her favourite sayings has helped me many times - "Cut your coat according to your cloth". In other words live according to your means & you will never get into debt. She gave Tom a good education & bought a piano & had him taught to play. She was a wonderful mother with a heart of pure gold.

In the village there were two funny characters, "Poop Fawkes & Dogger Hunt. We used to go "Bird nesting" in the spring. That was finding out where the birds had made their nest & then each week going to see if..

Page 8.

the eggs were hatched out. We were always very careful not to disturb them and never took their eggs. When we found a nest it was our secret & you never told anyone else.

At Christmas we hung up our black stockings & next morning you found you had an orange, an apple, a few nuts & a little bag of sweets. Sometimes even a few marbles or a new hair ribbon. Once I had a little box of paints & I thought this wonderful. No presents or cards like children have now.

At Easter we had a boiled egg with our name written on the shell. When it was our birthday we had a jelly for tea and sometimes small jam tarts.

To pacify the baby you gave it a Sugar Dummy (a lump of sugar tied in a bit of clean muslin and if they had wind pains you gave them drops of sugar water (boiled water with sugar dissolved in it).

We always had a dog & it was fed on scraps & an occasional bone. I never remember us having to call the vet to it. In fact I never even heard of "vets". We also had bantams and fantail pigeons.

On Sundays we went to church in the morning, Sunday School in the afternoon & then church again at night. In the summer we went for a walk with Mother & Dad after evening service & sometimes..

Page 9

..we would all walk to Water Lane and whilst Mother and Dad went inside for a drink we would sit outside & have lemonade & a packet of biscuits between us. We loved those walks!

My Dad was the first postman to go mobile. He had a motorbike with a big red sidecar to carry the mail in it & the top just lifted up like a lid. Many a time I have ridden inside it (with the lid propped open a little) to Miserden where my dad delivered the mail. The cook at Will's Estate often gave us a cup of tea & a bit of cake.

Ascension Day was a big occasion for us. The day before we would all collect flowers from the big houses to decorate the Seven Springs. The letters AD & the year & the letters Ascension were all in flowers & after a short service in church children carried them in a procession headed by the

vicar & choir & the Chalford Brass Band at the rear & also all the villagers & then they were placed on the Springs & then we all had a big party. The Springs looked lovely all decorated up with lots of bunches of flowers as well as wreaths. They were left for about a week.

Mr Skinner (a farmer) used to ride a large horse and when we saw him coming he would always say "hello my dear" & we used to say "Hello Mr Skinner it's my Birthday today".

Page 10

& he would say "Is it my dear, then I must see what I can find" & then he put his hand in his pocket and give you a halfpenny. He was a lovely man & he must have kept a pocket full of halfpennies because he never once refused any of us.

In those far off happy days children could wander anywhere & speak to strangers & there was never any fear of being hurt or molested.

On Good Friday mornings you were wakened about 7 o'clock by cries of "Hot Cross Buns, Hot Cross buns , one a penny two a penny Hot Cross Buns". & they were being brought round the road in a big wicker basket covered with a cloth & were all still very hot straight from the baker's oven. Also around Easter time men used to come round pulling a large truck with a tin bath full of elvers. You took a jug or basin & had a pint or a pound for 3 old pence. Nowadays you can't even buy them in the shops as they fetch such enormous prices & are mostly exported delicacies.

We all went to the village school (starting when you were 3 years old) & then going into the bigger classes as you progressed. I can still remember being taught to count & add up with marbles which you had in round tins (like small cake tins) & also they had strips..

Page 11

..of leather with holes in & you were taught how to lace up your book. (No shoes in those days). You left school at 13 or 14 unless you were clever enough to pass the exams for Marling (*Marling School Stroud .grammar school....still there*) or High School (*Stroud High School ... for girls. The school Diddley was expelled from fifty years later*). In which case you first had to sit for a written exam & then go for a final oral one. Having passed you had to cycle to Stroud & back daily. There was no other means of transport.

Miss Taylor who used to keep the village shop had a pony & cart which she drove to Stroud twice a week to collect parcels etc for people. After I got home from school I used to deliver these, then fetch her some water & then take the pony to the field for the night. Catch him next morning, put him in the stable & feed him. Sometimes in the mornings he would be very frisky & just as you were about to put the halter round his neck he would gallop away. Many times I have cried in desperation. But in the summer evenings when I took him my friends & I used to get him up against the wall & then get on his back & have a ride. We were too small to get on him otherwise. We were always afraid that Miss Taylor would find out, but she didn't..

Paige 12

..All this for one shilling a week which she kept to pay for a pair of books she got for me!!

When I was 12 I won a scholarship to the school of Art in Lansdown (*Stroud*) where they taught (among other things), shorthand, typing and book keeping. There were only two free places & a girl named Vera Jefferies from Chalford was the other free pupil. All the rest were paying pupils & much better off.

Then, when I was 14 my beloved Mother died & I left school. I got a job as cashier at George Masons in the High Street. I had a little office up some steps at the corner of the shop (overlooking all the counters. Grocery on one side, & bacon, butter, cheese etc on the other). There were wires overhead leading to the office from behind the counters and the assistants would take the money from customers, put it in a container which hung from these wires & then pull a lever & it would come up to me. I would then send any change back in the same way. The

assistants never really handled the money. Then when the shop was closed I had to "cash up". All this..

Page 13

in addition to keeping accounts of all goods received etc. One man used to go out all the week getting orders and these had to be made up, delivered and accounts sent to the customers. The shop closed at 6 in the week & 8 o'clock Fridays & Saturday's. Thursday was half day.

Saturday nights were very lively . On the Cross at the top of the High Street there would be "cheap jacks" (*people who sell shoddy wares*) selling all kinds of things & calling out to people to bid for them. It was like a mini market & one regular one was a man we called "Winkle" who used to sell lovely china. He came from Worcester & I believe that Winkle was the real name of the firm & it was all lit up with lanterns & there was always a lovely covered stall selling all "Granny Ball's " home made sweets. They were lovely. She made them all at the back of her little house at the bottom of what was then called Tower Hill. Later known as Hill Street & now Parliament St. She had a little shop at the front of the house & you could always smell the sweets cooking behind..

Page 14

We used to go for in for a "haeputh" (1/2d) of qbroken bits & had a lovely bag full. Late on Saturday nights also "Fishy Lee" would stand outside his shop & auction the fish that were left. (sprats, bloaters, kippers etc)

The butchers did the same & that was how we got our Sunday joint. You never planned in advance as you never knew what you would get. There was no such thing as fridges and freezers, you kept things in a box covered with mesh to keep out the flies. In the summer you had to scald the milk to keep it.

Saturday nights were always very lively, when you met your friends & had a good old chat about all that had happened in the past week. People were happy and there was never any rowdiness or bother. The local policeman "Banger Yates" just clipped anyone around the ears if they misbehaved in any way. He was highly respected. No one ever complained of his treatment & it did a power of good. It's a pity they can't do this now!

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