

REMINISCENCES OF CHILDHOOD

1914 - 1925

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HEMPTON

1st SERIES

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One day whilst gathering strawberries from our garden, my thoughts suddenly went back to when I was about 3½ years old, which was then 1914, a year which a lot of people will remember: But my memory takes me to a holiday with an Aunt in London at that time.

One day I went missing and was eventually found in the larder 'popping the last of a dish of strawberries into my mouth', an event which I was never allowed to forget as the years passed by, also it must be one of my first memories of those tender years. The second was also while I was in London. If a penny was put into a slot, little marionettes came out to dance, which was very entertaining for small children. As far as I can remember these 'slots' were situated outside shops, more like small kiosks.

As the first World War developed, I was taken home, and this particular Aunt had to take me to the dentist. I remember this so well, as the dentist gave me 6d. because I was a good girl, and I was allowed to buy a little peg doll, dressed in crepe paper. How thrilled I was when I showed it to my mother on reaching home.

By now great events were going on in our village at Hempton in Norfolk, with soldiers digging trenches on the village green, while we were allowed to play in them; how we enjoyed chasing one another around those trenches, also watching the soldiers charging with their bayonets at stuffed sacks. We thought it great fun, little realizing the seriousness of it all.

Most of the villagers had to billet the soldiers, I know we had two and when they left a Cavalry Brigade arrived.

We had a Major and his wife stay with us quite a while, and we kept friends with them for the rest of their lives; very nice folk they were too, in fact they spent a holiday with my husband and myself, and we spent one with them. They came from Birmingham, so with us living in Norfolk this made a lovely change.

I went to school when I was 4½ years old to Fakenham, and although this was a good two miles away, I always walked and thought nothing of it, even coming home for lunch, as did my sisters. I must admit we did not have time to dawdle, many a time I ran back to school with

one eye on the distant town clock, as I hated to be late, although I was sometimes.

When I think of the present generation of children riding to school by bus or car, and then being met, I cannot see them being so tough in their old age, as some of the old folks of today. It is a true saying, "Use your legs or lose them". Of course there is far more traffic on the roads today, than in my day, so it would be unsafe to send young children on their own, but oh! what a lot they miss of the beauty of God's world. We used to gather reeds by the river-side, and make whistles with them; also gather yellow water Irises, cuckoos and ragged robins to take home to Mother. I can picture those meadows now and feel like weeping at all that beauty, so little appreciated today.

Incidentally I saw a field of buttercups and hedges of hawthorn all decked out in their glorious blossom this morning, and thought what a lovely month is May.

A very true saying is: "What fools men are, who full of care, have no time to stop and stare".

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The old railway station at Hempton was a great attraction for children, for when a train was in the station we could go over the bridge that spanned the railway (which was often, as the station was on our school route), so prompt at 4 pm would find us at the top of the steps, waiting for the train to come underneath with smoke pouring out from its funnel, leaving us children shrieking with delight, and covered with smuts, which we thought nothing of.

The train would then stop and like busy bees, you would see people getting in and out of the carriages, while porters would be dashing about, loading and unloading luggage and goods onto their trolleys, then the guard would wave his green flag and after an ear-splitting whistle let off by the steam. The train would slowly move out of the station - puff, puff, puff - getting quicker all the time, then would slowly be lost to sight as it rounded the bend. One way led to Gt. Yarmouth and Norwich, the other to Peterborough and London. It was quite a busy little station, especially on Market days.

In those days there was quite a large cattle market in the town, and cows and sheep came in by train, then the drovers would drive the cattle from the station to the market. On the mid-day train a large number of people from outlying villages would pour from the station en route for the weekly market that was set up in the middle of the town, a little way away from the cattle market.

There was a local man who ran a horse drawn cab down to the station

to meet passenger trains, and if we were lucky enough to find him in a good mood, he would give us a lift as far as the: station, so that by then we were almost home How we enjoyed those rides: The station gates were opened by a signal man in his box, who turned a large wheel, so inevitably there would always be a crowd of horses and cars and cyclists waiting for the gates to open, all trying to get over first. Yet in spite of all the bustle, I do not remember ever hearing of an accident there.

Unfortunately, this station was one of those to be closed down in later years, and I was lucky enough to be staying with my parents at the time the last train ran through - a very nostalgic moment as memories came crowding back to myself and others, who were giving the train a last send off. No more carefree trips to Sheringham or Yarmouth, or wondering whether the train would slip if a banana skin was thrown out of the window (which my younger sister once asked), and now all we have are our memories and overgrown silent railway lines.

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One thing that has not changed with the passing of the years, is the Girl Guide and Brownie Movement. When I was seven I joined the Brownies, then later became a Guide and then a Ranger.

As a Brownie I have a special recollection of getting lost with another Brownie while we were leading a tracking party. I thought I know the way and was well in advance, when I suddenly felt unsure of which way to go. So, forgetting all about leaving signs for the others who were following us, we called at the first house that we came to, to ask the way. The lady here was very kind, and asked us indoors for a cool drink and a piece of iced cake. We were quite happy, never giving a thought to those who were following us, and who eventually had to give up, and go back, expecting to find that we had got home. As you may guess, there was quite a pandemonium when we: were reported missing.

Meanwhile the man of the house was on his way back with us, as we had walked about three miles from our starting point. We each carried a bunch of flowers, and plodded along quite happily, when almost home we were met by my Dad and a neighbour who were very relieved to see us safely back.

After thanking the man, who then rode back (he had brought his cycle), we were put on the seats of Dad's cycle and the neighbour's and taken home. My goodness, what a scare we had given everyone, especially our Brown Owl. Needless to say we did not lead a tracking

expedition any more.

Looking back now, I feel so sorry to think how we had upset our parents, but child-like we did not see what they had to worry about, "Where ignorance is bliss. . ."

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Our Summer Holidays will live for ever in my memory, as my Father and Grandfather were the tenant of a very large field just outside the village. Corn and barley were grown, so naturally when it was time to be harvested, my sisters and I, and most of the village children went to the field every day. How I loved riding on old Bob's back (one of Dad's horses), shouting our "Hold Gee", as we stopped at each stook of corn, to be stacked on to the tumbril by the helpers with their long pitch forks. When the load was sufficient, I was allowed to drive it back all by myself, to the stack that the men were making, then when the tumbril was emptied, off I would go for another load, I passing a full one on the way, to be emptied.

The excitement of chasing the rabbits, while the horse-drawn harvester would slow down as the rabbits would run out of the corn. Then at the end of the day, they would be counted, and handed over to the helpers, any spare were given to the children to take home, as they made a very welcome meal in those days.

We always took our lunch with us and bottled tea or lemonade (made from crystals and sugar), this we thoroughly enjoyed, sitting by the stack with Dad the helpers, while they enjoyed a good pull on their pipes.

Then at four o'clock the Mums would arrive, bringing more tea, this was called "farzes" by the Norfolk farmers, which went down well, as we were never back home much before 10 o'clock - the evenings seeming to remain lighter then than they do these days - the summers were certainly different to the ones we experience today.

I When I think of those lovely happy days with the larks trilling high up above, and the tiny children sleeping of the heat in the shade of the stooks, then riding hack home in either cart or tumbril, being quite ready for bed, but oh so contented and happy, I feel quite sorry for the children of today, as they are missing so much, now that everything is done mechanically but then that is progress, even the rabbit is worth its weight in pounds today to those who still eat them, when in my young days they were given away, and thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed too.

During the summer practically all the children of our village came out to play on the village green after tea was over. How happy we

all were playing Rounders, Tap-tin, even Cricket (girls as well), although I preferred to do the scouting, after getting hit in the eye whilst I was batting, luckily no harm was done, except for a little swelling. As it began to get dusk a piercing whistle would rend the air, which was a call for us to go home. Dad would put two fingers in his mouth when he gave us this whistle it would be very unusual if we did not hear him.

Other games like marbles, spinning tops and skipping with ropes were much enjoyed, especially skipping, as so many could join in with this. With two of us turning the rope, as many as possible would run in and skip, while we would chant, "All in together, this fine weather, I spy Esau sitting on a see-saw, Swish Bang Fire", then the skippers would try to run out, without 'getting caught in the rope; those who were caught would then take a turn on the rope. Another game was for each to go in singly, and we would say "Salt, Pepper, Vinegar, Mustard", saying it quicker all the time as they skipped, and at the same time turning the rope quicker to try and catch them as they ran out. I am almost sure these games would catch on today if they were revived, jolly good exercise I am sure - do more good than watching "the Box" as soon as they get home from school.

The same with marbles, as soon as the evenings began to draw out, it usually meant an hour to play before tea. There was a certain cottage, which had an L-shaped wall around it, here we would play. I never pass that way without forming a mental image of four or five children thoroughly enjoying themselves with marbles, hitting them on the wall, then spanning them with thumb and finger against our opponents marble. If we could touch each one, then both were ours.

A game we called "Marble Hole", we would be to make a hole on the ground by going round and round on our heel, then when the hole was large enough we would try to roll the marbles in and hit others in too, if possible, these would then be ours. How the time would fly, and how pleased we would be if we had won a few extra marbles.

When the weather was not suitable for playing outside, we would then play in the stable or hay house, as Dad had fixed a swing for us in either so if the horses were in their stalls, we could play in the "Hayhouse", so called as you may guess this was where Dad kept the hay stored. Many a time have I watched Dad grinding the hay through a machine by turning a large handle, so as to make chaff for the horses, and for this too, I would help Dad to chip up the Mangolds in a machine like a gigantic meat mincer. While turning the handle, Dad would catch the chips in a large skep - such a lovely aroma as they fell fresh into the basket, especially so during the early Autumn evenings. Even the horse manure heap had a distinctive fragrance,

a real earthy smell, although some folks might not agree, but I am sure compared to the artificial manures of today, I know which I prefer!

We also had a large See-Saw in one of the cart sheds. This one faced onto my Grandma's back door, so I am afraid she was not too pleased when we brought two or three girls home with us to play, as we were inevitably always on her doorstep. Our two houses were semi-detached, with her backway facing the large entrance where the carts came in, and also most of the buildings.

As a child I used to love going with Dad to feed the different animals, mixing up the "Suppers" for the pigs, slop-slop-slop, somehow this held a great fascination for me, also watching the pigs feeding from their troughs, listening to their grunts of delight; not forgetting when the sow had a litter - lovely little things with their curly tails, squeaking around their mother and enjoying their food, when they could finish falling over one another to reach it.

We had chickens on a meadow adjoining our house where I liked nothing better than to walk all round the meadow looking for stray nests. One day, I discovered a nest full of eggs, underneath the Golf House (which was built into one side of the meadow, facing onto the Village Green). How excited I was as I drew the eggs out, one by one, with Dad's walking stick. The hen house would be the first place I would run to when I came home from school at mid-day, just to gather the eggs and many a time one of the hens would be on the verge of laying her egg, so I would wait and then hush her off the nest (Cruel me!).

Once we had a Buff hen lay on the meadow and she hatched off thirteen little chicks. What a picture it was to see her proudly bringing them across the meadow, just shows how wonderful Nature is if left alone.

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During the Blackberry season, we would be off on a Saturday morning, with three or four girls from the village, to a special lane where there was always an abundance of the fruit. No cut back hedges here, even the smallest child could enjoy herself gathering the berries (and eating them). Our faces were pretty well smudged with the juice by the time we reached home again, as we proudly gave Mother our loaded baskets.

Sometimes my Nanna came with us. She would bring a long stick with a hook on the end, actually this was used for weeding on the corn field, the hook enabled her to pull the branches down so that she could gather the blackberries as the best ones always grew beyond

my reach. I can remember the basket that she always used. It was in a dark wicker, with two covers that opened from the centre, just the thing for blackberries as they could not get shaken out.

I would sometimes go with her to gather elder berries, as, like most country folk in those days, she made quite a lot of wine.

When the weeds were beginning to grow through the corn, Mother and Nanna would spend a day on the field weeding, as I had not started school, I would go with them.

One particular day I shall always remember, as we always had a picnic on the field. This day Nanna gave me a piece of Madeira cake, but it must have been rather stale, as I spotted blue mould on it, and promptly said "No thank you, my mummy doesn't make cakes with feathers on" My! was she mad! I guess she wanted that piece of cake eaten up. She also had a habit of keeping desiccated coconut too long, as she would often sprinkle a jelly with this when my sisters and I had tea with her sometimes, such a pity as this spoilt the jelly for us.

As we lived next door, she would come in every evening to borrow the daily paper, but Friday evenings was important for us, as she always gave each of us (four) one penny, which seemed a mint of money in those days. This we would add to the penny that Mother gave us on Saturdays!, for the different jobs that we did, such as: dusting, cleaning the cutlery and silver, rubbing the knives on a bathbrick board and cleaning all the families shoes. Once we had done these jobs, we were then free to go out to play.

Thursday, being Market day, we were always given one penny to spend. Goodness, what a selection we had: four long sticks of liquorice for a penny, or a bag of pink and white coconut chips or maybe a bag of tigernuts, four or five locusts for a penny, or sometimes I would buy a pomegranate, but oh! the pips!

As I have said previously, Nanna Jane, as we called her, used to come in every evening. Sometimes she would ask if one of us would go over the green to the village Post Office to get her some stamps. This would always be after tea and dark (Why she did not ask us to go in day light I will never know), and it was usually I that went.

The Post Office was on the opposite side of the Green to where we lived, and no lights anywhere, except glimmerings of oil lamps through the shaded windows. In the centre of the Green stands the Church and Vicarage, which has a wall all round it. How dark and gloomy it seemed to be those nights. I' Would run over the Green, turning

every so often to see if anyone was behind me. I was quite breathless as I left the Vicarage behind me, and so thankful to reach the lighted windows on the other side, but even more thankful when I reached home again.

Thinking back, I remember how we used to love polishing the hall, making quite a game of it, as we put on a pair of Dad's old socks. We would then slide up and down the hall, thoroughly' enjoying ourselves, and at the same time putting a real polish to the lino. When Nanna Jane used to come in she would say "those children have been sliding in the hall again, I shall slip down one of these days". She never did!

What strange things we do when we are children. I guess if we looked back more often it would help us to be more lenient with our own children, for am sure we were no better than they. For instance, walking home from school one day (I would be about six or seven) with other girls, one of the older ones gave me a paper bag to carry, inside of which was a half pound of sausages. I suppose the others were too busy talking to notice me, so that on reaching the girl's home and being asked for the bag - Oh! Horrors, I had eaten most of them. Poor mother had to replace them.

Once my young sister, who was two at the time, trotted off to the garden and amused herself by picking unripe peaches that hung low, and carrying them back to mother in her pinny said, "Look, Mummy, Ballies". I am afraid Mother did not feel like laughing, as she used to make jam with the peaches, and although tiny, my sister had gathered quite a few. As the years have rolled by, we have had many a laugh recalling such incidents.

In the summer we would often take a packed lunch to school, and if it was fine, we would sit in the playground to eat it, if wet we were allowed in the lobby. (No school meals in those days).

One particular day we were outside when we saw an airplane in trouble, and saw that it was making for our village. So, hoping that it would come down on the village Green, we forgot all about our dinner and tore off down the street and through the town and so home, Where we found to our delight, the plane had landed almost opposite to our house. I think it was the first ever to come down on the Green. Oh what excitement there was, half the village had turned out before one could say "Jack Robinson".

Suddenly we remembered that we should have been at school, so off we ran back again (only 2 miles) and finished our lunch.

I have a photograph of that plane, which was taken by a neighbour

at the time, with quite a few of the villagers on it; most interesting to see the kind of clothes worn at that time.

Talking of clothes, my Mother, who had served an apprenticeship with a dressmaker when she was young, used to make all our outer clothes; the three of us were always dressed alike. One particular outfit I remember very clearly was a red velvet pinafore slip with a cream tussore blouse, then we wore wide red ribbon on our hair. Mum has told me since, how she used to watch us going down the road on Sundays and feel so proud of her children and her handiwork. How little we realized the hard work and hours that she put into making us look nice. Sunday was special in those days; What a difference today, whether one goes to church or not anything goes.

My Grandparents used to love a game of Whist, so many a Winter evening, one of my sisters and I would go next door to make up a game. How we used to enjoy ourselves as Grandad was a typical Norfolk man, so his speech used to amuse us greatly.

Sometimes he would take quite a time before placing his card, then Nanna would say "Come on here Ward" (this being his name), he would answer! 'Hold you hard, I'm a scheming". Another time if an unexpected trick was taken he would say "Thas a corf-drop", giving us children a fit of the giggles. It is strange how little things like this linger in one's memory.

I often sit by the fire and picture those evenings, with the glow of the lamplight on the deep red table-cloth, and the vase of pipe lighters on the mantel. It was certainly no effort to see in those days, which is surprising really, considering the bright lights of today.

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With four girls from our school, my sister and I (we would be about 12 and 10), formed a concert party. We would practice in one of Dad's barns, then, after rigging up a stage and making seats out of boxes, we would be ready to put on a concert. We would put a notice on our front gate to give the date, which was always on a Saturday afternoon.

Quite a few children came from the village and they all paid one penny. With the money we bought refreshments from Dad's shop, biscuits and sweets (crisps were unheard of then), and during the Interval we would distribute them to the audience. We called ourselves "The Merry Pickles", and I can assure you, great fun was

had by all.

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Our house stood on the edge of the Village Green, and on the Green was a very good 9 hole golf course. So, on Saturdays several of the village children including myself would congregate by the Golf House, hoping to be caddy for someone. As soon as a golfer was spotted coming (on a bicycle in those days) they would race up the road to try and get there first, as at 6d a round of nine holes (and they went round twice), that was quite a sum of money in those days. I was lucky, as I usually had a Doctor to caddy for.

Quite a few of the golfers would have a break after 18 holes and have a tea in our front room, having previously ordered, which was a pot of tea, bread and butter, jam, and buttered dough buns - often having the pot refilled - all this for 9d per person. No wonder we were so busy on Saturdays.

When my Doctor stopped for tea, I would clean his golf clubs and so earn another sixpence.

When I look back now and think of us walking round that green four times for 2/- and we enjoyed it, now children of the present generation get ten times that for pocket money, such a pity, as in my opinion they get no enjoyment that way at all.

There was one dear old lady for whom I used to caddy during the week, after I came home from school. When I left school she gave me a very nice golf club, which I used a lot, as I loved the game and later joined the Artisans Golf Club.

When I was eighteen I actually won the cup, which I was allowed to keep for a year. I often wonder where it is now, as the winners all had their names engraved on it, but I do still have the silver brooch that was given me to keep.

Unfortunately the Green was ploughed up during the 2nd World War, and has never been the same. Such a pity as for a village green, it had everything, cricket pitch, football ground and ample room for playing; makes me feel full of nostalgia when I look back, although there is a new 9 hole golf course further out of the village, on Fakenham Race Course.

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Even the weather was different then, and far more severe, as the ponds and streams were frozen over for some time.

As soon as we were out of school we would be off to slide on the ponds, there being two, one on each side of the Green. As many as twenty would slide, one behind the other, not bothering one bit as regards the bumps we occasionally got.

Many a moonlight night have I seen the largest pond covered with skaters, which was something I never could do, although I did try. I can still see myself swaying backwards and forwards trying to keep my balance, whilst holding on to someone each side of me, but, alas it was not my vocation, but oh! what happy carefree times they were.

In the Autumn evenings a fresh fish man would come round the village in his horse and cart, and how we would enjoy the kippers for tea, each being given a sheet of newspaper to wipe our hands on. Just to smell kippers being cooked during late autumn sends my thoughts winging back to childhood. I wonder why it is these little things that count with us as we get older.

Living in North Norfolk, with the coast only ten miles away, we were always sure of the sea food being fresh. Cockles, mussels and winkles were bought by the peck, the latter I have not seen for many a year.

A very tasty sea food is Sampher or Samfer, which grows in the marshes at Wells and most of North Norfolk around late July and August. We would buy it in bunches, then, after giving it a thorough wash, would put it in a saucepan roots downwards, then half fill the saucepan with cold water, put lid on and slowly bring to the boil, and simmer well until the flesh comes easily from the stalks. The roots are then cut off, and after straining the water off, put in a dish and cover with vinegar. This makes a very tasty dish. It is surprising the people who have never heard of this food, it is quite a delicacy, I can assure you.

I spent many happy days at Wells as a child, as Dad had a rubber tyred wagonette, which we would all pile into, with enough food packed for the day. Mother and Dad would sit in the front with us children facing each other on the side seats.

We would start about nine, and though only ten ten miles to go, we usually arrived about mid-day although we used to stop half way in a shady spot for a snack and a drink, also a trip behind a tree! Almost unbelievable to be able to do the same journey now in less' than thirty minutes.

On arrival the horse would be taken from the wagonette and tethered amongst the pines with his nose bag full of food, where he would be quite safe until we went home. (Incidentally, all the pine trees were

Then came Whitsun when we would be off to gather bluebells; the lovely early summer evening walks, avidly watching the rabbits playing leapfrog, then when a slight cough would send them scurrying back to their burrows, after a while as they gathered courage, they would timidly make another appearance, then came right out into the open playing once more, while we held our breath fearing to frighten them off again.

I wonder how many children in these times appreciate this wonderful world. They go everywhere by car or bus, when the beauty of nature passes them by, which is a great pity, as when they are older, what are their memories I wonder, not of glorious days paddling in trickling streams and catching tiny fish in their hands, but of seaside resorts, eating ice creams and sunbathing. All very nice, but at the same time it can be very boring, while nature does not come into it at all.

It is all speed, and progress, which is not always for the best. Folks seem to be forever searching for something, and know not what it is, when if they only took the time to stop, enjoy and appreciate God's wonderful world, there would be far happier people and less wars.

To sit in a garden on a lovely day in early summer, with the perfume of late lilacs, honeysuckle and early roses scenting the air, listening to the thrushes with their pretty song, calling to each other, gives me a sense of bliss. So true is the saying that "One is nearer to God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth".

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Looking back I realise how lucky we were to have so much to take up our time. Besides the Small Holding, Dad was a coal merchant, so many a time he would take me with him on his rounds to out-lying villages.

In those days the coal was delivered by horse and cart, and Dad had to travel several miles in one day. On our way back, Dad would let me drive. There was I sitting on the top of a coal sack and looking almost as black, but feeling on top of the world.

It is uncanny the sense some horses have, as in the latter years when cars began to make an appearance, this particular horse would draw to the side of the road when he heard the hooter, as my Dad was slightly deaf so he could not always hear them.

Arriving back home, Dad would take "Dick" (the horse) out of the cart, then after putting a halter over his neck, I would be allowed

to take him to our meadow just up the road, where I would slip off the halter, and away he would go, kicking up his heels end galloping around, to enjoy a few hours of freedom and green grass.

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About this time I would be twelve, I very well remember being asked if I would play the piano for the Cinema in the town, while the usual pianist had her holiday.

I was a bit dubious at first, but I managed, and quite enjoyed it, especially when Pathe Gazette came on, when I used to play the "Grand March", changing to dreamy music for love films.

At half time a man would go all round the Cinema, squirting from a long article made of tin which had a round shape at the end of it filled with some kind of air spray, it certainly was a lovely smell. A handle at the opposite end would be drawn in and out to pump the spray out. He usually came and pumped a couple of times over the curtains where I sat. I can remember using this type of spray killing flies, when I first married.

Three shillings a night, four nights a week was paid to me, I felt quite rich I can tell you, after playing for two weeks!

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How we used to look forward to Valentine's night, which sadly seems to have a different meaning today.

After dark a knock would be heard on the front door. My eldest sister would get half way up the hall, then would hang back, and say to me "You go". On the step would be a small parcel with one of our names on, then after several knocks we would each have received a chocolate whipped cream walnut (we were too excited to notice that Mother had disappeared).

Sometimes an old shoe would be on the step, then as one of us bent to pick it up it would be drawn away having an unseen piece of string attached to it. How excited we were, thinking it was Father Valentine.

As we grew older we would knock on our Grandparents door and leave a packet of tea and an ounce of tobacco, happy days!

I used to keep "Valentine" for our children, which they really loved; such a pity it has died out, although I do know that some folks have never heard of the knock on the door.

Another memory was the arrival of the Hot Cross Buns on Good Friday morning. My sisters and I would be sitting on the stairs chanting "One a penny, two a penny, Hot Cross Buns, come on, Mummy. Even they tasted different to the ones we get today.

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We always spent a fortnight at Scratby with our Great Grandparents in July, which we really looked forward to, as apart from being close to the sea, they lived next to a farm and granary.

There was also a huge orchard where ducks and hens used to roam at will. I often think of the dear old lady who lived at the farm (she was a Great Aunt to them). She used to take us down to the orchard and give us apples, with a warning not to let Uncle Ban see them (he was the farmer). She would also talk and sing to her chickens, which amused us very much. There was an old fashioned well just outside our bedroom window, and how we loved to watch the farm workers, early in the mornings, drawing water for the cattle, with one pail corning up while the other went down. You see, we had a pump at home, so this was a novelty for us. The clattering of those pails and the gentle mooing of the cows as they were being milked, is now just a lovely memory, but still very vivid.

Unfortunately, these old wells have since been done away with, but some can still be seen, used as a decoration in gardens, and very pretty they look too, with flowers trailing over them.

While at Scratby we always went to Chapel, as Grandad was the Minister. Their Chapel was always full, and during the sermon a fervent AMEN was often heard. What has gone wrong today, when so few people care about religion; it is heartbreaking to see the empty churches and chapels.

Again, as I see it, if people have no time to enjoy all nature's gifts, which are free to everyone, then that must surely be one reason why they have no time for God, for God all the loveliness that is there for our benefit, if only they would just pause long enough to think and behold.

I was confirmed at 14, and like children of today, I went to confirmation classes. Ours were held in the Rectory, where the Rector was quite an old Gentle man, to our tender years; he also had a very bad stammer.

One evening we were all listening to him as we sat in the lamplight

(no electricity then) where just opposite to me were hung red velvet curtains, which no doubt partitioned off another room.

This particular night we were warm and cosy and yes, drowsy, as the Rector's voice was very monotonous. I was almost asleep, when I happened to glance over to the curtains which suddenly parted and a face peeped through. I was transfixed, but before I could say anything, the face nodded and smiled at me; I then realized it was the Rector's wife! The curtains closed again, but by then I was wide awake and I must admit getting fidgety. I was glad when it was time to go home.

Whenever I see red velvet curtains now, I inevitably think of my confirmation classes

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Progress has come a long way as regards toilets. Children now would be horrified to have to use the kind that we had to, which were always outside the house and often down the garden. If we needed to go after dark, there was quite a palaver with my sisters as to who would go with who.

First a candle stick was found and lit, then gingerly opening the back door, two of us, hand in hand would set off for the W.C. carefully holding one hand round the lighted candle, which very often blew out. Then we would scuttle off indoors as fast as we could to get the candle lit again. What a boon a torch would have been.

As for toilet paper, we would cut newspaper into squares, then make a bundle of them: afterwards we would pierce a hole right through them, then tie a piece of string through that, these would then be ready to hang in the closet. A good thing the print did not come off the paper as it does today!

Talking of cutting paper, many an evening I have cut strips to make fire lighters, or rather they were used to put in the fire to light Dad's pipe. The paper would be twirled round and twisted at the bottom, then put in vases on the mantelpiece. These were called pipe lighters. We passed many an evening away doing these little jobs.

Friday nights was when the night cart came round the village to empty the closets.

A short, tubby little man (I can picture him now) had a small cart and a white pony. He was the night cart man, and had two pails hanging on the back of his cart. Woe betide anyone who was out late the night he was around. We always had our windows closed you can be sure.

Progress in this direction was a real necessity. It is amazing really, that the health of children was so good. Maybe it was the healthy out-door life that helped, when today's children spend more time cooped up indoors, watching the television, and always seem to have caught a virus or bug of some sort.

I certainly appreciate much that progress has done for the people, at the same time, it has made folks lazy. Where we used always to find something to do, or amuse ourselves, today children want to be amused and soon get bored.

We hear people talking of the "bad old days" but compared to the end of the 1990s, people were far more contented and enjoyed their work, inspite of the long hours and little money. In fact, the more money they have today, seems to bring more greed and dissatisfaction. There must be a moral there somewhere!

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Christmas must certainly not be left out, as it meant so much more to us in those days. The excitement of Father Christmas coming down the chimney, having first written to him, and thrown the note up the chimney, to tell him what we would like him to bring us.

Christmas eve, the carol singers would come round carrying their lanterns, as there was no lighting in the village, only the gas lights nearer to the town, which we would love to watch as the gas lighter lit them as we came home from school.

Around seven at night, after a lovely was in the old tin bath by the fireside, we would don a nice white linen nightie, all nicely warmed, then armed each with a pillow case, with our names pinned on, off to bed we would go.

When we were quite young we had very long stockings (not unlike the fishermen wear) to hang on our beds for Father Christmas to fill. These would have an orange in the toe, and a few nuts, also a tiny Christmas stocking, which had inside a small tin dustpan, a whistle, a few transfers and a decoration of paper, that would be turned into a fan, which we would play with for hours.

As we grew older, there would be an overall (which we always wore at meals) handkerchieve a 6d box of chocolates, a small bottle of white rose perfume, and a reading book, and sometimes a lovely white linen pinafore, which mother always kept impeccably starched and ironed, for to wear when we went to school. Then at the top of the pillow case would either be a doll or a nice game.

We were always awake by 6 am, then the four of us would troop into Mum and Dad's room carrying our cases. The youngest would get into bed between Mum and Dad, then we would get into the bottom of the bed, having brought our pillows with us.

One at a time we would see what we had got, leaving Dad's stocking until the last, which Mum had especially prepared for our amusement.

Out would come an extra large onion, a sausage roll and a pigs tail, tied with a large bow of ribbon, how we used to laugh.

Incidentally Dad used to rear pigs for killing so that was how Mum got the tails (all scrubbed and clean of course).

After breakfast, too excited to eat, (as the tree had been decorated while we were asleep) we found plenty to do while Mum was cooking the goose. My Grandfather always brought up geese for Christmas, while Nanna used to pluck and dress them. Incidentally she gave me two pillows and a bolster filled with goose down when I married. I can well remember her saying "My poor fingers", which must certainly have been tender after plucking three or four geese.

When the Christmas pudding was served, we would carefully fork through it, to see if we could find a three-penny piece or a charm, and shame on us, if none were found, we would leave the pudding, although Dad usually managed to secret one in when we were not looking.

In the evening we would all sit round the piano singing carols, while Mother played. Christmas day was definitely for the family.

Boxing day would start a week of parties, with ours being the first, then for four or five nights following, we would go to different parties given by our friends, having wonderful times by playing Postman's Knock, there was a jolly Miller and musical parcel.

The Sunday previous to Christmas day we would act the Nativity in our Village Church.

Unfortunately oranges, nuts, mince-pies and chickens are now an everyday occurrence and so get taken for granted and all the pleasure taken away as when we only saw them at Christmas.

In later years as my family grew up, they too would come into our bedroom with their pillow cases, as I had done before them, right until they themselves were married. Our first Christmas without them seemed very strange, but we still have the memories.

PENNY LOVE

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