

Gladys Steer (nee Fletcher)

Born in Hayfield, Derbyshire 1922

Died in Bunbury, West Australia 1992

*Gladys was the daughter of Herbert & Mary Elizabeth Fletcher.
Her siblings were Beatrice, James and Herbert who died in infancy.*

*This document was created by her eldest son, Bruce Fletcher, from
hand-written notes & sketches which she began in January, 1987.
They were intended for her grand-daughter, Kylie, who was about to
travel to the USA on a Rotary Exchange Scholarship.*

January 14th '87

I saw this book in the supermarket – it was big – cheap – and empty! So, I splurged and decided to write in it EVERY DAY while Kylie is away in America and then she can read it when she is back home again. Don't know what will go into these pages but I'll keep on writing and see what happens!

Last night I went to the committee meeting at the Rep and Phoebe (cat) came with me again – she doesn't know that cats aren't supposed to follow people and sit in on meetings – nobody told her that she's a cat – she thinks she's a Dog! Anyway – in the minutes that I wrote I named all those who were present and added “and Phoebe” so she's an ex-officio member of the Repertory Club committee! What a crazy cat – we always seem to have family pets who don't behave as they ought to do! I well remember our dog Noogy (Noog being a backward Goon!). He used to follow us when wasn't supposed to and I'll never the Sunday that he followed Isobel and me to church – at the Cathedral no less! He lurked behind bushes and in gateways in the fond hope that he was “invisible”! When we went into church I was convinced that he wouldn't come in there – but he did and as Tib & I knelt down she whispered “*Don't get up yet Mum, Noogy's coming up the aisle looking for us!*”

We knelt there for ages – I'll bet people thought we were terribly devout! The damn dog walked straight up to the chancel steps and looked at the beautiful carved pillar and I thought “*Oh no! He wouldn't, would he?*”

I've never prayed so hard in my life! “*Please God don't let him – not on that lovely post and the blue carpet!*”

Anyway, he didn't and someone took him outside while we knelt there trying to look as if we'd never seen him before in our lives.

Then we heard him barking and growling and he had the Bishop backed up at the West door and wouldn't let him and his procession come in! I always have a sneaking suspicion that old +Ralph (plus Ralph) gave him a smart prod with his crook because there was a sharp yelp and then a long silence!

On the way home, I was breathing fire and planning some heavy, un-Christian things to do to him and – there he was – lying on the verandah as if he'd never left the house! Good thing that no-one in the congregation knew he was our dog or we might have got a smart prod from +Ralph as well!

I must post off a parcel to USA for Kylie soon – I’ve made some red, fluffy mitts and a beret to match – it looks so BIG! Like a red, hairy cartwheel! She’ll be able to drape it around her like a shawl. Hope big, floppy, hairy hats are the “In Thing” over there.

Thurs 15th Jan

Kylie’s big day! I spoke to her on the phone last night – her mum and Dad were taking her out to dinner and the Boardwalk in Freo. She flies out at 6:10am – I’ll be thinking of her and wishing her God Speed at that time. Liz will be taking snaps at the airport and I’ll be glad to get one. Photos are such a great way of making (or keeping) Family History – I brought back lots of old photos from England in ’83 – they were all the ones that my mother had kept and none of the family wanted them! I can’t think why, but thank goodness they didn’t destroy them, I had some enlargements made from some of me that were taken when I was 2½ - one of them taken by my Uncle Wilf at the side of Herbert’s grave just after he died! What a weird idea to take a snap of a small girl in such a weird location!?

Incidentally, Herbert mentioned above was my little brother who died at 1 year old and, although I can’t recall what he looked like – one of my very earliest memories was of being in the kitchen in the Kinder Road house with Jim and Beat – Jim would have been about 6 years old and Beat 4 so I would have been just over 2 years old. Herbert was in a big gray pram (it was higher than my head) and Jim was holding the handle and rocking the pram and singing “Rock-a-bye baby” and the pram tipped up! Baby didn’t fall however as he was strapped in, but he yelled like mad and Beat was screaming hysterically, “*You’ve killed him our Jim, you’ve killed him!*”

Of course, I got involved in all this carry-on and I remember running to the back door and shouting “*Mam! Mam! Our Jim’s killed the baby!*” and seeing my mother running out of Mary Jepson’s shop – she had a black shawl round her shoulders and her was in a big “bun” on the back of her neck and she was running and saying “*Eeh dearie me! What’s up? What’s he done?*”

I don’t remember any more so what happened to Jim & Beat (and me!) I don’t know! I often wonder what DID happen? I remember that our living room/kitchen had a stone-flagged floor on which were big “rag rugs” which my Dad used to make from strips of cloth which he pegged into large pieces of hessian sacks with a Rug Peg. The rugs were all colours in stripes and they were made from old jackets, shirts and things like that. Dad always kept the cast-off

railway uniforms which he wore to work as a signaller on the old LNER railway at Hayfield. The buttons on these clothes were always carefully cut off by my mother and were put into the Button Tin which was kept on the mantelshelf over the fireplace. The Button Tin was bright red and shaped like a shield – it had gold squiggles all over it and a picture of Britannia on one side and a picture of King Edward VII on the other and “God Save The King” all round the base. It was a favourite game on cold, rainy days to have this tin and empty the buttons onto the kitchen table and make patterns with them or sort them all out into neat piles. I remember trying to count them – I never got far because I’d only just leaned to count and got a bit confused after 10! I asked my Dad once how many buttons there were and I can hear him now, saying “*Eeh love, ah don’t really know – let’s have a look*”. Then he pushed them all about on the table and said “*Reight to then! There’s 5,000 and 2 left over!*” And I believed him! Well any number over 10 was a complete mystery to me and – anyway – I was a very gullible sort of child and believed everything that was told to me! My brother and sister used to tell me some really tall stories and I accepted every one with wide-eyed wonder.

One thing just came into my mind – I don’t know how old I was but my Mam told me that if I said a swear-word my tongue would drop off! I couldn’t resist trying this out and so I whispered “*damn*” and waited for the squelch as my tongue hit the floor – what a relief when it didn’t, but I spent a terrified few seconds waiting for something to happen!

Referring back to my Dad’s rag rugs; my mother had made Beat and I red velvet dresses with lace collars and cuffs – they were to wear at “t’Sermons” which was the name always used for our Primitive Methodist Anniversary Sunday each year. All the other Chapels in the village used the same expression and so there were “t’Wesleyan Sermons”, “t’Bethel Sermons”, “t’Zion Sermons” and “t’Little Hayfield Sermons”. Believe me there were as many Chapels as there were pubs in our village.

Anyway, to get back to our red velvet frocks – we paraded proudly in front of my Dad to show off these prized garments and he said with a big smile “*By heck! Them’ll look right smart in one o’me rugs*” but mother didn’t appreciate this joke at all and went all quiet and thin-lipped and said “*I hope you’ll let ‘em wear ‘em a time or two before you tek to ‘em wi’t scissors?*” Beat and I got the giggles and Mam said “*Come on, let’s have ‘em and I’ll put ‘em away till t’Sermons – if your father can keep his hands off his blessed rugs and scissors.*” Mother wasn’t blessed with much of a sense of humour at any time!

Still, I don’t suppose she had much to laugh about in those days – there no household labour-saving gadgets. On washdays (Monday, never any other day) a

fire was lit under the big copper in the scullery – when the water was hot it was put into the dolly-tub with lots of carbolic soap which was grated or cut into thin slices to melt easily – then, after the boiler was refilled with buckets of water from the cold water tap (the only tap) over the brown “slopstone” sink the clothes were put into the dolly-tub and a posser was used to pound them up and down. The posser was a sturdy wooden object like a small stool with five legs which were rounded at the ends so as not to tear the clothes – it had a long handle coming up from the middle with a cross-piece at the top which was held firmly while the whole thing was pounded up and down and round. Then the clothes were lifted up one at a time with a big “boiler stick” – they were all steaming hot and had to be held with the stick while they were put through the mangle which had big wooden rollers and a huge iron screw on top to tighten or loosen the rollers and it had to be turned by a big iron wheel with a wooden handle on the side of the mangle. While all this was going on the white wash was boiling away in the copper and that had to be mangled – THEN everything had to be rinsed with cold water and mangled again! No wonder my Mam was short-tempered on Mondays. Only one thing I liked about Monday was the dinner (lunch). When we came home from school for lunch there was a big frying pan on the fire with all the left-over vegetables and gravy from Sunday’s roast dinner- these were dished up with slices of cold roast meat and lots of home-made bread and butter – I can taste it now as I write! Then, on rare occasions when Mam was in a good mood (usually dry, sunny days with a breeze to dry the washing) Mam would say “*There’s been no time for a pudding so you can have a ha’porth* (that being short for a halfpenny-worth which was the equivalent of half a cent!) *of toffees from Mary Jepson’s when you come home from school.*”

Well that was a treat – to go into the shop and look at all those jars of sweets – oh the agony of deciding what to buy! Perhaps a Sherbet Sucker, some Caramel Whirls (no, you only got about 4 of those for a ½d). I usually ended up with either Dolly Mixtures or “Lamb chops, green peas and potatoes” which were tiny marzipan sweets shaped like lamb chops with bright green peas and the potatoes were dusted with cocoa to make them look real. These were good to set out on my doll’s tea-set and put on the little table for the dolls. My tea-set was made of tin painted in patterns of bilious greens and reds until one Christmas morning when we went up to my Grandma’s to give them their presents – there was a white teaset, a pottery one with gold rims on the plates & cups and a teapot, a milk jug and sugar bowl! I treasured that for years.

I’m writing this on Friday night (16th Jan). I didn’t mean to write much but I got quite carried away like some female Albert Facey and wrote 4 pages!

You'll notice that where I'd written the name "Jim" I've altered it to "James" which was what he was always called until he was in his early teens – my mother called him "James" all her life – he was named after my Grandad who was always "James" at home but "Jimmy" to his work-mates and cronies.

Sat 17th. Liz rang me this a.m. to say that you (Kylie) had arrived safely at Homeworth – she told me about the journey and that you went to the Pizza Parlour and went shopping! What stamina!! Blizzard expected today!!? Glad you're there and not me! Brrr!

I've just listened to the TV weather report and it's going to be 28° in Bunbury tomorrow. Think of Gran as she potters about in the garden. I have to fix up a new hose at the front of the house because some rotten so-and-so stole my hose AND all the fittings – anyway the loss of the actual hose wasn't too bad because it was very old and had a couple of leaks but I had to buy all the fittings as well and it's cost me about \$20! I hope the hose falls to bits when they try to use it!

I've been looking at this page and my writing is DREADFUL! I think that my brain is moving faster than my pen!? Anyway, I'll keep carrying with all my meanderings through the past (I've just checked my Lotto coupon but it wasn't my turn this week – ah well, perhaps next week?)

Still Saturday night and I'll keep on going until 8:30 when I'm going to watch "Superman" – there was a "Superman II" last week and this is the sequel. You know me and how much I like sci-fi films and stories!

Thinking about snow, took me back to Dad's Rag Rugs! I remember sitting on one of them in front of the fire and playing games with Jim and Beat – my Dad joined in sometimes and I always remember one game he taught us. The idea was to cut pictures out of the newspapers or magazines and put them all on a page to make a picture. The actual name of this game was "AD-O-CLIPS" but I always thought that it was "HADDOCK-LIPS"! I could never see how fish had anything to do with sticking cut-out pictures on a paper and it was years before I found out the right name! But it was so cosy sitting in front of a roaring fire with the curtains drawn and the gas-light lit – yes we had gas lighting until about 1931! The light in the kitchen was a double light with frosted glass shades and, when lit, they hissed! What with that noise and the hissing of the coal in the fire it must have been like the snake house at the zoo!

The lights in the parlour (it was not called The Parlour but always referred to as "t'front room") and was only used on Sundays and other special times such

as Christmas. That room had a central light and two wall lights, they had long fluted shades with frilly edges like the central light. The furniture in there was VERY grand! The two chairs (I was going to draw a picture but not enough room) [Drawings added later]]



they were green “plush” with red roses and yellow leaves and the high backs were plush as well but with heavily carved, dark shiny wood frames on the back and on the arms. The sofa was in the same materials but shaped like a chaise-longue and the “plus” stuff was very itchy to bare legs! There was a sideboard made of dark wood with a big mirror at the back with little carved shelves and brackets all over the place to hold all the little ornaments and wim-wams that were very carefully dusted each week. The windows had lace curtains looped back with green ribbon velvet and long green velvet curtains on wooden rings and poles. We thought it very grand and it was quite an occasion to sit in t’Front Room! Oh yes, there was a round table with a green plush cloth with bobbles all round it and a big brass plant pot with some spiky green plant had pride of place on it! Doesn’t it sound a marvellous sight!?

The open fire had a green tile surround and hearth with a carved wooden mantelshelf and a brass “companion set” in the hearth with a poker, a little shovel and brush hanging from a fancy brass stand – talk about “House Beautiful”! But d’you Kylie I can SMELL that room now! A mixture of smoke, wax polish and faintly musty smell from being closed up so often, the smoky smell was a mixture of coal smoke and my Dad’s pipe - he smoked “Bruno Fine Pipe Mixture”, it was in a yellow tin and we children had a strict roster as to who had the empty tin each time.

Thursday’s were Baking Days when the bread was baked – pies and cakes were made and always a “Fatcake” each. These were from the leftover pastry and filled with currants, sugar, a dab of butter and a pinch of spice. They were delicious! Mam’s Rock Cakes weren’t so popular – very rocky they were! I remember my Grandma saying to my Mam “*Tha’ knows Mary, tha’ might have a light hand wi’ a bit of dough and pastry but thy Rock Buns tek some thinkin’ on*”.

I know that when we were coming home from school on Baking Days we used to hope that Mam had been too busy to make Rock Buns – but they were

always there on the table and we were told “*They’re cool now so you can have one each – but only one mind you!*” So, we used to say a suitable “thanks” and take them outside to eat – the birds got most of them but I always ate the currants first. Thank heaven we were only allowed one!

There was a baker’s shop in the village which made the most delicious little cakes and bread rolls and things like that but it was thought to be the sign of a lazy and spendthrift housewife to BUY bread and not to have a Baking Day! However, we did sometimes get a bun from Brennan’s bakery! There were light-as-air sponge ones with pink icing and a cherry on top, chocolate ones with chocolate icing and currant ones with cinnamon on top – all cost 1 penny each (about ½ cent). Compared to my Mam’s Rocky Buns they were sheer bliss. Compared to my Mam’s Rocky Buns even a dry crust was sheer bliss! Poor Mam! I think she used to make them every week with dogged determination that, just once, they’d turn out right!

I remember Jim telling me once after we were all grown up that if he and his wife, Margaret, were going to go and see my mother and Dad, Margaret used to say “*Let’s go on Wednesday – if we go after that there’ll be Rock Cakes on t’table at teatime*”. Poor Mam! I wonder if she ever got ‘em right!

One thing that Mam did well was to sing! She had a beautiful contralto voice and used to sing solo in the choir and at concerts in the Chapel. I was dragooned into the choir when I was about 11 or 12 years old – I was put in with the contraltos as it was thought by the choirmaster that “*I’d make a good alto voice*”, I don’t know if he was right but I’ve sung contralto in choirs ever since then (54 years to be exact!)

We used to give lots of concerts and social evenings at the Chapel. I was many things in these Terpsichorean Ventures – I’ve been a moonbeam, a fairy, a gollywog, a gypsy fortune teller – THAT was my Big Moment! I had four solos to sing, two duets and a Very Operatic Quartet! I was “Mother Monica” and, at 15 years old, I thought I was headed for the Big Time!?

Mon 19th

I’ve been thinking about those rock buns again! Mam cooked in coal ovens (either side of the fire) and the ovens had to be stoked up to get them hot enough for the bread so – if the rock buns were put in too hot an oven they burnt and if the oven was too cool they didn’t rise! Mam never seemed to get her timings right, even the bread had a rather black crust sometimes! If it did we were allowed

to leave the black bits on our plates. Mind you there were most times when the loaves came out just right and then it was a feast fit for a king.

One time I'll always remember was when I was watching my Mam knead the dough for the bread – I could only just see over the top of the table so I must have been about 3 or 4 years old. She (Mam) had her hair in coiled plaits on each side of her head and her cheeks were all pink from the heat of the fire and I thought she was just beautiful! I ran to her and clutched her round the knees and said “*Oh Mam, I do love you!*” and I really meant it! She – quite gently but firmly – pushed me aside and said “*Dunna be so soft, can't you see I'm busy!*” I'll never forget the way I felt! It wasn't “the thing” to show any emotion – if you did you were “soft” and I'm sure that's why I don't find it so easy to show my affection easily like you do. We only ever had a small kiss on the cheek on Christmas Day and on our birthdays, so you couldn't say we were an outgoing lot when it came to showing emotion. But we weren't unique in that respect – it was a fact of life for most of the North Country people then and I suppose it still is in some places even to this day. I don't blame Mam and Dad because it was the way that they were brought up.

Wed 21st

Well, Alan Bond's boat is out of the Cup so it's up to Kevin Parry and Kookaburra III to stop Denis Conner and Stars & Stripes from taking it back to US of A! Wonder if he will? Though I admit that I'm a leetle bit fed up of all the Cup to-do! It might sound un-patriotic but – oh heck – they DO GO ON about it all !!

Thurs 22. Rang you mum this arvo and she gave me all the news from your phone call – glad you're with such a nice family – they seem to be spoiling you from what I hear!

I've been reading an article in “Reader's Digest” about “Odd Household Hints”. One of them really tickled my vulgar fancy and I had a giggle about it. This is what it said: “*If you have a nasty smell in your bathroom just strike a match in there and the smell will go.*” Well!! With the nasty smells that **I** can get in **my** bathroom I wouldn't **dare** to strike a match! Not only would the smell go but the whole b****y bathroom would disintegrate! Talk about home-made

flame-throwers! Don't think I'll be game to try that Household Hint – I'll stay with "Glen-20"! It works (even for me)!

The toilet that we had when I was a kid was quite a place – not only was it an Outside job but it was a "start-off-early-and-take-a-cut-lunch" job! When I was very little I remember I had a green enamel potty in the scullery and that was for use after dark or in inclement weather! I remember one year when we had a heavy snowfall my Dad had to dig a path up to the toilet – he must have been in a bit of a rush because Mam said "*By gum! Yer Dad isn't 'arf mekking that snow fly – ah think he's in a bit of a 'urry this mornin'*". I wonder if he made it in time?

My Grandma's loo was a real treat to visit! It meant a stroll through her garden past the Easter Lilies, through the roses and the Herb Garden – quite a fragrant affair it was! Her Herb Garden was quite well-known in the village and she had a Herbal Remedy for every ailment known to man! We got dosed with her potions if we were at all off-colour. I remember drinking Hyssop Tea when I was feverish – ugh! Horrible! I'll never forget when I first heard the Bible Reading about the Crucifixion where it said that a Roman Soldier gave Jesus a sponge soaked in Hyssop! I thought, "*Ooh poor Jesus – fancy being on a cross and having to drink Hyssop!*" It seemed to be the quintessence of cruelty!

Then there was Turkey Rhubarb which I suspect was another name for Quinine because when you put this dry bit of stuff in your mouth it felt as if your entire mouth – teeth and all – shrivelled up to the size of pin-head. Yuk!

You know, Kylie, with all these bits of news being dredged up from some corner of my mind (I wonder where they stay to be so well-recalled at will?) you'll have not just ONE book but a set like "Encyclopaedia Britannica", with a special bookshelf to hold them all. What a thought! Fancy having to plough your way through a few of these!

Another Remedy of Grandma's was used when we had a sore that didn't heal quickly – a sore knee from falling over or something like that – then we were sent to Grandma's to display our un-healed wound and she'd say "*Reight – we'll try a bit of mould!*" Then she'd produce her special piece of cheese from the pantry and scrape off the mould on to a piece of clean bandage and fasten it in place over the sore. It worked too! Well, what's penicillin made from? (Gran was very *avant garde* with her treatments). I remember, when I went to the UK in '83, Jim and Margaret and I were talking about old remedies of Grandma's and Jim mentioned the "Penny Cough Stuff" that my mother made each winter (from a recipe of Grandma's of course) and it was delicious! We used to be sent to the chemist's shop in the village – it was a real old shop with big glass bottles in the window full of green and red and purple liquids, and all the ingredients for

prescriptions were kept in tall rows and rows of little wooden drawers, each with a white china knob and a white card with the name of each drug written on it. The name of the chemist was Mr Thomas Livesley but, as he stocked a lot of “Rexall” products he was always known as Tommy Rexall. We used to be sent there with a list of items written out and a shilling (10 cents) with the instruction, “*Slip down to Tommy Rexall’s wi’ these*”. We had a bout 6 little glass bottles for some of the ingredients which were liquids and the rest were each wrapped in white paper and sealed with red sealing-wax. All these things were mixed up according to Grandmas’ recipe and the resulting, tasty concoction was a thick, black liquid which was added, by the teaspoon, to a cup of hot water and sipped – the fumes went up the nose, made the eyes water like mad, made the forehead perspire and the chest and stomach really glow! It was like drinking a Vick’s Vapour Rub! Anyway, Jim got the recipe from my mother about 1980 and he thought he’d make some although he knew it wouldn’t be bought “*by the pennorth*” (pennyworth) any more. He took his list to the chemist in Bedford and he said that the poor chap nearly had a coronary! Most of the things would have had to be signed for in the Poison’s Register, while one or two were forbidden by the Trade Practices Act (or something like that). There was Laudanum, Paregoric, Horehound, Myrrh, Tincture of Belladonna and all sorts of illegal goodies that one wasn’t supposed to purchase. All we used to do was “*Slip down to Tommy Rexall’s*” with 6 glass bottles and a shilling and lisp our childish request over the counter “*Me Mam’s mekkin’ cough stuff Mr Livesley and can she have the things on this bit o’ paper?*” And we got ‘em, just like that! No wonder a spoonful of the stuff put us to sleep for 12 hours! It’s a wonder we ever woke up again. But it **DID** taste lovely!

Frid 23rd Rang your Mum to tell her about an Art Exhibition in Busselton this weekend when they’ll be down there – thought that she and Dad would be interested. She told me that she’d talked with you last night and I believe you’re going to a Ball (?) this weekend – I think she said that it was a “Winter Sports Ball”. What do you do? Ski round the floor? She also said that when you had a roast dinner on Sunday the other kids had a Peanut Butter Sandwich!! On their side plate!! How peculiar! How yukky! Did you have one?

One yearly event that I absolutely adored was our School Concert – each year the Infants did a little play – then the older ones did a full Musical or a Drama – we had one or two good actors and actresses amongst our loot and I remember one girl called Doreen Cudworth who always had a leading role. She was Portia

when we did “The Merchant of Venice” – I was Bassanio! I remember I was resplendent in blue satin knee breeches, blue satin cape, frilly shirt, white silk stockings, silver-buckled shoes and a wide black hat with sweeping plumes! The judge was Arthur Pycroft, a studious youth with very large and thick specs.

We did “The Bishop’s Candlesticks” one year and I can still remember all the first page of dialogue between Persome (Sylvia Poritt), Marie (Dorothy Swindells) and Monsignor the Bishop (our own Doreen Cudworth again!).

One year when I was about 6 years old I was chosen to be a fairy – one of three who had to float on stage singing “Winkyn, Blinkyn and Nod” (I was probably Nod I should think). We were to wear silver lamé dresses (it was called silver tissue and cost 6d a yard!) with silver wings and a wand with a big star! Then we found that neither Beat – who had a part in the Senior Play – nor I could be in it as our family had to go to my cousin Mary Fletcher’s wedding at Hyde. I was so upset to miss out on my Big Appearance!

Cousin Mary was the daughter of Auntie Martha and Uncle Sam; Auntie Martha was my Dad’s sister and they lived in Hyde in Cheshire. There was Annie Fletcher and the youngest of the family was George who had silver-rimmed glasses and large buck teeth! Annie was very plain and thin with short, straight hair and Mary and Nellie were the pretty ones with curly hair and curly bosoms. I was so sure that brides always wore flowing white veils and long frilly dresses that I was so disappointed to find Mary dressed in coffee-coloured lace and crepe with a big floppy bronze-coloured hat with a huge rose on the side. Annie was the bridesmaid with Nellie and they wore satin dresses. Annie’s was blue and Nellie’s pale green – their hats were what were known as “cloche” hats – looked a bit like a plant pot or a Roman helmet. I don’t know what I wore except that I had a pair of new shoes – black patent ones which hurt like mad and I didn’t dare complain because I’d been told off when I said, before we left home to catch the train to Hyde, “*Oh Mam, these shoes do hurt my toes when I walk*” and got the stern answer “*You said nowt in t’shop when bought ‘em – them shoes cost good money so you’ll just have to break ‘em in!*” I did wish that I was at the School Concert wearing my fairy frock and my wings AND my white shoes that didn’t hurt my toes!

Sat 24th Jan. I lay in bed last night and so many things popped into my mind that I got up and wrote a list to remind me of them all.

The part of our School Concerts which I liked the best of all was the prize-giving at the end of the concert when all those who’d done the best in the Term Exams (or in some special subject) received books.

I was always one of the lucky ones as I was nearly always top in the exams; I don't know if it was because I was smart or whether the rest of the class was "thicker" than me? I often got prizes for English Dictation, Drawing, Essay writings (they were called "English Composition") but NEVER EVER for maths! Brother Jim was the one who always collected those particular ones. The atmosphere of excitement about the Concert; all my precious new books to be read (They were usually "Schoolgirl's Annual", "Stories of Adventures for Girls", and so on) and the fact that it was only a few days to Christmas and we were on holiday for TWO WHOLE WEEKS made me quite euphoric and my Dad said once as we walked home from the concert "*Nay lass, steady on a bit of else we'll have to fasten thee to t'floor!*" because I never stopped chattering on and was skipping about the footpath with the sheer joy of it all! Mam and Dad didn't give praise easily but they always seemed so pleased when we got prizes.

Poor Beat never seemed to get many prizes – she was the one who always seemed to be 2nd or 3rd but not often 1st. I know that one year when she was about 8 or 9 she won a prize for handwriting and one for English Composition and all the way home she kept saying "*Hey our Gladys, I've got two books this time – did you know?*" Well, of course I knew! Hadn't we all clapped like mad when she went up to receive the blessed things?

Another exciting "Book Time" was our Annual Prize Day at Sunday School. There the prizes were awarded according to the number of "Attendance Marks" one accumulated. Needless to say, Jim, Beat and me were always up at the top of that list because we weren't allowed to miss a single Sunday all the year round! We were given a book catalogue to bring hom to study so that we could choose our book and the top of the price range was 7s/6d (\$1.50) and that was the value of the book we could choose. That was quite a big price for a book in those days and, as there were quite a lot in the 7s/6d range we spent days of agonizing over our final choice! I distinctly remember the very first S School prize that I ever received – I must have been about 3½ because we were "invited" to start S School at 3 years old. Invited!? Our family was marched into the S School as soon as they'd finished singing "Happy Birthday" when we were three! The book was called "Sunny Days" and had a picture on the front of a little girl in a blue dress with a big blue ribbon bow in her hair; she was sitting under a tree with a big dog lying beside her. We children must have been sitting at the front of the church and we went to sit with our parents after receiving our prizes. I well remember clutching this book and toiling up to the pews at the back. Each row of seats was one step higher than the preceding one and, to me, it seemed a long, long way up to Mam and Dad's pew. I remember clambering up all those steps with this big book and shouting "Hey Dad! Look what I've got!" I wondered why

everybody was laughing but didn't realise that they were laughing at me! (So I joined in all the laughing too!)

Sunday 25th I've remembered some more details about cousin Mary's wedding – the chap she married was called Billy Lomax, he was very tall with slicked-back wavy hair and a thin black moustache and very white teeth. He was given to wearing pale grey suits with a jacket that nipped in at the waist and very wide legs on the pants, a pearl grey trilby, and a dark blue shirt and shiny black shoes with very pointy toes! He must have looked like a member of the Mafia! Perhaps he was for all I know – he always seemed to have plenty of money to splash around when they came to see us at Hayfield.

Thurs 29th I've been rather rattling on about my early years Kylie, but they are such very vivid memories that it seems a pity to let these things be lost. The world was a much quieter and peaceful place 50-60 years ago and because we lived in a quiet little village up in the Peak District in Derbyshire we were not affected by the happenings in the Big, Wide World outside. I always felt safe and secure and Hayfield was, as far as I was concerned, the centre of the Universe! It sounds a bit silly now because I've done so many things in my life – some I've regretted and some I'm proud of – but they're done and things go on! I'm sure I'll do lots more silly things before I'm finished! I might even do something of which I can be proud, you never know do you?

It must sound very strange to you that we had no TV, very primitive radios, wind-up gramophones, black & white silent films, very few cars (in our village). Dr Lynch, the one and only GP in Hayfield had a Silver Ghost Rolls Royce – I thought it very grand then – it was a big square thing with a collapsible hood and wire wheels but it didn't make as much noise as some of the others in the place.

Just across from us, next to Mary Jepson's sweet shop lived Mrs Booth with her two teenage daughters Beryl and Margery (I think that there was a Mr Booth but I can't remember him at all). I think they were "Distressed Gentlefolk" who had fallen on hard times (it was during the Depression of late 1920s). They were very well spoken and the two girls were always well-dressed and I thought they were gorgeous. Margery had a very ordinary sort of boy-friend who worked on the Railway I think but Beryl (whose name was always given the local pronunciation) was called "Burl" like "Burl" Ives! She had a very glamorous boy-

friend who always called for her in a red Lagonda sports car which made more noise than a Boeing 707. He was the only son of the owners of Slack's Paper Mill. This Paper Mill employed a great many of the local people and the Slack family were very much "looked up to". Their mill was at the bottom of a road whose official name was "Swallowhouse Lane" but I've never heard it called anything other than "Down t'Slacks" and it's still called that to this day.

"Burl" eventually married her wealthy boy-friend and there was a very posh wedding. And I remember seeing Burl leave their house to go to the church in Slack-the-Eldest's Rolls Royce (a dark red, gleaming monstrosity). She wore a pale blue outfit, all floating bits of lace and silk with a blue gauzy hat which fluttered in the breeze like a flag. Sister Margery was the bridesmaid in pale yellow, also with a fluttery hat.

Frid 30th The main source of employment for the people of the village, apart from Slack's Paper Mill, were the textile mills of the CPA (Calico Printer's Association). We were in close proximity to Manchester (27 kms) which had long been the cotton centre of England. They used to export much of their raw cotton from America, but when the Civil War broke out over there in the 1860s then they had to seek elsewhere for their raw materials and they looked to India for new stoks, not very successfully.

Long before that – before there were any mills – the weavers used to work at home. They had looms set up in their houses and there are many weaver's cottages still in Hayfield. They were 3-storey houses and the looms were up on the top floor to catch as much of the daylight as possible because the only source of light they had were candles or paraffin lamps (we call them kerosene lamps). No gas or electricity! The entire family had to help – even very young children – and, even when the looms were eventually brought together into cotton mills, young children of 8 and 9 years old were employed as "part-timers" until Lord Shaftesbury brought in a Bill in Parliament to stop this practice of young children having to work (about 1890 or so, I think) [added later – The Shops and Factories Act 1901 was the eventual outcome of Lord Shaftesbury's efforts]. The age was then raised to 12 years old and both your great-grandmother and your great-great-grandmother started work as "part-timers" in the Clough Mill at Little Hayfield when they were (Grandma 14? And great-grandma 12 yrs). I have the copy of my mother's permit to work as a part-timer – 4 hours at the mill in the morning and 3 hours at the Elementary School in the afternoon. The mills were both for the weaving of cotton and others for the dyeing and printing of cotton and other

materials. There were the Wood printworks – right opposite my Dad’s signal box – Birch Vale printworks, Strines printworks and, originally Kinder printworks which closed after World War 1 but there are still traces of it in what is now called the “Puddlefield” (don’t ask me why). My Grandad Dunn came to work at Kinder in the Dyehouse and met Grandma while he was working there. He lost his right hand in an accident there just after they married. I well remember that he wore a sort of leather cover which strapped over his wrist when he went to work but, for high days and holidays he had a “hand” in black leather glove and it was to us children a sign of an Occasions when we could say “Grandad’s got his hand on!”. He worked right up until he was 65 and it must have been very hard because it was heavy labour to work in those places. I used to be highly impressed when I could watch him wsh himself at the kitchen “slopstone” because he took off this leather contraption from his wrist and washed the pink “stump” which used to get very sort. I used to boast to the other kids at school that “*My Grandad can take four of his teeth right out an’ he can take his hand off too!*”. I thought he was so clever and took it all quite for granted that he should do this!

Another treat that I remember well in Grandma’s kitchen was on the day when she made her Toffee! Her butter toffee and treacle toffee were always in great demand and it was a great source of excitement to watch all the ingredients being put into the big iron saucepan (that was NEVER used for anything else!). I had to stand on the third step of the stairs which went up from the kitchen near the gas stove, to be able to peer into the pan and smell the beautiful smell of toffee and watch it bubble and boil. When it was done it was poured into well-greased patty pans – the kind with twelve little pans on each tray. These were always greased (with butter) and when they were all filled they were put down on sheets of newspaper on the stone-flagged floor to cool and set. When they were cood Grandma carefully wrapped each piece in greaseproof paper, so very neatly and precisely, and THEN came my big moment when Jim, Beat and I could pick off all the toffee that had dripped onto the trays during the pouring – lovely! I can taste it as I write! Dear Grandma always made sure that there were plenty of “drips” for us.

When Uncle Wilf – my mother’s brother – was married and they had a little boy (Arthur Dunn – what a wimp!) I remember Grandma saying “Well, wi’another babby I can see I’ll have to have mek more drips very soon” – this when the “babby” was about one week old and with no interest in toffee at all I was SO jealous.

One of grandma’s main sources of sales for her toffee was at our village cinema. It was originally named “The Tivoli Theatre” but it had a big poster out

at the front which read “Come in, it’s cosy inside!” and so it became known as “T’cosy pictures”. There was a bus stop right outside The Cosy and the conductors always called out “Next stop, cosy corner”. Do you know Kylie that when I went to UK in ’83 it was still called “T’Cosy Corner” even though the cinema was destroyed by fire over 50 years before. Now **that** was a night to remember! My Dad came to our bedroom about 11 o’clock one Saturday night and said “*You’d better come and have a look out o’t’front bedroom window – there’s summat to see that you might not see agen!*” We went into t’front bedroom and there, across the village on Ridge Top was t’Cosy, blazing furiously! We were very upset because we kids used to go to the Saturday matinees and we were in the middle of a very thrilling serial called “The Hooded Claw” which was quite terrifying really but which we waited for with bated breath each week. There was no such thing as classification of film – if it frightened you it was a Horror Film, if it made you laugh – it was a Comedy! If it made you sigh tearful sighs – a Love Story. We saw some of the most horrifying films at those Saturday matinees! They were silent films of course and were accompanied by appropriate piano music played on a very tinny and off-key piano by Mrs Shearsmith who was the owner of the Cosy. The Saturday Night Show was a full length feature film and Grandma, Auntie Libby (her sister who lived next door to Grandma) and sometimes my Mam (and us kids if we were lucky) went off to t’Cosy with Grandma carrying a high leather handbag which was a ghastly shade of yellowish-gray but which held all those precious cakes of toffee. She had her Regulars who used to wait until we were all arranged in t’best seats which cost 4d to sit in and, unlike the bare wooden forms at the front of the house, these 4d “fauteuils” (called “fawteels” by the cognoscenti) had corduroy coverings – no padding, just corduroy! When all was ready then Grandma sat in the Seat of Custom and doled out the cakes of toffee, 1d each for butter toffee and 2d for treacle toffee.! I suppose she must have made a profit on the transactions? She always reckoned to get there 20 minutes before the start of the programme and, although there was a little shop in the cinema foyer which sold sweets and chocolate and which was manned by Mrs Shearsmith, my Grandma was a law unto herself when it came to selling her toffee – so much so that Jim Roebuck, who was the projectionist – used to stick his head round the projection room door and ask “*Have you done Mrs Dunn?*” which witticism always raised a laugh. Then Grandma would say “*Reight Jim, you can get on wi’ it now*” and then then the lights would dim and the film could roll when Grandmad gave the all clear! Even Mrs Shearsmith herself often sampled a bit o’ butter toffee!

Saturday 31st. After last night's marathon effort, I'll have to see how many pages I can manage tonight.

I was thinking about our school and I've only mentioned it in regard to Concerts and Prize-Giving but it was a very important place in our village life. There were two schools, the Council School and the Church of England Primary School (this being the one we attended.) There were four teachers – Miss Mitchell who taught the infants class, she was a thin, small spinster of indeterminate age with a great mop of brown hair scooped into a large “bun” on her neck. She wore a brightly-flowered overall which wrapped around and crossed over at the waist with a belt which tied at the back. She wore brown lace-up shoes with very pointy toes and fawn lisle stockings. In many ways she was like a mouse! She used to sit behind a large desk and peer out at us from this great nest of hair that she had. Her eyes were brown and very bright and her nose was thin and pointed and she looked very, very mouse-like, especially when she made her little darting forays amongst us to squeak approval at some bright child or to quell some incipient riot among the more unruly element of the tough Mafia-like section of the infants, with the aid of a few fluttering gestures of her paws (sorry – her hands). At the end of each week the one child who had done best in reading aloud from her book and who had written the correct words read out by Miss Mitchell was given a “Milky Way” bar. They're back in fashion now-a-days and every time I see their ad on TV I can recall so clearly the triumph of receiving my prized Milky Way from dear Miss Mitchell! I remember that they could be bought in the shop for three ha'pence (1½d or 1½ cents!) but to get one for nothing! Well! That was quite something of an achievement and to hear her “*Well done Gladys dear!*” was music to the ear. (So “Milky Way” must be 60 years old at least). When we were “moved up” at the end of each year it was quite a big happening because after the Infants class was Standard One! This was in another classroom, quite different from the formal, cloistered calm of Miss Mitchell's room. The teacher of standards I and II classes was Mrs Sunman – I was terrified of her at first! She was a lady of middle years and always looked very well-groomed – she wore the same sort of flowered overall that Miss Mitchell wore and she wore Makeup! It wasn't considered proper to paint one's face, perhaps a discreet touch of Pond's Vanishing Cream and a small – a VERY small – dab of powder on the nose and chin. But Mrs Sunman had the lot! Rouge, lipstick and pencilled eyebrows and hair very firmly “Marcel waved” with deep ridges of waves, like well-ploughed furrows, with a few sausage curls at the ends. This hair-do was always in immaculate condition because her daughter, Dorothy, was a ladies hair-dresser, as also was daughter Grace. Mr Sunman, a man of impeccable dignity, was “Something In The City” and went on the 8:01am train to Manchester every day,

complete with bowler hat, rolled umbrella and briefcase. Dorothy and Grace were part of the crowd of Bright Young Things who caroused around with “Burl” Booth and her young scion of the House-of-Slack. Sadly, Dorothy died of cancer about 1939 at about the age of 30 (?) after having been married only 2 years. Beat and I used to go to Dorothy Sunman’s to have our hair trimmed and I used to love those visits because she was so bright and happy and had golden which fell in deep waves over her shoulders, she had delicate, pink cheeks and red, shining lipstick and long dark eyelashes (it was whispered to me by Beat that “She puts Stuff on ‘em to make ‘em black!”)

My mother had long hair which was always coiled in plaits over her ears until, one Great Day, she went to Mabel Clayton’s at Birch Vale to have a “Eugene” Permanent Wave. This perm (which was the only kind available) cost one guinea! That’s about \$2-10c and that was considered to be terribly expensive and extravagant! Anyway, Mam must have decided to be expensive and extravagant because she went off to Mabel Clayton’s and, after an ordeal lasting over 3 hours, she came home with a Mrs Sunman’s hair-do which had to be duly admired by Dad, us kids, then Grandma, Auntie King, Mrs Drury-next-door, Mary Jepson and her sister Emma and any passing drover and his dog! That was the milestone in village history – the day that Mary-Elizabeth-Fletcher-got-her-hair-permed! (My gran always called her “Our Mary-Lizzie”).

Anyway, back to Mrs Sunman and our hectic life in Standard I! She was NOT the most patient of teachers and was much addicted to a sharp rap on the knuckles with a big, wooden ruler for any imagined infringement of her strict rules! I’ll never forget her teaching me to knit! I had thick wooden needles and bright red wool and I was meant to be making a “Square” (a square what? I never knew) but I do remember that I was knitting very, very tight stitches and, my hands being all sweaty from sheer nervousness, the whole thing was a mess! Her idea of demonstration was to stand behind me, take my hands very firmly in hers – push the needle through the stitch – wrap the wool around – then PUSH through! The last instruction was by pushing MY finger hard on top of the point of the knitting needle! It was absolutely agonising! I used to go home in tears with large red spots on top of my fingers from sheer pressure, and sob “I ‘ate knittin’!” However, her jackboot methods must have made some sort of impression (apart from my poor finger!) because I quite enjoy the knitting that I do now. I wonder why? She taught us lots of poetry and one poem which I learnt from her I taught to my daughter who taught it to her daughter and that’s how you know “The Witch in the Wood” Kylie! I must have been about 8-9 years old when I first learned it. She must have taught us many more things as we passed through her Halls of Academe but I can’t recall anything else, apart from her calling me

a “silly duffer” when we did arithmetic! She was quite right too, and I’m still a silly duffer when it comes to arithmetic! By the way it was Mrs Sunman who chose me to be one of the Winkyn, Blinkyn and Nod trio (when I had to bow out because of Mar Fletcher and Billy Lomax’s nuptials)

Monday 2nd Feb. When we eventually moved up to Standard 3 we were in the Senior Room – Standards 3 and 4 were taught by Mrs Frances Hallworth and 5 and 6 by her husband, the headmaster Arthur Hallworth. They were two people who loved to teach and they did it very well indeed! Through their influence I learned to love music, drawing, painting and drama. Each year we gave an excerpt from a Shakespearean play at the Annual Concert. The costumes were designed in the Art Class (as also was the scenery) – then the costumes were made by the Sewing Class and the stage props were made in the Woodwork Class and it all made Shakespeare so very real to us. It’s thanks to the Hallworths that I can now go to a Shakespeare performance and enjoy it! Not all his plays, I hasten to add, but a lot of them!

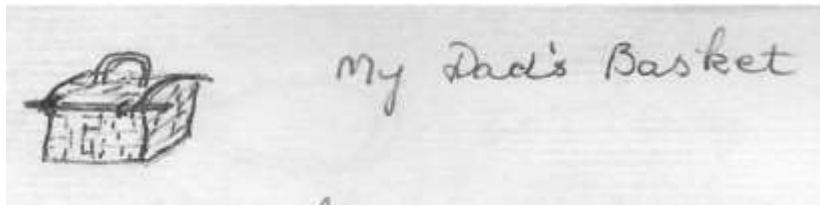
I kept in touch with Mr Hallworth after his wife died and after he retired – he sent your mum a little hand-made golliwog for he 2nd birthday – she may remember it as she kept it a long time.

My Mam and Dad didn’t think to much of a Higher Education for us – “*It’ll mek you get ideas above your station*” was their attitude. So, Jim, Beat and me all went to Evening Classes at New Mills (3 miles away) much against Mam & Dad’s wishes (I did eventually get my equivalent of “Leaving” when I was in the WAAF and one could go through to TAE but it was called “The War Educational Certificate Parts I & II”, the equivalent of “Junior” and “Leaving” education)

My early teens were not happy years – I was in a very rebellious state of mind and wanted to get away from Hayfield but I couldn’t see any way of doing it. I did try as you’ll know from those newspaper extracts that your mum has copies of. However, World War II came along and I escaped into the WAAF – but more of that later.

One thing that I did mention but without giving any detail was my Dad’s Signal Box – he did two shifts of duty – Early Shift from 5am to 3pm and 3pm till midnight – each shift on alternate weeks. When he was on late shift we kids had the very great responsibility of “*Tekking his tea to t’Box*”. His tea, which might be Potato Pie (the Derbyshire name for Lancashire Hot Pot) which was cooked in a big white basin and had a golden suet crust on top or something equally delicious! This basin was wrapped in a blue check cloth and carefully put

into the Dinner Basket which was a square wicker basket with a curved lid which fastened by means of a wooden rod pushed through slots and carried by a wooden handle on top.



There was also bread & butter in a white cloth and a huge slice of cake (fruit cake or Seedy Cake; that was plain cake with lots of caraway seeds in it – one of Dad’s favourites and also one of mine). Quite often Jim, Beat and me went down to take Dad’s tea and we loved going to the box. In summer we used to play out on Dad’s allotment which a large piece of land that ran along by the side of the railway track and which adjoined the fields alongside the road. Here Dad grew all the vegetables to feed the feed the family AND Grandma & Grandad Dunn AND Auntie Libby (always called Auntie King by us – dunno why?). The small garden we had by the house was always full of flowers – Dad could make anything grow & flourish!

Some nights when there was no train due for a couple of house – well Hayfield being at the end of a small branch line, the trains weren’t very frequent – Dad would escort us across the track to “*t’Wood Plantins*”. This was a small copse by the side of the Wood Printworks. It was full of buttercups, kingcups, bluebells, harebells, and big daisies which we used use for long daisy chains. It was a magic place to me with all the beech, oak and elm trees with shut out all signs of railways and cotton mills and I always felt it to eb a very secret place.

In winter my Mam often came with us as it was a dark trip down Wood Lane which had no lamps so we took a torch because it was too easy to trip on the stone “setts” which were big, square cobbles. Dad had a little stove in the box – a bit like a small pot-belly stove that you see now-a-days. He had an endless supply of coal and so the fire was always glowing hot and the little oven on top was ideal for boiling the kettle for tea – and the long toasting fork made the most delicious toast!

To sit in the signal box on a winter evening with the gas lamps lit and stove full of red coals and leaping flames and play games with pennies & enormous sheets of pink, blue & yellow paper (I think they were the backs of all kinds of official forms!) – well that was the cosiest and safest place in the whole world and it was well worth the cold walk home in the dark. In one corner there was a big iron wheel with a handle which was used to shut and open the level-crossing gates at the side of the box and it was a great thrill to be allowed to turn this and

close the gates when a train was due. It gave one a heady feeling of power to watch the big gates swing across at the turn of this wheel - and also the handle of the wheel made a perfect place to sit and swing back & forth. The smell of oil, tar and toast are all part of my memories of the box. When a train left New Mills (about 3 miles away) a bell rang on the tablet machine and Dad had to push a big brass knob on the machine which rang a bell at New Mills Signal box in reply. Then a round tablet was taken from the machine and put into a leather bag with straps and a leather, padded handle about 50cm long. The exciting part was when the train came into view at Slack's crossing gates – Dad went down the steps onto a sort of cat-walk by the line and, as the train steamed by with clouds of steam, smoke and sparks, Dad use to “*Catch t' Tablet*” from the driver, bring it up to the machine and put it in the box, ring the bell, get a reply from New Mills and then, when the train was ready to leave again he reversed the whole procedure and gave the tablet back to the driver on his way back to Manchester. This process always seemed terribly scientific to me – something like launching a space rocket – had I ever heard of such things then.



Wed 4th Feb. I always given to a fondness for Sci-Fi type stories and I remember when I was 11 or 12 I chose as my Sunday School prize H.G. Wells' “The First Men on the Moon” and when it was handed to me by Great-Uncle William Whitehead (my Grandma's brother and our Sunday School superintendent) he said “*Now here's a very strange book that Gladys Fletcher has picked out*” and he shook his head and said “*It's a fairy story Gladys, it will never happen!*” I felt like saying “*Oh yes it will!*” but didn't dare! But I know that when Neil Armstrong landed on the Moon in '69(?) I felt like saying “*See Uncle Willie! I knew it would!*”

Great-Uncle Willie (he would be your Great-Great-Great Uncle!) was quite a power-to-be-reckoned-with in the village! He was one of the few people in Hayfield who had Travelled Abroad to foreign parts. He was in India for some years when he was a young man, this would have been about 1880 or thereabouts and he ws there to contact sources of raw cotton for the C.P.A. firms when they were having difficulty obtaining supplies following the American Civil War.

On his return to Hayfield he became the manager of the Gas & Coke Co. I remember going to his office as a small child with Mam and he gave me a huge pink blotting pad with some advert on the front in bright blue letters. It was quite probably a “Use More Gas” ad or something like that but I don’t remember. He and Great-Aunt Lavinia (always known as “Vina”) lived in a house called “Fern Royd”, a huge (to me) Victorian edifice full of large, highly-polished pieces furniture. G.U. Willie always looked highly-polished too! His starched collars and cuff were very shiny and VERY WHITE – he had a shiny gold watch chain across his waistcoat, his black buttoned boots shone like twin mirrors and his droopy walrus moustache was always gleaming! Now Aunt Vina was quite the reverse! She had a pale powdery skin, her black ankle-length skirt was of a dull sort of material as was her blouse which always had a stiff, boned collar right up her neck, she wore black lisle stockings and black suede shoes (very grand!) so she seemed to have lost all her shine to G.U. Willie. She was a lovely lady and always had exotic goodies to give us when were taken to visit (only by invitation, of course!) – she had things like chocolate biscuits, thin shortbread fingers with cherries on top and such luscious things as we never saw in our house. We had to be content with Mam’s Rock Buns!

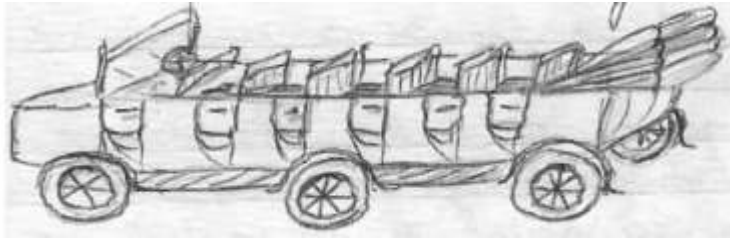
Because G.U.W. was the chairman of the Chapel Board of Trustees and always very generous with donations there, the Chapel naturally had gas lighting – I well remember the chandelier-type fittings with four glass-shades over the gas mantles and when the lights were all lit at the evening service on winter Sunday nights it was quite a Dazzling Array! But when it came time for the sermon – then Charlie Sims, who was the caretaker, used to go round each light during the hymn that preceded the sermon and turn them down to the merest flicker by means of a notched stick about a metre long. The only light left at full brilliance was the wall bracket about the pulpit. We had lots of local (lay) preachers and there some weirdos among that lot I can tell you! There was Timothy Beard, a stout gent from Thornsett who had a glass eye and who always told the saddest stories to us children and he’s get very emotional and weep buckets of tears with his glass eye! I don’t know how he did it!

Our favourite was Mr Wynn who was a source of sly giggles from us kids – but when I think back he must have been a very brave man to persevere as did as a preacher! He was rather badly spastic (although they didn’t use that word then – he was usually said to have “a bit of a twitch”) added to that he had a speech impediment and the end result was that not a soul in the Chapel knew what the heck he was talking about! I remember overhearing Dad saying “*Ah knew Willie Wynn likes to spread God’s Word but ah wish ah knew what word it were as he were spreadin’!*”

When Mr Wynn was rostered on the Circuit Plan to preach at our Chapel, all the Mams used to lecture their children before they set off for t'Chapel "*Now think on or there'll be no gigglin' and laughin' this afternoon at t'service!*" There always was of course and I remember one fateful day when his uncontrolled gestures hurled the big Bible clean off the ledge of the pulpit and it hit Fred Whitehead on the head! There was young Fred with blood pouring down his Sunday suit, Mr Wynn having some sort of seizure and the entire place in an uproar! The service was cancelled if I remember rightly! What a day that was! I believe that Wynn went on preaching until he was in his 80s and Auntie Beat told me that he had left his body to the Manchester Royal Infirmary to be used in the cause of science! I'll bet that gave 'em summat to think about!

Another thing we had was a team of handbell ringers and it was a great honour to be invited to join. One had to be able to read music and I could do this, at about 1 years old – BUT – only the alto line; so – what did they do but give me bells in the tenor section! These bells were quite tricky to ring, there was a special flick of the wrist and thumb to make them work and it made the hands VERY sore. The other tenor bell ringer was a fella called Charlie Barber who used to get very nervous when we played for the services or at concerts – when he got nervous he used to sweat a lot and, as he wore thick, pebble glasses, they got all steamed up so he couldn't see the music! I never hear the hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers" without thinking of Charlie – I had to pick up four bells in quick succession to make a "run" in the tenors and Charlie was always convinced I'd muck it up! In every verse of the hymn he'd peer frantically over the steamed-up glasses and hiss "*Dunna forget that A flat Gladys.*" This used to make me want to laugh and it's a wonder I ever made that run, but I did!

One annual event that we always looked forward to with great excitement was the Annual Outing! The entire Chapel congregation – Mums, Dads & kids met on Kinder Road in front of the Chapel very, very early in the morning and there were the charabancs waiting to take us away to the seaside for a whole day! The charabancs were the early version of touring coaches. You'd never believe what they were like. Imagine a single-decker bus with a canvas roof that folded back like the hood on a pram – each row of seats had their own door to get in and out. Something like this



It was lovely to bowl along in the sunshine with the roof folded back. The first double-decker buses that I remember didn't have a roof on the top deck and the stairs were curved along the back of the bus in a sort of spiral and there was a shiny brass handrail all around the top deck. I remember riding to Chinley with my Mam and Grandma Dunn once on the top of the bus – it was only a 3-mile journey but it was So Exciting! Much better than sitting downstairs but Mam spent the entire journey holding her hat on and grumbling about the dust, and the grit, and the wind! We came back sitting downstairs.

Another thing to which we looked forward was the Market. The Market Place was just behind the George Hotel opposite the railway station. And each Friday and Saturday it was full of stalls selling everything from clothing, materials, pots & pans, fruit & veg, and sweets.

Our favourite was the Toffee Stall and we were always given a whole penny to spend. The stalls all had what were called (I think) acetylene lamps which gave a very bright light and made a very loud hissing noise. It made all the colours look so vivid and bright and the Toffee Stall looked like Fairyland to me with rows and rows of boxes and jars of sweets, and a penny bought such a lot!

I remember once – I must have been 3½ yrs old at the time because it was the year before I started school – running with Mam and Auntie Lizzie (my Uncle Wilf's wife) through the Market Place to see the Empire Day Procession. This was on Empire Day (24th May) and it used to be a public holiday and Mr Hallworth always had all the school-children dressed in costumes of the Empire (this was when the British Empire was a big part of the world). I remember holding Mam's and Auntie Lizzie's hands and they were swinging me off the ground and my legs were still running in mid-air! We ran through to Church Street which was called "Up t'Town" (or "Down t'Town" depending on which way you were going). Beat was a Chinese lady and Jim was an Indian Rajah with a jewelled turban, but the one I remember best was a girl called Margery Handley who had the most glorious auburn hair which fell in deep waves right down to her waist and she wore a golden helmet and carried a golden shield and had a flowing blue gown down to the tips of her golden shoes! I thought she was the loveliest thing I'd ever seen and I was filled with a burning desire to be chosen as Britannia when I was 13 years old like she was. (I never was of course!)

Another thing that I've just remembered was a very early episode in my life. It was at the time my brother Herbert died. We children had all had measles and, as a result of that we got abscesses in our ears (that's what caused Herbert's death – he got meningitis). I was in my Mam and Dad's big brass bed and I was given some medicine to drink. To persuade me to drink it I was allowed to use a pink mug (?) that usually lived on the sideboard with all the other treasures. It was of very thin, fine china and was a pretty pearly pink with a picture on it of a Dutch girl in a Dutch girl's cap which had curling "points" over her ears and she had long gold plaits of hair over her shoulders. I was quite convinced that I was wearing a hat like that because I said that I could feel the points sticking into my ears! I know that my ears were very sore and I was crying and Dad was sitting on the bed and holding the cup and saying "*Nay love, dunna cry – drink this it'll mek you better.*" What I was drinking I don't know but it was a yellow colour, it was warm and it tasted horrid! (probably some of my Grandma's Hyssop!) I must have been about 2½ at the time but I remember it so very clearly. Round about that time I also had a very Favourite Dress – it must have been a hand-me-down from somebody else because I'm sure that Mam would have never bought such a frivolous garment! It was pale yellow silky stuff and had a skirt with two rows of scalloped frills which were edged with tiny bronze beads and, on each of the scallops there was a X in the same beads. I called it my Frock-with-the-kisses and I loved it.

I've just thought about some more of the local preachers who used to come to preach – there was George Shaw, he was young and very trendy with always a pearl grey suit which had a jacket with a very nipped-in waist and broad padded shoulders which made him look as if he'd forgotten to take the coat hanger out! A tight-fitting waistcoat and very wide flares at the bottom of his trousers! He had brown wavy hair all slicked back with brilliantine and a thin moustache. He looked like the local "rep" for the Mafia – but he told us children lovely stories like "The Pigeon with Pink Feet" and "The House with the Golden Windows" and I thought he was terrific!

There was Lloyd Simpson who lived in Little Hayfield, he used to thunder all sorts of awful threats and he frightened me to death. He was actually a kind and gentle man but put him in a pulpit and he went BERESK!

I had a tape from Beat just recently and she was telling me of one or two things she remembered of our childhood. She reminded me of Grandma Dunn coming to look after us on the evenings when Dad was on late shift and Mam had to go to choir practice. We used to play "school" and Grandma used to sit in our little table and chairs that Dad had made for us. We wrote sums on our blackboard

and easel and Grandma used to get the wrong answer every time (on purpose of course) then whoever was the “teacher” would say “*Come out Grandma Dunn and stand in the corner*” or “*have the cane*” or “*say your four times table*” or some similar dreadful punishment and out would Grandma pretending to cry but sticking out her tongue when “teacher” wasn’t looking! She was such a lot of fun – she used to make Beat & me “ballet dresses” out of newspapers and we’d do a big “Margot Fonteyn” act. She used to wrap a tablecloth round her shoulders for a shawl and do a wild Spanish fandango around the kitchen! I used to laugh so much that I had to make a wild scramble for my green enamel potty in the scullery before I disgraced myself with wet pants!

Beat also reminded me of a play we once did at S/School – it was called “Soot and the Fairies” and I was chosen to be a fairy with tinsel on my white dress, gauzy wings that were attached to my wrists with silver loops, a tinsel star in my hair and a silver wand with a star on top and silver streamers hanging AND – the final touch – white shoes and socks. Beat said that she was desperately hoping to be chosen to be a fairy but she was picked to be one of “Soot’s children” with her face blacked with burnt cork and a ragged dress. During the play Soot’s children were made clean by the fairies and they had to be cleaned by a gaggle of ladies waiting in the kitchen. Beat said that Violet Simms was the one who cleaned her face for her and she scrubbed so hard that poor Beat came back on stage not just clean but glowing red from all Violet Simms’s scrubbing. She (Beat) had gone to Grandma’s and poured out her disappointment at not being a fairy and, at Christmas a couple of weeks later, there among her presents was a fairy frock with wings, a wand and new white shoes (sneakers) – she spent the entire day dancing round in her new outfit and waving her wand over everybody within reach! She suspects that Grandma had made this finery for her to make up for being a “Soot’s child” in the play. Dear Grandma!

Speaking of Violet Simms reminds me that she was my first Sunday School teacher when I was 3 years old and when we sang hymns I used to be allowed to stand on the seat beside her and share her hymnbook. I knew the tune but the words were all Greek to me so I made up my own words, “*I pla-aa-y with my whip and top, I play with my dolly.*” I told Beat about this on one of the tapes I sent to her some years ago and she said that she remembered me doing this and thinking “*How does she know the words? I’m in class II and I don’t know them!*” She’d no idea what rubbish I was singing. I must have looked VERY convincing holding Miss Simms’s book and singing at the top of my voice! We sang some pretty little hymns – I remember “Sunny Days of Childhood”, “In the Grass at Springtime see the Daisies Start”. I remember all the words and the tunes even to this day – and that’s 62 years ago.

I well remember the awful day that Grandma Dunn died, it was February 25th 1937, 50 years ago next week! She collapsed and died while she was doing her housework and, when I was told, I thought the world had come to an end! Jim, Beat and I weren't allowed to go to the funeral (dunno why not?) and I remember standing at our front window in Highfield Rd with Beat and looking out over the village to the far side where the cemetery spread out up the hill – there was snow on the ground and all the mourners looked so very small and very black as they went up the hill behind the men carrying the coffin. It seemed to be the day that I stopped being a child – I was 15 at the time but a very young and naïve 15-year-old. Surprisingly I have some very happy and pleasant memories of the cemetery! I remember bright sunny days when I went with Mam & Grandma & sometimes my Dad to “Tidy up our Herbert”. His grave was about halfway up the hill and we used to fill up one of the big enamel jugs that were kept by the water tap just inside the gates of the cemetery. This was taken up to the grave and the stone vase was filled with fresh flowers and fresh water and then I was allowed to take the “old” flowers down the path, which was paved with stone “setts” and had a shallow step every few yards. It seemed miles away to the place at the bottom where all the dead flowers were thrown onto a big compost heap, but I always felt very important when I set off alone to do this chore. On the other side of the path from Herbert's little plot was a very imposing grave. It had a polished granite border round it with granite posts joined together with loops of spiked chain! There were white pebbles all over the grave and a large (well it seemed large to me) black polished obelisk in the middle. The name on that was Isherwood and I once asked my Dad why Mr Isherwood had all those chains round his grave and Dad said VERY seriously “*They were mekking certin as he stopped where he'd bin put*” so I saw no reason why Mr Isherwood shouldn't do the same!

The Sunday School concerts I've spoken about were the highlight of the year to us kids. It was called “The Annual Tea Party” but was usually referred to as “Th'Annual”. It took place on the first Saturday in December and, at about 4:30 in the afternoon everybody gathered at the Chapel where there were long trestle tables with white cloths on them and rows of plates and piles of sandwiches, cakes, mince pies, jelly, custard, fruit cake with icing, biscuits and all sorts of goodies, and at the end of each table a large copper urn full of tea. Whenever I make tea the smell takes me back to those parties and the excitement of it all. When all the food had been eaten we children were whisked off to get ready for the concert and by about 7 o'clock all the tables had been cleared away and everything was ready for the show to begin. You've no idea of all the giggling and shrieking that went on while we were being dressed in our costumes by Mam

and all the helpers. Then the thrill of standing on stage and hearing the piano start to play the opening music and wait for the red plush curtains to be drawn back and the magic to begin. I still get the same stomach-churning excitement in plays at the Rep! Even after all these years.

On Christmas Eve there was always a Social at the Chapel and we played games and then – just when we couldn't stand the excitement any longer – the lights were dimmed (I don't know how they managed to dim all those gas-mantles at one and the same time) and Santa Claus made his entrance to a rousing greeting. He had a big red sack full of toys, each wrapped in red shiny paper with our names written on them. I remember that to be eligible for a present a child had to have attended S.School for 10 consecutive Sundays and so, about mid-September, the S.School classes used to increase steadily! And, as for Santa Claus, he always had a voice suspiciously like Harry Osborn or Bill Ball or Wilf Whitehead but I never saw through the disguise – gullible little Gladys believed Everything! (Even Santa Claus with a Derbyshire accent!)

When I was older and was on the choir we always left at 15 minutes before midnight (everyone else had gone home ages before) and made our way up to the gates of the vicarage where we waited very quietly till the church clock struck 12 and then we let rip with "*t'Christmas 'ymn*" which was "Christians Awake"; then we went round to various places in the village and sang more carols – not only in the village but to outlying farms as well. We must have walked miles! The memorable year was when Wilf Whitehead (G.Uncle Willie's son and the local coal merchant) had the bright idea of attaching long handles to a small harmonium so that it could be borne along like a sedan chair! A stoll was also carried and at each stop the organ was planted on a firm patch of ground, the chair placed in position and Frank Osborn would sit and pump the pedals like mad to accompany the choir as they sang. There had been a fair bit of snow that year and as the blokes carried the organ up Phoside to Mr Potter's place – he being one of our larger-donation-givers – they let it slip as they lifted it over a wall and it fell upside down in a snowdrift! After a rather acrimonious consultation between the men it was left in the drift and we had to sing *a capella* for the rest of the night's calls. They eventually rescued the organ when the thaw set in but we never used it again! Mr Potter of Phoside had a pet donkey and it used to make a heck of a loud noise that could be heard all over Hayfield, one of mam's sayings if we were playing a noisy game was "*Do shut up, you're making more noise than Potter's donkey.*"

Other things that were an everyday happening – like the lamplighter who used to go round and light all the gas-lamps in the village streets – was the

knocker-up! This man was paid 1 penny a week by the people who worked in the textile mills at Birch Vale or the Wood Printworks in Hayfield. He had a long pole about 3 metres long which had a bunch of fine wires at one end and he used to go to each house on his weekly list and rattle these wires on the bedroom windows until the person in acknowledged the call by lighting the gas or a candle. There were 2 or 3 people living near to us who employed the knocker-up and I used to hear him come striding up the road in the dark about 5:30 in the morning – his boots were hob-nailed and made a big lot of clatter on Kinder Road which was paved with big, square, stone setts. Then if I listened very hard I could hear the noise of his pole on Miss Fleming’s window (next door but 2) and then after about half-an-hour there was the clatter of steel-tipped clogs on the setts as the mill workers set off to be at work by 6:30! That was when the mills were busy and were working overtime – 6:30am to 5:30pm from Monday to Friday and 6:30am to 12:30pm each Saturday (a 61-hour week!). I used to snuggle down in bed in the dark and be so glad that I didn’t have to hurry to the mill in clogs at such an hour. I do remember that the knocker-up was a very little man but his son, who helped him, was very tall and thin and Dad always said “*He wouldna need any long stick, he can just reach over t’gate and tap on t’window wi’ his fist.*”

It must sound a very strange sort of life that we led back in the 1920s but it was a quiet, uncomplicated existence and I always felt very sheltered and secure in my simple country existence. Our lives as children were orderly and regulated with school each day, Chapel every Sunday, practices for choir, handbells, concerts and a host of socials on Saturday nights in winter months. One thing I always enjoyed was a “*Cobweb Supper*” – this strangely-named event was great fun. There was an enormous wooden hoop suspended about 6 feet up in the air and from this were long lengths of different coloured strings which radiated outwards and were all twisted around each other and they eventually ended up on the coat hooks on each side wall of the Chapel (these were the “hat-pegs” and were put there for the gents to hang up their hats when they came into church). On the end of each string was a small parcel containing a little gift, such as a tablet of soap or a couple of hankies. The parcels for the children were on red or green strings. One paid a penny to gain possession of a string which was then untied from the central hoop and off you went trying to untangle your string from everyone else’s and, believe me, when you had about 25 people all going off in different directions doing this it got quite hectic! The kids always had a grown-up to do their untwisting and it got quite exciting when one got closer and closer to all those bunches of parcels dangling from the hat pegs and wondering which one was yours and what would be in it? Then, of course, came the supper with

vast amounts of sandwiches and cakes and the inevitable copper tea urn. I can only remember one prize I got from the cobweb and that was a little celluloid baby doll with a set of knitted baby clothes threaded with blue ribbon at the neck and the waist and blue-ribbon ties on the bonnet. I thought it was beautiful!

When I said that our lives were orderly and regulated – the main time-keeper and regulator was the mill hooter which sounded 6 times a day. At 20 minutes to 8 was what was always called the “First Buzzer” – this was a couple of 3 second blasts to remind the workers that they’d better hurry and then at quarter to eight the “Second Buzzer” went in one long 10 second burst. If anyone checked in after the 2nd buzzer had stopped then they were docked 15 minutes pay from their pay packet. To check-in to work each person had a round metal disc with their “check number” engraved on it and as they went in through the work’s gates, past the “check-hut”, they hung their check disc on the appropriate number on a large board and collected it as they left work each night. I still have Grandad Dunn’s check disc that he had at Kinder Printworks some 75/80 years ago – his number was 246. As I was saying about the buzzers – they sounded at 12:30pm for the dinner break then again at 1:30pm and finally at 5:30pm – the end of the day. I remember when Mam used to call us each morning for school she’d say *“Come on, t’scond buzzer’s gone, you’ll be late!”*

Another thing about times was the games that all the children played. We might have been playing marbles for some weeks when, one Monday morning nobody brought their bag of marbles to school but everyone had a hopscotch, then it would change to “Hoop & Stick” then to “Whips & Tops” and so on. But nobody ever TOLD us when the games season changed – we just knew! It was very strange! I remember that we used to play hopscotch on the footpath on Kinder Road and we used to bowl our hoops up and down the middle of the road! It was quite safe really because motor cars were almost non-existent in Hayfield and the main traffic hazard would be to be trampled to pulp by Wilf Whitehead’s lovely Percheron horses as they plodded along in the shafts of the coal truck, but their slow and steady pace was hardly dangerous! Anyway, we kids all knew the horses and gave them bread and carrots and things and they’d stop anyway to wait for their titbits.

All the tradespeople had horse-drawn vehicles, the milkman who had a spanking two-wheel trap with the big shiny milk churns on the back. He had a long-handled “dipper” that was used to pour the milk into our waiting jugs, there was no nonsense about pasteurization and stuff like that, just lovely creamy milk straight from the farm.

All these horses had to be shod so of course we had a blacksmith's shop – I remember this well: it stood at the bottom of Market St and there was always a gaggle of kids round the door to watch the horses having their new shoes fitted. I was always a bit scared by the noise of the forge when it was fanned to a red-hot glow by the bellows and then the horse-show was lifted out, glowing red, and hammered into shape on the anvil and then plunged into a vat of cold water and hammered into place on the horse's hoof. It was a noisy, smelly, fascinating place – but scary! There were horse-troughs at various places in the village, they had a long-handled pump at one end by which they could be filled with cold, fresh water for the horse to have a drink.

There were also quite a few old buildings in Hayfield when I was a kid although a lot of them have been demolished in the name of “progress”. I remember the outcry in the late 30s when the blacksmiths was pulled down when the Council decided to widen Shudehill. One interesting place that's still in existence is Dungeon Brow, a cobbled alley which still has the old dungeon where the drunks and other desperate criminals were locked up by the village “bobby”. This building was a two-storey one and for many years the top floor was used by the Parish Council for their monthly meetings until in the late 30s the floor collapsed and hurtled them down into the dungeon below! Luckily nobody was seriously hurt apart from a few cuts & bruises AND the blow to their self-importance.

One thing I meant to write about before was the Hayfield May Queen Festival. This was the brain child of Mrs Hallworth and was a very authentic re-enactment of a Medieval May Festival. There was the May Queen who was chosen by election – all the village went to vote for their particular favourite entrant. The Festival usually took place on the 2nd Saturday in May, all the streets were decorated with flags and streamers and I remember the busy people in our street passing streamers across the street which were then raised up to the bedroom windows by means of a long clothes-prop. The Queen's procession was quite a sight to see – she travelled in an open Rolls-Royce with her two Ladies-in-waiting who were resplendent in red velvet gowns in Tudor period style with Tudor caps all decorated in gold. The Queen herself was in white (her dress was her own choice of style) with a long red velvet train edged with “ermine” (?) and lined with white satin. She had 2 small pages to carry her train and 4 small flower girls, a crown-bearer who carried the pearl and diamante crown on a gold cushion – I have a photo of Uncle Jim as the crown-bearer in brown silk knee breeches, a swirling brown silk cape, a frilly yellow shirt and a brown hat with sweeping yellow plumes. He doesn't look at all happy in that picture but, as he was also wearing white silk stockings and buckled shoes, he probably felt very

embarrassed! When I was about 14 I was a 2nd lady-in-waiting together with a girl called Kathleen King. We were arrayed in Tudor style dresses but in emerald green taffeta with silver trimmings – I have a photo of us in those outfits. Very swish! There were also courtiers who attended the Queen when she was crowned and then they danced a minuet and a gavotte. It was all very well organised and I remember that the very first May Queen was a girl called Mary Cooper in (I think?) 1926 – she was a very pretty girl and I recall that very clearly.

Then of course there was the Maypole Dance, a very important rite! The Maypole Dance song “Come lasses and lads” was written in honour of Hayfield May Fair in 1632 or thereabouts and had been played and sung every year since then! I understand that they still have the May Festival each year so the “Maypole Song” has been sung each year for 355 years!

One thing that always amuses me when I think of it is Mam’s camera – she was the local Snapper! She had a Box Brownie and she was on occasion really Trigger Happy! At our Sunday School concerts, she used to delight in taking a “flash” picture – now this was far more complicated than it sounds because in those days there were no such things as flash bulbs and so Mam perfected (?) her own idea of how to take a flash photo! This entailed the entire cast being assembled on the stage while mam stood on a with the camera firmly positioned on a step-ladder – then she opened the shutter for time exposure and, on the count of 4 (or 5 or 6?) she’d say “**Now!**” and Wilf Whitehead, who was standing next to her with a small coal shovel held aloft, would ignite the magnesium powder on the shovel – there’d be an almighty flash & volumes of smoke and that would be that! Mind you, it meant that everyone in the photo had an expression of wide-eyed terror when the flash went off! It gave Mam a lot of great pleasure to make her mark for posterity!

Going back to the pleasures of toffee-shops, there was a little sweetshop at the bottom of Kinder Road where we lived (that road was always known as “t’Jumble Lane” – I wonder why?). Anyway, this little sweets & tobacco shop was run by an elderly and VERY genteel couple called Smith. I rather think that had “come down in the world” because they were both beautifully spoken and Mrs Smith always dressed in black or dark blue with a dress down to her ankles with a high lace collar that was stiffened and starched and she wore spotless white aprons, also starched so much that they crackled when she moved! She had grey hair that was crimped into neat waves and a neat “bun” on top of her head. Mr Smith (his name, I know, was George because it was painted in gold letters across the front of the shop) he was terribly, terribly British and he always wore what was known as a Smoking Jacket – this was a relic from the Victorian/Edwardian

era when gentlemen used to sit in their Study or the Smoking Room to enjoy their cigars and they donned their Smoking Jackets to denote that they were in a mood of leisure and relaxation. Well, Mr Smith had quite a few of these jackets and very grand they were – they were velvet or brocade with quilted satin lapels in glorious shades of green, crimson, royal blue and some had gold thread embroidery all over them. With these grand garments he also wore a Smoking Cap – the only man in the village to do so. This was a round pill-box hat with a silken tassel dangling from the top and he had colours to match each of his jackets.



Mr Smith and his wife were unfailingly polite to each and every customer who went into the shop. We children were given the same grave attention as we spent a halfpenny as given to adults who might spend lots of shillings! I've wondered since just what sort of life they had left before they ended up in a little sweet shop in Hayfield. Possibly they lost money in the first World War or something like that – or maybe Mr Smith was an officer cashiered from his regiment and sought obscurity and anonymity in the North country far away from their former friends. I've imagined all kinds of things about them but I've never forgotten their unfailing politeness. There must have been so many untold stories in hayfield that we never knew about.

I only heard the full story of Grandma Dunn's marriage since I went to the UK in '83 and Jim & Margaret and I got talking about the many old documents that Mam had kept and which Jim had "inherited". Grandma always said that she and Grandad "*walked over t'tops to Glossop to be married*": well, it seems that they did this to be married at the Registry Office in Glossop only 6 weeks before our Mam was born! Can you imagine it Kylie? My Grandma, a daughter of a highly-respected and strictly Methodist family in Hayfield in the late 1800s when morals and respectability were so highly prized. Then Grandma gets involved with a man who, apart from being a stranger and an outsider was – of all things – a Roman Catholic! I can imagine the family rows this must have caused! Then she finds that she is pregnant! Just think what she must have gone through – she couldn't possibly be married in their Chapel – NOT to a Roman Catholic and NOT when she was having a baby! Then she and Grandad arranging to go to Glossop for their wedding – no buses or trains in those days so they walked the 6 miles over the moors and it must have been in November because Mam was born on New Year's Eve 1896. The November fogs and rain and bitter cold winds and

a little pregnant lady struggling along over that hilly road. Poor Grandma and poor Grandad! Anyway, they appear to have been forgiven by the Whitehead family and Great Uncle William and Great Aunt Vina used to take Grandma with them on holidays to Llandudno and such seaside places because I have postcards that she sent from there – but they didn't take poor Grandad – EVER!

Talking about Grandad being a Roman Catholic reminded me of my Grandad's sister my Auntie Kate (Great aunt really but always just Auntie Kate). She was married to a man called Michael McQuade who was real bog Irish. We never went to see them very often, they lived in Oldham and all I remember about them is that Uncle Mick laughed a lot but I could never understand half of what he was saying, he was so Irish. I seem to remember that he drove one of the big drays (a horse-drawn affair) for the local brewery. I think he liked a drop of the brewery stuff as well. Auntie Katie was very much of the Norah Batty in "Last of the Summer Wine" – did you watch that on TV? I know your Mum & Dad did.

Then there was Dad's sister Matilda, always called Tilly – she lived at Stockport and she was a widow. She had a little yappy black dog called Tiny and we used to hate her coming to see us because she brought this horrid fat dog and him on her lap as we sat to tea at the table and she used to feed him bits off her plate and let drink tea from her saucer and it was horrid! My Dad used to be so annoyed about this dog and, when Auntie Tilly had gone, he used to say "*Ah know she's me sister but it's right unhealthy the way she carries on wi' that animal.*"

I'll never forget the fateful day she came when I broke my lovely doll! Beat & I had dolls exactly alike, they had china faces and hands and arms and the rest of them was white kid leather, just like the "antique" dolls that sell for enormous sums now. Mine had golden ringlets and a blue floppy hat and a blue muslin dress AND (the greatest thing of all) white socks and white boots. I called her Clementine because Grandma used to sing the song "Oh my darling Clementine". Well, this day when Aunt Tilly came to visit I'd been playing with my doll and Mam had been shopping and she'd given me the bag in which she'd had some currants (I think that they were for the infamous Rock Buns she used to make). One didn't buy things all neatly packaged then but all the goods were displayed in big crates or sacks and were weighed out to order and put into brown paper bags – except for the sugar, that was always in blue paper bags – dunno why? Each of the boxes or sacks had a little scoop with which they were transferred to the bags and weighed on big brass scales which hung on chains and the brass weights which ranged in size from a tiny ¼ oz one to a huge 1 pound one were placed on the scale according to what one had ordered. I don't know why I so well remember that this bag had held currants but I know it had! I'd put it on

Clementine as a hat and she was sitting on the chest of drawers in the kitchen and, as Dad came in with Auntie Tilly, my doll fell onto the kitchen floor, which was made from stone flags and her head broke! I remember crying floods of tears and Auntie Tilly saying “*Eeh, what a lot o’ fuss o’er a bit of a doll!*” Well it wasn’t a bit of a doll, it was my Darling Clementine. After that, every time I knew she was coming I used to put all my toys into my toy drawer which was one of three which were built in at the side of the fireplace in the kitchen and I had the bottom drawer, Beat had the middle and Jim had the top one (his was always full of Meccano sets and clockwork motors).

Auntie Tilly asked me one day “*Aren’t you going to show me all your nice toys?*” and I said, “*I haven’t got any*” and got into awful strife for telling a fib. But I was sure that if I showed her my toys they’d break like Clementine did!

When Auntie Tilly’s dog, Tiny, died at about 17 years of age she had him STUFFED! And he was in a glass case in her parlour and it used to give us the creeps to see him glaring at us from the corner. She was weird! And so was the dog! I always think that if she hadn’t come visiting that day I might have still had Clementine who’d be worth a fortune now!

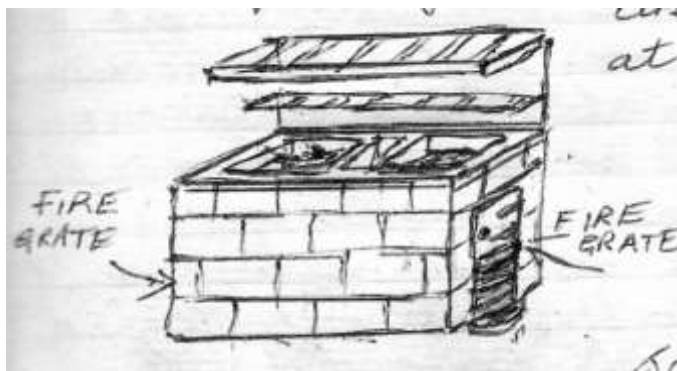
Talking of poor stuffed Tiny – I’ve never yet mentioned our dog, Lassie. She was a real bitzer with mostly greyhound in her makeup. Dad brought her home one day when she was quite tiny – I think he rescued her from being put down as an unwanted stray. I know we spent ages sitting her on the flags by the back door and calling her various names to see which she answered to. Apparently, the name “Lassie” elicited some response and so “Lassie” she was.

She was a member of the family to me and I used to sit with her on her blanket in the corner of the kitchen and read to her and sing to her and tell her all my troubles. She always went to work with my Dad and we used to have some lovely games with her at the signal box on long summer evenings. One of our favourites was hide & seek when Dad would cover Lassie’s eyes while we went and hid. Then Dad would say “Go get ‘em” and she’d rush around until she’d found us all. It was a very noisy sort of game full of barking and shrieking.

When she was quite old she got some form of cancer and Dad had to take her to be put to sleep because she was in a lot of pain. I remember Beat and I sitting on the stone bench in the back yard and crying and Dad coming and saying “*Well, we’ve all had a reight good skrike (cry) but we’ll have to stop it – so come and have yer tea.*” That was when we had moved to Highfield Rd into a council house. I thought it was a real palace because we had a bathroom with an inside toilet and lots of HOT water at the turn of a tap. Also, Mam had, as well as a nice

tilled fireplace complete with coal oven, she had a gas stove! What a miracle but her Rock Cakes still defied all her efforts, even in the gas oven!

While on the subject of food (if Mam's Rock Buns come under that heading) I can still remember some of our favourite dishes back in the days when we didn't count calories – no-one had ever heard of cholesterol and folks ate things just because they enjoyed 'em, NOT because they were “good for you”. On Thursday and Friday of each week there was always a delicious smell wafting through the streets when we came out of school – this was from Tommy Torkington's butcher shop where he'd been making his famous “Savoury Ducks” or as they were called the local hoi polloi “Savvery Ducks” and it was always a hope that when we got home one of us would have the happy job of going to Torkingtons for “6 Savoury Ducks and tek a bowl fer gravy”. The gravy was superb and was a meal in itself it was so thick and full of sustenance. Then there was Barber's fish & chip shop and Sleight's fish & chip shop but my favourite one was Mrs Drinkwaters fish & chip shop. This establishment would never pass any of today's health regulations I'm sure but Mrs D's fish & chips were gourmet delights to me when I was young! Her shop was a tiny little place at the bottom of Kinder Road – it had a stone-flagged floor, a beamed & raftered ceiling and the cooking range was a solid stone-built affair like this.



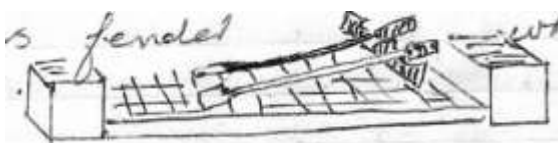
The two little fires at each end had to be kept stoked up with coal to keep the chip-pans hot and so Mrs Drinkwater would pause in the middle of mixing batter or scooping hot chips and would go to her coal in a big box in the corner of the shop, pick up a shovel of coal and hurl it into the fire, kick the fire door shut, swill her hands under the tap (no soap, just a swill with cold water) and go back to serving fish & chips. Talk about hygiene! But her chips were the crispest, goldenest I've ever tasted and her mushy peas were ooh-la-la! If I remember correctly her “tuppenny fish and a three-ha'penny mixed” was a feast fit for the

gods! And all for 3½d (3½ cents). Next door to her shop was Mrs Swindells shop – I don't know exactly what sort of a shop she was meant to have but she sold home-made shoe-polish, floor-polish, black-lead (which was for cleaning fire grates) and she sold charcoal which some folks bought for use in the iron when ironing clothes. I well recall going there often for a bag of charcoal for Mrs Cawking, our next-door neighbour, and I used to be quite fascinated to see her doing her stoking up through this tiny door in the back of the iron – how the heat of the iron was regulated I have no idea. When Mam had her ironing day – every Tuesday come hell or high water – she used “flat irons”, these being heavy metal irons (same shape as our steam irons but solid metal). These were put on the hot coals of the kitchen fire and when hot were lifted off with a thick iron-holder and put into an iron guard which was a shiny metal slipper with 2 prongs which fitted over and fastened the slipper to the base of the iron and kept the clothes from being soiled by the iron.



Very complicated and speed was essential otherwise the flippin' iron had gone cold before you'd begun!

There was a thick ironing blanket spread on the kitchen table with a clean ironing cloth spread over that and a metal trivet to stand the iron on when needed. We had a big wooden “clothes horse” on which the ironed garments were hung to air – this made sure there was no trace of damp left in ‘em! Poor Mam, ironing day was as traumatic as wash day – then Wednesday was upstairs day which also included sweeping the stairs and stair carpet with a stiff little brush AND taking our and polishing the brass stair rods every week! Phew! I also recollect that one certain day, I think it was Friday, was devoted to polishing the fender and fire irons! The ones in the kitchen were steel and black-leaded iron but the ones in t'Front Room were brass and took AGES to polish. These fire-irons were long handled shovels, pokers, rakes, etc. and they were kept on the hearth inside the polished brass fender which had a seat at each end like this (sort of)



They shone & twinkled when the fire was lit and looked so cosy on winter evenings – we also had a brass toaster by the side of the fire and it was such

fun to sit on the hearth-rug and toast thick slices of home-made bread and sit on the rug and eat it freshly buttered (the bread, not the rug!)

Speaking of butter reminds me, for some odd reason the Ambreys who lived across from us in Fox Hall. Fox Hall was a very old house – it had the date 1632 carved in the stone above the door. All the rooms had low, beamed ceilings and the windows were small and deep-set and latticed and the glass made everything look wavy and distorted and the whole place was full of the Ambrey family – I think there were about 12 kids, a no-good dad who drank like a fish and sloppy, happy-go-lucky mother who shrieked at the kids – I seem to remember that Mr Ambrey had a wooden peg-leg like Long John Silver and when Mrs A thought he'd spent too much time at the pub she used to wait till he sleeping off his beer and then take and hide his wooden leg and his stick to make him stay at home. When he woke he used to rant and roar and my Mam used to say “*Hey up, it looks like Fred's lost his leg again.*”

One of the Ambrey girls – Lizzie by name – was about my age and we used to walk home from school together and one day she took me to their house with her. Mrs Ambrey was cutting bread and gave us a jam butty – she used to make loads of jam and that was quite nice but the butter didn't taste very good at all. When I went home and told Mam she was horrified, “*You'll be poorly wi' all the muck there is in that house.*” I mentioned the butter with the odd taste and when I said, “*It weren't yellow like ours, it were white, Mam.*” She let out a shriek and said, “*You know what you've bin eatin' don't you – THAT were LARD you daft 'aporth!*” We only used lard for cooking chips and stuff like that – it was very cheap and probably the only stuff they could afford after Fred had been on the booze!

In the other half of Fox Hall lived the Medlicott family, now THEY were a cut above the Ambreys on the social scale. There were two girls Hilda and Muriel and a boy George who had a tiny, withered leg and used to wear a boot with a sort of iron pylon built into which must have been about 20cm high. He was a quiet, gentle boy and he and I used to swap comics and lend each other books.

At the end of the Fox Hall building was a shippon (a cow-shed to you!) where Charlie Torkington brought his cows to milk them. So of course, there was always a very ripe smell of manure all the way along the entire building! It must have been very smelly to live there but they all seemed to thrive on it. My Dad always said, “*It's that good smell of healthy muck – it kills germs like billy-o.*” Oh yes! There was also a little house sort of fitted on the back facing “t'Jumble Road” where the Franks lived. One of the daughters, Vi, was married (I remember

the wedding at our Chapel). She married Frank Osborn who eventually married my Mam after Dad died. The other daughter was Edie, a big beefy lass with very red cheeks. The Franks were Welsh and Mother Franks was a lovely lady, full of fun, a bit like my Grandma. I remember her giving me a new toothbrush with a whistle on the end and a tin of Gibb's Dentifrice for my birthday and saying in her singing Welsh voice, "A girlie with such nice big white teeth deserves a special present!" I wasn't too thrilled with the toothbrush even though it had a whistle on the end because I could never work out how I could whistle and brush at the same time! There were, as far as I can recollect, only 2 sorts of toothpaste then, Gibb's Dentifrice and Eucryl Tooth Powder – I think you can still buy Eucryl today – but I didn't like it much because it used to make my tongue go all tingly when I brushed my teeth! Also, I was rather put out by Mrs Franks' description of my teeth. To begin with they weren't really white but sort of creamy colour and the "big" made me feel like a carnivorous beast!

Beat and I used to scrub our teeth with peroxide to try and make them gleaming white like our Jim's! It tasted foul and made a lot of froth but our teeth stayed cream! So, we went back to good old Gibb's Dentifrice. At one period there was a big advertising campaign by the Gibbs company and, with every tin of the stuff one got a story book which could be coloured in and it was all about "Your teeth are your Ivory Castles – protect them from the bad Giant Decay," and when Giant Decay took over one of the Ivory Castles it fell into ruin, the pictures were enough to scare the daylights of a small child – they scared me!

Another present I once got was when I won a competition in the "High Peak Reporter" in "Uncle Ben's Corner." I forget what the contest was but I won a green fountain pen with a gold tassel on the end! I must have been about 9 yrs old and I took my pen to school in its fancy box and had to stand in front of the class while Mrs Sunman displayed the pen to one and all. I remember writing to Uncle Ben and saying, "Dear Uncle Ben, my letter this time as you can see is written in rhyme. It's written with the fountain pen which you sent me dear Uncle Ben." – that's all I can remember but that's enough!

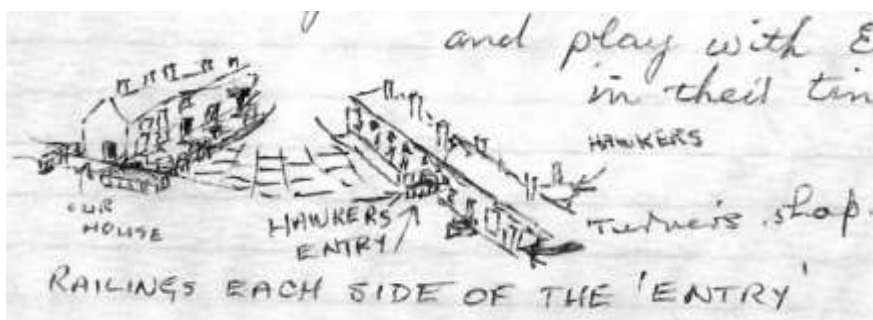
I seemed to be a great one for dingle-dangles what with a whistle on my toothbrush and a tassel on me pen – I even had slippers with bobbles on the toes! I was a funny child! I should mention that the whistle didn't last very long due to the fact that I'd give the odd blast on it when my teeth were all foaming with Gibb's D and it got clogged up with dried toothpaste!

I've just been reading through some of this and was reminded of Charlie Torkington's shop (he of the Fox Hall cowsheds) where he sold tripe & cowheels! My Dad was very partial to the odd meal of tripe and I used to HATE it when it

was my turn to go to Torkington's for "*Half-a-pound of thick seam with plenty of fat and 4 slices of elder.*" Ugh! I hated carrying the stuff in a sloppy parcel and always insisted on taking the shopping basket. Then I discovered that the term "elder" was a polite euphemism for "UDDER"! I nearly died of horror. I remember saying, "*Oh Dad Fletcher, how can you eat that muck?*" and Dad replying, "*It's right easy – I just pick it up on my fork like this.*" But it took me ages to accept the fact that Dad actually liked eating the honeycomb tripe with all the holes in it filled with vinegar and plenty of salt & pepper. It makes me feel queer just to tell you about it!

I remember Dad always liked strong-tasting foods and when he used to come and see us in Altrincham after he retired I used to make curry and he loved it but apparently when he told Mam about it and suggested that he get the recipe from me, Mam told him, "*We're not cooking that foreign muck, not for anybody.*" So poor Dad had to wait months for his next feed of curry.

I've just remembered a lot more about the folks who lived "*up t'Jumble Lane.*" Across the road from our row of houses was an identical row but as we lived on the side of a hill (come to think of it EVERYBODY lived on the side of a hill in Hayfield) our row of houses (7 of them – us, the Drury's, then the Cawkings – more of them later – then the Smiths, the fords, Miss Fleming and the Greenwoods – I think). We were on the slope of the hill which entailed us having about 5 steps up through the front garden to the front door while the folks across the street had their front doors level with the road (and no front gardens, just a pavement of flag-stones) while at the back their cellars were at ground level and their gardens sloped down to the cricket ground. This row of houses had an arched and cobbled tunnel that sloped down to the back of their houses where there was a little house tucked away in a corner by the garden. There lived a family called Hawker – there were 2 girls about the ages of me and Beat, they were called Elsie and Eva. Their only means of entry to their house was the cobbled tunnel which was always called "Hawker's entry" – a very odd arrangement indeed! I used to go and play with Elsie Hawker in their tiny garden.



Between that row of houses and Mary Jepson's sweet shop was a very dignified emporium called, "Turner's Gentlemen's Outfitters and Haberdashers." It was a double fronted shop with 2 large shop windows which never displayed anything but a notice in tasteful gold lettering which said "ORDERS TAKEN – FITTINGS ARRANGED." I was always most intrigued with this notice – what could you order? What sort of fitting could be arranged? (How do you fit an "out"). Inside the shop was very grand – everything in glass-fronted drawers and cupboards behind the two mahogany counters on either side of the shop. There were shirts and men's hankies and, more discreetly stored, men's vests and underpants. There were discreet catalogues showing men's suits etc. And I always felt like I was entering church when I ventured in there to buy Dad a hankie for his birthday. But the *piece-de-resistance* was Mrs Turner! She used to sweep into the shop with a very haughty air and she was Enormous! She must have weighed about 200 lbs (about 100 Kgs) but she had lovely curly brown hair and gorgeous dimples in her cheeks. They had a son called Victor who was a great mate of our Jim who used to spend all his spare time over there building models and Meccano with Victor. Mr Turner used to be "on the road" for weeks on end, travelling all over Derbyshire, taking orders from all the gentlemen who needed Outfitting. At the windows over the shop they had Venetian blinds in a sickly yellow colour and, once a week, these blinds would be raised and Mrs Turner would start to clean the bedroom windows! This was a sight to behold because she used to sit on the windowsill! She lifted the bottom sash of the window and squirmed through until she sat on the sill with her back to the street and rubbed furiously at the glass with her window leather. Almost the entire windowsill was filled with Mrs T's bum – an awesome sight and one that gave me the giggles every time I was a spectator. Dad was very funny about it too – if he was working in the front garden on the window-cleaning day he used to come into the house and say, "*I'll have a cuppa tea for a while, Mrs Turner's cleanin' t'windows again an' if she happens to tumble off that sill, I might 'ave to run over t'road and pick 'er up.*"

Another shop – well, it was more of a forerunner of today's supermarket – was the Hayfield Co-operative Society. A large, square, dull place built of big slabs of grey stone – it had a grocery section, haberdashery, butchery and a stable for the horse and dray – all in separate shops, and upstairs were storerooms, offices and a library on the 3rd floor. The library (the only one in the village) was open 3 evenings a week, as well as some afternoons. My job when I was old enough was to change Grandad Dunn's books on a Friday night. He had some of the most unlikely tastes in books and one of his favourite authors was Edgar Rice Burroughs who wrote the Tarzan books – he also wrote some really fantastic tales

about “Thara, Princess of Mars”, and some others, also about Mars. But I can’t recall the titles. I’d go up to Grandma’s and get the books to be returned and ask Grandad what I ought to get for him, and he’d say, “*Any like Tarzan, or Mars, or perhaps a Wild West by the feller with the funny name.*” (He meant Zane Grey). I used to love getting the books and I used to wander around that big room which was lined on every wall with rows and rows of books – what bliss! I always used to share the books with Grandad because I used our family’s ticket as well, and I read much faster than Grandad so I’d have read them all by Tuesday or Wednesday and had to wait in a fever of impatience until Friday.

This Co-operative Store (commonly known as “t’Kwarp shop”) was very well patronised because they had a dividend system which meant that the amount one spent each week was entered in one’s “Divi Book” by the assistant and then, every 3 months, it was “Divi Day” when each family could take their book to the office and be paid a dividend of 6d in the pound or something like that. It varied according to their trading figures but it was always a day of palpitating excitement because the “divi” might even be a shilling in the pound! And then Mam would come home all flushed and smiling and bearing a penny bar of toffee for each of us AND a packet of orange cream biscuits for tea! In the Haberdashery Store there were two very refined ladies and I used to like going in there with Mam because they always made a fuss of me. Of course, we always bought underwear, linen, knitting wool and all that stuff at t’Kwarp because it all went into the Divi Book for Divi Day!

T’Kwarp was situated “Up Top o’t’Town” which meant it was at the top of Church Street at the crossroads of Buxton Rd, Fisher’s Bridge and Valley Road. These roads were oddly placed somehow and Buxton Rd went steeply UP-hill, Fisher’s Bridge went steeply DOWN-hill as did Church St and t’Kwarp was teetering in the middle and I always had a fear that it might one day overbalance and slide down into the river by St Matthew’s Church.

I quite forgot to mention one special shop that I always called, in my mind, “The Sunday Shop”. This was because on most Sunday mornings, after Sunday School, we used to go for a walk with Dad to “*let your Mam get on wi’t’ dinner.*” We’d have what Dad called “*A bit of a stroll round by t’Reservoy.*” Which meant about a 2½ - 3-mile walk! But we didn’t mind because on the way back when we got near the Roman Bridge there was a house and shop – made of weatherboard with a tin roof and painted dark red. This was Marriott’s Sweets & Tobacco-Sandwiches - Cakes and Pots of Tea – Hikers-welcome-and-catered-for shop. Dad would studiously ignore the place and sit on a seat by the river while we hovered hopefully until one of us (usually me!) would say, “*Hey Dad, there’s*

Marriott's shop," and the reply would be, "Well I never did – so it is!": "It's open Dad!": "Aye, it would be wouldn't it?" Then, after a long pause would come a tentative "Can we have a ha'penny Dad?": "What, all t'lot of you?" (as if there were great throngs of children): "Yes Dad": "D'you think I'm made o'money then?": "Oh you are Dad!": "Well, in that case you'd better have a penny and run afore t'shop shuts up." – and he'd hand out the pennies which had been in his hand the whole time and we'd race round the corner in case the shop DID shut. Then we'd munch, crunch or chew, depending on our particular choice of toffees, trying to make them last until we got home to the lovely smell of the Sunday Roast and the Yorkshire Pudding and all the veggies from Dad's allotment. It was the custom to have the Yorkshire Pudding first with plenty of rich brown gravy and then the meat & veg – the idea being that the less expensive Yorkshire Pud would take the edge off hearty appetites and then one wouldn't want too much of the more expensive meat. Crafty idea isn't it?

You remember my telling you about the paper bags in which groceries were weighed out at the shops – well all the library books at t'Kwarp were covered in the same blue, thick paper as the sugar bags. Over a period of time this blue paper faded gradually to a silvery gray and you always knew the new books by the bright blue covers. The title and the author were hand-written on the book-spine and the official Kwarp stamp was printed in the front cover AND about 10 times throughout the book! Not much of a library perhaps by today's standard but it brought me a great deal of pleasure. As Mam used to say, "You've always got yer nose stuck in a book!"

Another village "character" about whom I learned the truth when I went back in '83 was a young woman called Alice Liddiard. She lived with her family on Birch Vale Road and then, when she was about 20 yrs old, she moved into a little cottage down Slack's Crossing. My mother always told us, "If that Liddiard lass talks to you – don't answer her but just come away from her – think on now!"

I could never think WHY we couldn't talk to her because she used to come to our Chapel till she was 16 or 17 then she just stopped coming.

Anyway in '83 I asked Jim why it was that Alice Liddiard was so ostracised by all the good Christians (?) of Hayfield and Jim said, "Eeh, didn't' yer know? She were a lesbian! But I don't know what they called 'em in those days." So, after all those years I found out the reason why we weren't allowed to talk to Alice Liddiard.

We had a lot of games that we used to play, both at school and after school. We had a method of deciding who would "go first" in any game which we called Dipping. We stood in a circle and someone would be the Dipper. She or he would

go around the circle pointing to each one in turn while we recited one of the following rhymes:

Dip 1:

“As I was walking down Icky-Picky land I met three Icky-Picky people.

What colour were they dressed in? Red, white or blue? Close your eyes and think!” (then the one who was pointed at on the word “think” had to say which colour – perhaps Blue)

“B-L-U-E spells Blue

And if you do not want to play

Take your hook and go away

Slap, Bang, Bing – OUT!”

The one who was pointed at for “out” then stood out of the circle and the whole thing was repeated ad nauseam until there was only one person left and they were the leader for the next game.

Dip 2:

Eeny meeny mackaracka

Air o dominacka

Chick a packa alla packa

Am Pam Push

Dip 3:

This one was called “Spuds” and each one put out their 2 fists for “Spuds”

“One potato, 2 potato, 3 potato 4, 5 potato, 6 potato, 7 potato, more.”

The fist which was struck by the Dipper on the word “more” was tucked away behind ones back and off we went again.

Dip 4:

This one was a bastardized version of a prayer from one of the 300-year-old Mystery Plays and was the “Annunciation of the Virgin Mary”

“I’m the Gabriella Man

I’ve come across from the Isle of Man

We’ll do all that ever we can

To follow the Gabriella Man

Hay merry, Hay merry fulla grass,

Slap, bang, bung, out”

All these complicated ways of choosing a leader took a long time and the question was often asked at the end of a Dip, “What game was it we were going to play?”

Skipping-rope games were not quite so long and complicated and there was one where the rope was swung slowly from side to side while the skipper jumped over it to the words:

“Swish, swash, potato hash,
Turn the blanket OVER!”

Then the rope was swung completely over and into “Pitch, patch, pepper!”. When the rope was turned as quickly as possible and the one who managed to skip the most “peppers” was the winner.

When I was about 10 years old my best partner in skipping was Olive Rampling who lived across the road from us. Her sister, Margaret, married our Jim and, sadly, Olive died about 12 years ago. Margaret’s hair was the reddest hair I had ever seen and I longed for mine to go that colour and I used to peer very hard in the bathroom mirror to try to detect some sign of red hair growing but it was all in vain, my own ordinary brown locks stayed ordinary and brown!

While I was writing that I was suddenly reminded of Dad’s home-brewed wines! I think it was because Olive Rampling and Beat used to put on leather gauntlet gloves and go over the field to where they kept their hens and over the wall behind the hen-coop there was a big patch of stinging nettles and me and Olive used to pluck the leaves till we’d filled a sack and drag it back across the field feeling very proud of ourselves. We also had an ulterior motive because we knew my Dad – and Mam – would then make bottles of nettle “beer” which was absolutely delicious! Dad also made elderberry wine which was deep purple and, although we kids were allowed a small glass of it when it was “new”, I believe Dad used to stash some away under the pantry bench to gather potency. The pantry which we had in Kinder Road house was a little room which opened off the kitchen – it had a stone-flagged floor like the kitchen and rows of shelves which were made from slate and always cold, even in summer, as were the stone benches under the pantry window. This little window was the one I liked – it was high up in the wall and had 4 small panes of glass and, although I couldn’t look through it. I just knew that if I ever did I’d see not just the back-yard but some sort of fairy-tale land! I dreamed that when I was big enough to see through it I would climb out into whatever magic place I saw and never come back. I usually had this little day-dream when I’d had a scolding from Mam or when Jim & Beat had been horrid to me.

Another wine that Dad and Grandma both were fond of making was elderflower “Champagne”. This was brewed by some mysterious process from freshly-opened white elder blossoms and the resulting brew was a pale, sparkling wine with a most delicate taste; it really did deserve the title of Champagne.

I remember when they were doing some new extension building across the lane at the Chapel – that would have been about 1926 or ’27. It must have been a hot summer because Beat & I had a big bowl of water in the back yard to play

with and the builders working on the Chapel used to come across to our house for Mam to brew their tea for them and they'd sit in the yard "Out in t'cool" and drink hot tea out of their blue brew-cans. These were made of metal and had a handle to carry them and a cover that had its own handle and could be used as a cup.



I thought them very dashing but Beat and me had to be content with a plain old white mug of nettle beer!

I think it would have been that same hot summer that Mam was going shopping to the Kwarp and I walked with her through the "rec" and she told me to play on the swings till she came back with her shopping. I think I remember this occasion so well because I was allowed to wear one of my "Sunday" hats! This was a rare treat because straw hats were strictly for a Sunday or a wedding or other great State Occasion. This particular hat that I call to mind was of yellow straw, but the stiffest and most prickly straw that you could ever imagine! It was in the style known as a "cloche" hat like this



When we went to buy this hat, Beat also got a new one (for the Chapel Anniversary – or "t'Sermons"). Her's was very similar to mine but in a peachy-orange colour. My yellow job looked like lace as it was very open weave – and a yellow taffeta lining and bunches of yellow ribbon at the sides – when I first saw it in the shop I wished so hard that Mam would pick that special hat – little knowing the agonies of wearing it for more than five minutes! I used to come home from Chapel with sore tops to my ears and a deep scarlet welt across my forehead! The pain of taking it off was worse than the pain of having to wear it! When I timidly mentioned the discomfort one Sunday, Mam merely gave me a

stern look and said, “*You were all of a dither to have it when we were in t’shop! I paid three and sixpence for that ‘at so you’ll have to break it in.’*”

How do you “break in” a hat made of yellow barbed wire? Eventually Grandma decided to help me and she secretly steamed it over the kettle and it softened up a bit – BUT – it made the brim sag even more and the crown fell into a saucer-shaped depression on top. Mam was very cross when she saw my saggy bonnet and made angry remarks about “*shops what sold things that didn’t last more than five minutes!*” As I’d already endured that hat for months it was a bit of an exaggeration!

Anyway there I was sitting on the swings on a hot, sunny morning and watching my shadow as I swung back & forth – the sun was shining through my dress - a pink silky hand-me-down from Beaty - and the shadow of my saggy hat looked all lacy and beautiful. The river by the side of the swings was making cool noises over the stones and I had no socks and sandals – I felt very summery and smart and so safe and happy as I watched for Mam to come down the steps to the Rec.

Every time I wore the hat after that, Mam would “*tut tut*” to herself about “*things that fell to pieces as soon as you unwrapped ‘em!*” But if Grandma was there she’d give a little smile and a wink and it was our secret and no-one else ever knew how my barbed-wire hat got all saggy and soft. I had another hat that I loved – it was a winter hat – a blue velvety felt one with a big brim and 2 fur bobbles. With it I had a blue coat with a fur collar and fur cuffs. I must have looked like Dick Turpin but I always felt like a fashion model!



One dress I had made was made for me by Emma Drury, the wife of the eldest Drury son – our next-door neighbour Drurys. I think she might have made it from some of hubby’s cast-off cricket flannels – it was cream serge and very rough & prickly. It had two button tabs on a VERY low waist – they fastened with pale blue buttons and it had blue silk chain stitch on neck, cuffs, tabs and inverted pleat. I HATED it but I was so fond of Emma and Herbert Drury that I always pretended that I liked it too much to wear it for school (which is why it was made in the first place, I think) and it wasn’t posh enough to wear for Sunday according to Mam’s ideas on Sunday wear so it hardly ever got worn except if we were on holiday from school.



Whenever I wore it I used to run up Vicarage Lane to Emma's house and say, "Look Mrs Drury, I'm wearing your frock." What a little hypocrite I was!

One much more unpleasant happening that used to give me nightmares for ages was when I had an abscessed tooth. This was much worse to me than it really was because I'd never had any trouble with my teeth prior to this. For some days the District Nurse came to our house and syringed out my mouth with a huge metal syringe thing – it was like the thing that my Dad used to spray the rose-bushes to get rid of bugs! Anyway, it was decided that the tooth would have to Come Out and an appointment was made for me to go to the Dental Clinic at Chinley – about 3 miles away and with a very sparse bus service (about 1 bus every 3 hours). So, Mam and me set off for Chinley about 8am to be at the Clinic for 9:15 or so. All I can recall of that morning is of sitting in this enormous dentist's chair with a nurse gripping my hands while the dentist stuck a rubber mask over my face & I could see the window in front of me rushing away down a sort of dark tunnel! It was a lead-light window and it had coloured birds all round the edges and bright green leaves and red roses in the middle. When I woke up I was lying on a bed in another room which seemed to be crammed full of beds, each bearing a comatose child. I think there were only 4 beds in the room – but – when I woke up on one of them – there seemed a heck of a lot! When we came out of the Clinic we'd just missed a bus and Mam said, "*We're not messin' about here for another couple of hours, we'll walk home up Back Chinley.*" Back Chinley was a footpath that ran parallel to the Chinley Road, it was a very rocky up-and-down path and though normally I enjoyed that walk, it wasn't so nice to walk 3 miles on a rough hillside after having anaesthetic and a short rest to recover from it. The road seemed to go on for ever and my legs felt all boneless and rubbery. I was so glad to see our house at long last and I slept for about 3 hours in Dad's rocking chair. Even now it makes me feel tired just telling you about it!

I'm finishing writing this on Tuesday the 29th December – I've been doing this writing for nearly a year!

There are still many stories in my mind Kylie and, if you'd like more, I'll take the book and fill some more pages (one of these days!)

I hope that you enjoy reading it as much as I've enjoyed writing it and now I'm going to wrap it up to give to you when you come home on the 6th.

With my love to you,

Gran