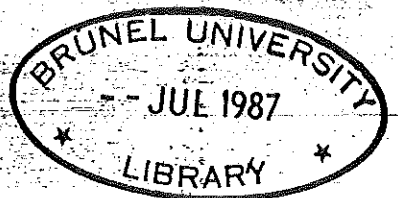


2-22



V. AUSTIN

Local History

I was born in Slough, which was then in Buckinghamshire, now in Berkshire, in the year 1910, the youngest of four children.

When I was a child, Slough was a pleasant country town, surrounded by farms, fields, woods, and large estates and bounded on the South side by Eton College, the River Thames, and Windsor Castle.

Gone now is the lovely countryside I remember, swallowed up by houses and factories.

The main industries were brickmaking, horticulture and agriculture. It is well known that the bricks for building Eton College were purchased from Slough brickfields.

It must have taken a very long time to build the college, which was completed around 1500.

Some of the brickfields were still being used when I was young. I can remember seeing the smoking chimneys as we passed in the train on our occasional trips to London.

Sir William Herschel, the discoverer of the Planet Uranus owned a house in the town, with a large telescope in the garden. Many well known horticulturists had nurseries in and around the town.

Suttons, the seed merchants, had trial seed grounds between the railway and the canal. It was a lovely sight, and a riot of colour for most of the year.

Black and Florio, the orchid growers were adjacent to Suttons.

The producer of the famous Cox's Orange Pippin Apple, lived just outside Slough, and Charles Turner owned a house and nurseries in the High Street.

The wisteria that covered the whole of the front of the house was a magnificent sight. It is said that Charles Turner brought the first wisteria plant into England.

The master of the workhouse raised the famous Mrs Sinkin's pinks which are featured on the Borough coat of arms. Situated on the road from London to Bath, the town possessed many coaching inns.

The oldest and most famous of these was the Old Crown

Only one inn now remains.

Looking at an aerial photograph taken before the rebuilding, one can see Slough as a pleasant small town with lots of trees.

In the 1960s the planners decided to change all that. Bulldozers ripped the town apart, built a shopping centre, a theatre, lots of office blocks, and a multi-story car park. The old Slough has gone forever. It is now just another nondescript town, all its character lost.

It is hard to believe now that Slough is mentioned in records dated 1496.

Childhood

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I had a very happy childhood. Our parents, while not being able to give us many material things, did all they could to make life happy and interesting. We were very inventive, making up games and amusing ourselves. We were never bored.

As there were less than 2 years between my sister and I, we were very close, our brothers being so much older, 8 years between my sister and younger brother, and George, the eldest 2 years older.

The boys were very good to us, and often took us with them, when they went out with their friends. No one seemed to mind a young girl tagging along. We lived in a cul-de-sac containing 16 houses, 8 on each side. Ours was the last house on one side, with an orchard between us and the main railway line to the West Country.

We never noticed the noise of the trains, and on wet days, my sister and I would position ourselves by the bedroom window nearest to the railway and write down the names and numbers of the engines. We only had ~~managed to write down~~ time to read the slow trains. The express trains were past in a flash.

On a very dry hot summer sparks from passing engines sometimes set the railway banks alight. Great excitement, but no danger.

The fires were left to burn, but it was a sorry sight afterwards. All the tall grasses, in which were growing clover and marguerites, burnt down. Our house possessed 3 bedrooms, 2 living rooms, a kitchen and outside lavatory.

When I was very young my mother cooked on a coal fired range in the kitchen.

Later, when gas was laid on in the road, we had a gas cooker and gas lighting instead of lamps.

My Parents had gas lighting in their bedroom but ~~we~~ ^{children} still used candles to go to bed.

The floors were covered with linoleum and rugs, except for the parlour or "Front Room" where there was a carpet.

Every day the fireplaces were cleaned, ashpans emptied, floors swept, rugs shaken, kitchen floor washed, rooms dusted, outside toilet cleaned.

To incorporate extra jobs about the house, one had to have a routine. My mother's was as follows.

Monday, house cleaning, cooking, and washing clothes etc.
 Tuesday " " " and ironing
 Wednesday " " " mid week shopping
 Thursday " " " bedding changed and bedrooms thoroughly cleaned
 Friday " " " furniture polished, windows cleaned and week-end shopping,
 Saturday " " " front room carpet cleaned by sprinkling with damp tea leaves and then brushing, outside drains scrubbed and disinfected and surround whitened with hearth stone, front doorstep and tiled path to the front gate washed.

We all helped on Saturday, George's job was to blacklead the range, and bars of fire, also to rub the steel parts with emery, also the fender.

Our other brother cleaned knives, forks, and spoons, washing them all afterwards to remove the "Monkey Brand". My sister and I, cleaned and polished the brass stair rods, and door knobs.

When the boys were old enough to work, we inherited these tasks as well.

There were no labour saving devices, and had there been, we could not have afforded them.

It was a case of down on your knees to wash, scrub and polish floors, and plenty of "elbow grease" for all other tasks.

The result was a lovely shine on everything and the smell of polish and disinfectant.

Monday was not anyone's favourite day. We all disliked it, most of all Mother, Washing Day.

In the back kitchen was a large copper built into the corner, and on Monday morning, my father would get up very early, fill the copper with water, and light a fire underneath.

After preparing our breakfast, Mother would set to work, Soaping the clothes, and rubbing them on a ridged wooden board, ~~then~~ ^{and} ~~into~~ the copper to boil, Then rinsing, blueing, and starching, We had a large wooden roller mangle through which you passed the clothes squeezing out the water, by turning the wheel by its handle, The clothes were then hung on the line to dry.

In winter the back door was closed, and the room would be filled with steam, and the smell of soap.

Washing over, clearing up commenced. The fire ~~was~~ under the copper was raked out, the copper emptied of water, and whitened with hearthstone, and the tiled floor washed.

I hated our meal on Monday, it was always the same, Cold meat, "Bubble and Squeak", which was left over potatoes and cabbage from Sunday, mixed ^{and} fried together, and remains of Sunday's fruit pie. We children loathed Friday evenings. It was bath night, also hair washing. We yelled when the soap got into our eyes. Worse was to come, the mighty dose of ~~liquorice~~ liquorice powder. Every child was purged on Friday night. We would protest, but to no avail. I can still remember the taste of that horrible brown concoction, and the trouble we had to force it down. Afterwards we were allowed to read our "comic", which made up a little for what we had endured.

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Saturday was the best day of the week.

After we had completed our household tasks and ~~been~~ given our pocket money, we had time before our midday meal, to visit our local shop, to buy our sweets. This was a serious business, not to be hurried. We only had sweets at the week-end, and so we tried to get the best value for our money.

Sometimes, instead of sweets, I would buy a "Surprise Packet" which might contain a ring or brooch, Japanese "flowers" tightly coiled slivers of coloured wood, which, when soaked in water, unravelled out to form amazingly pretty flowers.

On Saturday afternoons in Summer, we would play with our friends in the field at the end of our row of houses. On a bank at one side of the field was a huge elm tree, whose roots were enormous, and protruded from the ground to form "chairs", and one long root a "sofa".

We would picnic there on jam sandwiches, broken biscuits, cold tea or home-made lemonade. On winter Saturdays we were allowed to go to the "pictures" in the afternoon.

Slough had no real cinema then, no films were shown in the Public Hall, a building used for every kind of function.

The floor was level, and there was always a rush for the front seats. The unlucky ones at the back, especially if they were small, had difficulty in seeing the screen. As the projection room was also on the same level, during the showing of the news, several boys at ^{the back} would stand up and wave their arms, and of course, their shadows would be shown on the screen.

There was a pianist, who watched the screen, and thump out the appropriate music for each film, it could hardly be heard, as we all booed and hissed the villains.

We thrilled to the adventures of Pearl White in "The Exploits of Elaine". The Broken Coin etc. These films

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were in serial form, and each episode ended with Pearl either tied to a railway track, with an express train thundering towards her, in a locked room with water rising rapidly, or tied to a platform, with a circular saw moving towards her. Then on the screen would flash the caption "To be continued."

The boys liked Tom Mix, and cowboys and Indians, and would act out, on the way home, what they had seen on the screen.

We girls wished we had curls like Mary Pickford, and both boys and girls practiced walking like Charlie Chaplin.

I was almost 4 years old at the outbreak of the First World War. The fact that the country was at war, did not mean much to me, but as time went on, food became scarce, and rationing was introduced. One did not register with one butcher or grocer as in the 1939-45 war.

I remember waiting in queues, for groceries or meat, with my mother, only to find when our turn came, supplies had run out, and we had to try somewhere else. Everyone was eager, and yet afraid to read the newspapers and dreaded the knock of the telegraph boy, with the news of a son or husband missing or killed.

It was terrible for the soldiers in the mud and cold of the trenches. My eldest brother enlisted as soon as he was eighteen. My mother sent him whatever she could spare in food parcels. Even potatoes. They were so short of food.

George was killed in 1917, at the age of nineteen. I remember vividly one night, when staying with my Aunt and Uncle, at their home at Se near Lewistham, the sound of gun fire waking me, and on looking out of the window, I saw a German Zeppelin caught in the glare of the searchlights. It was an unforgettable sight. The Zeppelin was brought down at Infield.

It was so sad after the war ended, to see the demobilised soldiers, wearing medals, singing in the streets for money, or selling matches or bootlaces. How bitter they must have felt. There was no work for them.

On Sunday afternoons my sister and I attended Sunday School (unwillingly sometimes). My sister, who was a bit of a tomboy, would rather be swinging dumb bells with the boys, or following one of her favourite pastimes, racing snails on an upturned wheelbarrow.

Sunday School was held in the Church Institute. No child went unless they had "best" clothes to wear. I hasten to add that my parents were no wealthier than our neighbours, but the aforementioned Aunt and Uncle were childless, and took a great interest in our welfare. Auntie made a lot of our clothes, or bought material for Mother to make up, and I am sure they paid for quite a few other things as well. After tea on Sunday evenings in summer, we would go for walks with our parents, usually along the canal tow-path to Langley.

The tow-path was gay with dog roses, honeysuckle, and cow parsley in the hedgerows, and the barges, carrying coal etc. to ~~London~~ ^{Worcester & Rayton} and pulled by horses, were a pleasant sight, with their gaily painted buckets, water cans, and jugs displayed on the deck. In Summer, we had a Sunday School treat.

We always went to Burnham Beeches, just a few miles from Slough.

We travelled in well cleaned coal carts, loaned by the local coal merchants, who also supplied a carter. Forms were put inside for us to sit on. They were open carts, but I don't remember it ever raining. We sang as we went along, at the tops of our voices.

On arriving, we played games, had tea, which was set on long trestle tables, with forms on each side

Afterwards, we spent our money, so carefully saved, on fancy goods. We always took home a present for Mum. On the way home, we sang again, jingles passed down for years, and would arrive home tired and grubby, but very happy. We never went away for holidays, except to relatives.

I was 13 when I saw the sea for the first time, I was very disappointed. A vast expanse of cold looking water, I much preferred the country, I still do.

As we got older, my sister and I attended the 11 o'clock service at St Mary's Church.

On the way we had to pass the workhouse, it was sad to see the inmates, (who ~~not~~ were excused work on Sundays) standing by the hedge facing the road, hoping passers-by would give them tobacco or cigarettes.

Each season brought its own delights, Springtime meant warm sunshine, walks to Wexham Woods, to gather primroses and violets, also bluebells, travelling along the dusty roads, hardly more than lanes, with no traffic hazards, perhaps a cart or two would pass. We were always accompanied by our brother. The late summer was blackberry time, the best were always to be found in 'Black Park'.

So off we went armed with walking sticks, (to pull down the higher branches) and baskets and Dad's enamel tea container with a lid.

Mother came with us. She probably thought we would eat too many berries if alone, and bring home half-ripe berries. We always arrived home scratched, and stained with fruit juice.

When the frosts arrived, the sweet chestnuts began to fall. They were gathered, the cases split open and the nuts extracted, we baked them on the bars of the fire, or on a shovel placed over the fire.

It was important to slit the top of each nut, or when they got hot, they would fly across the room.

Each year in early autumn a fair came to the grounds of the local hotel, and we saved our money to spend on the roundabouts and swingboats. Sometimes we were lucky enough to win a small prize on the hoop-la stall.

Then winter, and the preparations for Christmas. Mum would buy the ingredients for the Christmas puddings and cake. Our task was the sticky one of stoning the raisins, made more bearable by being allowed to eat some.

Excitement rose as Christmas drew nearer.

Every New Year our father made a tin box, with a slot in the lid. He soldered the top on, so that no one would be tempted to open it, and he and mother would put in each week, as much money as they could spare.

Just before Christmas, Dad would open the box, and we all helped to count the money, and on Christmas Eve we shopped in the High Street for our Christmas fare.

All the shops looked bright and gay with holly and mistletoe. The butchers and poulterers, had Turkeys, chickens and rabbits, also pheasants and other game birds hanging on hooks inside and outside their shops. All the shops stayed open until 10 or 11 pm, on Christmas Eve.

We had finished making our presents for our parents some time before, perhaps a book-mark for Dad, a pin cushion or a hair tidy for Mum. Hair tides were always used, and were made from a circle of cardboard,

covered with whatever scraps of material we could find a half circle of card larger than the first similarly covered, bent and attached to the circle, forming a pocket, into which you put hair combs. They hung from dressing table mirrors. We made our own paper chains

5 strips of coloured paper, looped through each other and stuck together with (home made) flour and water paste. The boys gathered holly, which was placed behind the pictures and looked lovely.

To return to the shopping on Christmas Eve, our parents would buy a chicken, a piece of bacon, Fruit, Nuts, chocolates, a box of crackers, and a bottle of wine and mineral water. The other purchases were ^{kept} a secret from us.

We hung up our black woollen stockings, and tried to keep awake, but I never ~~managed~~ succeeded. My sister managed to keep awake once, and now Dad dressed in Mother's red dressing gown. I do wish she had gone to sleep, or not told me. I wanted to go on believing in Father Christmas. On Christmas morning we were awake very early, before it was light and would try to guess what was in our stockings. We could not light the candle, as we were not allowed matches.

Always in the foot of the stockings was an orange, apple and nuts, but it was the other small packages that intrigued us.

We also had one large present each, usually a book, or a game.

We were too excited to eat much breakfast, but the dinner was worth waiting for. The chicken, brown and succulent, boiled bacon, potatoes, brussels sprouts and parsnips. Finally, the Christmas pudding into which Mum had put some silver threepenny pieces. I don't know how she managed it, but she cut it so that we each had a coin.

After the washing up, no one wanted to move, so we children read our books, or played board games, and at tea time, all we could manage was a piece of cake, and we pulled crackers. In the evening we listened to our old gramophone, and played games.

On Boxing day, Mother was able to rest a little, with only vegetables to cook and mince pies to heat. Birthdays were special, cards and small presents, from our parents, they were usually an item of clothing. Aunts and Uncle would always send a birthday card, enclosing a postal order.

At school, we were allowed to choose the morning hymn. We never had Birthday parties. No one at that time could afford them.

There were several annual events which I love enjoying. The Marathon was run from Windsor Castle to Hyde Park. We would watch the runners go by, and cheer them on.

On Boat Race day we all wore our light or dark blue favours, but unless someone had an evening paper we would not know the result until the next day. Another yearly event was Founders Day at Eton College. If the 4th of June happened to be on Friday (no school the next day), our parents would take us to see the fireworks display which ended the days events.

The boys parents and friends were on one side of the river, and the public on the other. Crowds of people would watch the boys row down the river, dressed in white flannel trousers, blazers and straw hats, and after dark, the fireworks display would commence. It was a wonderful sight, and always ended with set pieces, "Gloria Etona" and of course "God save the King".

Then we would walk home, it was quite a long way. We were tired, but it was exciting to be out so late.

Another rare treat was to visit relatives in London. When we did so, we had to get up very early, because ~~was~~ the only way we could afford the trip, was to catch the workmans train, which cost 1/- or 5p each return. It was a slow train, stopping at every station, and was usually crowded by the time it reached Paddington Station.

If we hadnt time, or were too excited to eat any breakfast, on arriving my father used to buy us a bun or toast at the A.B.C stop which was opposite the Station. We also had a cup of tea, in a thick white cup. Then a ride in a bus or tram to where our relatives lived. In the afternoon, Father would take us to a museum or picture gallery. They were free, and Dad was a great believer in furthering our education, but really they were a bit beyond our appreciation.

These events, which were so thrilling to us, would probably seem tame and even laughable to modern children, but we were very happy with our simple pleasures. I was never very robust as a child. I was slightly deaf, and had a lot of trouble with my ears.

My Mother, although suffering from heart trouble, was determined to see that everything possible was done to improve my hearing, and took me to hospitals in London and Windsor. After a bit of treatment I became less deaf.

For the ailments most children have, Mumps, Chicken Pox, etc. most mothers treated their children without the aid of a doctor.

When I caught scarlet fever, which I had rather badly, my sister stayed with a friend, and my poor mother nursed me. Nowadays one would be whisked off to hospital.

I was alone in my bedroom for eight weeks. Only Mother was allowed in, and when she did so, she would cover her hair, and put on a disinfected overall. On the inside of the door hung a sheet, also disinfected, and when I had a bath, also with disinfectant added, my poor mother had to bring up a bath and buckets of hot water.

How she survived it all without collapsing I'll never know. She was the only ^{other} person that came to see me was the doctor, a lovely man, who kept an eye on Mother. So when I was finally pronounced free of infection, the mattress etc was taken away and treated, in case any germs still lingered. No one else in the family caught the disease.

We always ate good wholesome filling food. Breakfast usually consisted of porridge, or toast and marmalade. The others liked dripping toast, with dripping from the Sunday joint, ~~was~~ ^{and} rich with meat juice, I hated dripping, and was never made to eat it.

Until we had our own chickens, we only had a boiled egg once a week. When we had eggs from our own hens, we ate them more often. There is nothing so delicious as a free range egg. The taste is entirely different from those eggs we get from those poor battery hens, who never ever use their legs, they are just egg machines.

For our midday meal we always had cold meat on Monday, then on Tuesday Mother minced the remainder of the joint and made a delicious cottage pie.

We always had lots of suet puddings, Liver and Bacon pudding, made with bacon pieces, which could be bought cheaply. Steak and Kidney or just meat pudding, Stews with dumplings

We sometimes had steamed fish with parsley sauce, and always Sausages on Saturday, or fried Liver and Bacon.

For "afters" lots of milk puddings, rice, semolina, sago or tapioca. I could not manage to eat tapioca, it was slippery and looked liked white frogs eggs! With any stale bread Mum made delicious bread puddings.

More suet puddings! Jam Poly-Poly, Spotted Dick with lots of fruit, or plain suet pudding with jam or syrup. On Sunday Mum baked a fruit pie, and jam tarts from the left over pastry.

She also baked a large cake, sometimes a fruit cake, sometimes a seed cake with corroway seeds. I hated that! For tea, we had lots of bread and butter, or jam, toasted muffins or bread and cake. We loved to use the long-handled toasting fork and hold it in front of the fire to brown the toast. It was delicious made that way. While doing this, we would see

pictures in the fire, beautiful caves, weird animals, or fairy castles.

We occasionally had fish for tea, herrings and sprats were cheap and nourishing, and always had a cup of cocoa before going to bed.

On Sunday, Mother would probably make paste, cucumber, or watercress sandwiches and a trifle. Tins of fruit were only bought at Christmas, and therefore were a special treat.

The modern generation have no special treats,

If they fancy something, they just go and buy it, whatever the cost, which makes life very dull.

Our diet sounds very fattening, but not one of us was fat. My sister, who ate enormous meals, quite as much as Father, was always slim, and when she married, only weighed 6 1/2 stones, and was as "fit as a fiddle."

We had plenty of exercise, walked everywhere, and ate hardly any fried foods. We had regular meals, but no snacks in between, perhaps an apple or some other fruit in season.

In spite of a few unhappy times due to illness, or a death in the family, my childhood was a lovely, happy time, when the sun always seemed to shine in the summer.

I remember wanting to stay a child like Peter Pan. I loved being young.

Parents and Other.

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My Mother's parents were country people, living near each other in the village of Coggeshall, in Essex. After they married, they left the village, because there was not much employment, and very low wages. After living in Newcastle for some years, during which time my uncle, and my mother were born, they moved to London, where my Grandfather found employment. He was also caretaker of the local Church, and Church Hall.

Our paternal Grandparents, who died before I was born, lived in London. Grandfather was coachman to Lord Charles Seely, and my father was born in Princess News, Kensington, Dad, who had quite a good ringing voice, joined the Church Minstrel Troupe. He learned to play a mandoline, and met Mother at the Church.

He "courted" her, taking her out on Saturday and Sunday for walks in the park. The young men had "best" suits, carefully brushed and hung away during the week. We have a photograph of Dad, dressed in a dark jacket, and pin-striped trousers. Very dashing!

Mother's favourite flowers, were violets, and my Father would buy her a bunch for 2d or 3d each week, but he would not be seen carrying them. He would place them on his head, and cover them with his bowler hat.

Dad worked for an engineering firm. In those days it was not compulsory to supply protective clothing, and goggles, against the risk of accidents, and while working a machine, not long after getting married, a piece of steel entered his eye.

He was taken to Moorfields Eye Hospital, but the doctors could not save his sight or even the eye, which they removed.

Two representatives from the firm visited him in hospital, and offered him the sum of £100, or a job for life. He was afraid to accept the money, as he reasoned, that there would be no work for him to go back to, and it would be

difficult to find other work,
 So he agreed to the job for life, but had nothing in writing, and in later years, in the depression, he was one of the first to be dismissed.

If only he could have had the benefits workers get to-day, with lawyers fighting for huge sums in compensation, for injuries far less, than the loss of an eye.

People today do not realize how lucky they are, or perhaps how unfortunate people of my parents generation were.

The firm moved to Slough and the employees were invited to move as well. At that time there were lots of houses for rent and my parents jumped at the chance, to breathe cleaner air, and live in semi-rural surroundings.

Dad dug and planted the garden with a few vegetables, but Mother wanted to grow flowers and herbs and have a small lawn, while keeping chickens, which we eventually did.

So Father rented an allotment, in which to grow vegetables, enough to last us well into the winter. The early potatoes were eaten, the late kind put into sacks and stored, Peas and beans eaten.

Onions were dried, tied together in bunches, to be used as needed, carrots, parsnips, turnips and beetroot stored. I think Dad did very well for a town man, who had never grown vegetables before. Our father was a clever man, and a very good mathematician, who had never had an opportunity to use his skill.

He loved reading, and spent any spare money he had, which was not very often, on secondhand books. We inherited his love of reading, and he instilled in us a liking for the classics, Dickens and Shakespeare, etc.

I loved the books by Harrison Ainsworth Old St Pauls etc.

He and his fellows worked long hours Tue till 12 pm then 1 pm - till 5 or 5:30. On Saturday Tue till 12, The only holidays they had were Bank Holiday, for which they were not paid. Later, they had a compulsory weeks holiday, but received no money for the week. The men were often "laid off" when work was scarce, sometimes for several weeks, and again received no money. A loan club was started and our Father was asked to be treasurer. All the members paid a weekly sum and in an emergency, would ask for a loan, which they had to pay back before the end of the year. At Christmas the money that was due to them was paid out.

My Parents paid £13 per week in rent plus rates, and also life insurance for the family. It was usual when a baby was born, to take out a life insurance policy of 1st for week. It sounds so little, but there were policies for Mum & Dad too, and it must have taken a lot of planning to eke out the money. I think in all his life, my Father never earned as much as \$2 per week. How different now, people are always wanting more money, and getting it, pushing up the cost of living, and still not seeming to be satisfied. We had so little, yet were happy.

On Sunday, Dad was more rested, and on winter evenings would sing to us, and imitate well-known entertainers. He could dance a wonderful soft-shoe shuffle.

We also had a gramophone, one of the box types, with a large red horn. Dad loved Opera and Military Bands, and we sat listening to the records. He occasionally bought a popular record at Christmas. In the home nothing was thrown away, if it had any possible use. Underclothes (vests etc) were cut up and used for dusters and polishing rags, shoes were cleaned every day to preserve the leather, coal was bought in the summer, when it was cheaper and Dad sowed logs and stacked them ready for winter. Good clothes were

handed down, except for best clothes. Mother would make up the fire, and on the top would put dampened coal dust, which helped to che out the coal, and when hot, would give out a warm red glow.

We had a friend who mended clocks, and in return, Dad was good at repairing gramophones. We hardly needed clocks. Hooters blew at 7 a.m., at 12 p.m. and 5 and 5.30 p.m. The convent clock nearly chimed the the hours we never had a good excuse for being late home. My Mother was never idle. In the evening, her days work done, she would sit mending, darning, or altering or making a garment. She liked reading but the only time she had to spare, was for about an hour, in the afternoon, not every day.

Mum had a passion for hats. None were ever thrown away if they could be altered in any way, such as cutting the brims, turning brims up, or retrimming them. When she could afford a new hat she would buy one costing about £1/11 or even 3/11, = 14½p or 19½p, always choosing dark colours, so that they would not clash.

Her other hobby was attending auction sales. Several large houses were sold after the war, the owners moving out as factories began to move in, and paying large sums of money for property. As the sales were held in the houses being sold, I think Mother, as well as looking for a bargain, also liked to see the inside of the big houses. Mum did get some bargains, once, a pair of fur rugs, which the boys poured on, cutting pieces of fur where it did not show too much, to make moustaches. Mother let them, she was very tolerant. Once she arrived home with a three-legged milking stool.

Another hobby of Mother's, was wine making, the usual elderberry etc. and also one that was called bee wine. I never knew what it really was, but what looked like pieces of yeast would float up and down. Working

Mum said, it was not unusual to hear a loud bang in the night. The corks had a habit of popping out of the bottles.

Our Mother had a great sense of humour, and could laugh at herself, and often did. She would make the most hilarious mistakes.

For instance, one day she hurried home and said to us, "They are building a lovely little bungalow at the top of Hebridge Road, such a nice position in those trees." Dad nearly exploded, he knew what it was, but had not told us about it.

It was a public convenience, ever afterwards known to us as "Mum's Bungalow".

Our Mother fought illness all her life, and by sheer will-power lived to the age of seventy. She took no unnecessary risks, looked after herself, but would not be coddled, and of course we kept a watchful eye on her.

There was such a gap in ages between us girls and our brothers, but we all got along very well. I remembered feeling very proud when my eldest brother came home on leave from the war, and would hold my hand, and take me to his favourite shop, where he met his friends, and one could buy soft drinks to be consumed on the premises. I was a little overawed, as I was only about six years old, and they seemed grown up at eighteen or so.

The Aunt and Uncle who lived at Lee, were the only relatives close to our family, except for our grandfather, our mother's father. He was a darling, happy man, ^{who} spoiled us all.

We children would stay with our Aunt and Uncle, but only one at a time. They were not used to children. We loved them, Uncle would let us try to play his zither and we read Aunt's books very uplifting books "The Wide Wide World," "Uncle Tom's Cabin" etc.

Uncle was a nice, jolly, man. He had been in the

regular army. Joining as a boy, and after serving a period of time, became a civilian and joined the Post Office. He was always very smart in his uniform, and had a flat topped hat.

Auntie was orphaned at an early age, and was brought up in an Orphanage. From the one or two photographs we have seen, the girls all looked quite happy in their spartan surroundings.

The girls, when old enough, were entered into service with clergymen. Auntie was very happy with the vicar's family ⁱⁿ which she found a position. When she married Uncle, they were sorry to lose her, and the wedding present they gave her, a full tea service, bone china, is still in the family, almost intact.

Auntie always wore clothes in the Edwardian style, with high boned lace choker collars, which reached to her chin, and her hair piled up in the "cottage loaf" style. She never changed her style.

In our small road, lived a rather eccentric lady, who for some obscure childish reason, we called Auntie Acid Drop. She had short cropped curly grey hair, and one passion, brass bands.

If the Salvation Army came round on Sunday morning, she would leave everything, and would be out in the road singing, and when they marched off, she would go with them, everything else forgotten. Her son wore hob-nailed boots, of which he was very proud. We used to watch him, leaning against the gate, counting the nails, to make sure he had not lost any.

Mrs Hawkins, who lived at the top of the road, was very badly crippled. She looked very like our idea of a witch. She never went out, but would wait, peeping round the corner of her house waiting for a child to come along, then she would call, and ask them to stop for her. I used to run

part her house as far as I could, but she caught me sometimes. Her husband had been the local muffin man, and she had a huge range in her kitchen, in which they used to cook the muffins.

As she looked so witch-like, I always thought of Hansel and Gretel, and imagined being popped into the oven.

We had four local shops.

Mr. Bergant, a barber, was also a photographer. We have a photograph, taken by him, of my sister and I, standing stiffly upright, hand in hand, me with my head on one side, and my sister smiling happily.

One of the four shops was a sub-post office, and they were also newsagents, and the end shop was a general store which sold practically everything, including warts.

Mr. Bowles, who mended boots and shoes, lived in a nearby road, and carried on his business from a shed in his garden. My father mended his own working boots, but all best shoes were taken to Mr Bowles.

Milk was delivered by a man pushing a wooden hand cart on which was a milk churn. From the sides of the cart hungy metal "dippers" of various sizes. The milkman filled his oval shaped containers from the churn, hungy one or two dippers onto it, and carried it to the door, where the housewife was waiting with a jug, into which was measured the required amount. Later, the hand cart was replaced by a horse and cart.

The baker called each day, with lovely crusty cottage loaves, so different from the soft, tasteless bread we buy today. If the housewife was out, when the baker came, he left it on the doorstep unwrapped, Mother always left a basket on the step.

All this sounds very unhygienic, but no one seemed to come to any harm.

The knife-grinder appeared periodically, Most people

sharpened their knives with a steel, but the scissors and knives needed a real sharpening occasionally. On Sunday mornings "Chubby Wild" would arrive, ralling winkles and watercress, loaded on a coster barrow, one side higher than the other. He had converted it into a cart, by adding shafts to the handles, and harnessing it to a donkey.

Chubby had a peg-leg, a wooden stump like Long John Silver, with which he would prod the donkey to make it trot. His final call was the "Dolphin", where he would drink his profits, but he always bought the donkey a pint of beer, which it thoroughly enjoyed.

We children loved it when the men with the windmills came round. We would run to ask our mother for a jam jar, in exchange for which we were given a windmill.

The gypsies were frequent visitors, not very welcome. They sold clothes pegs, which the men made, and paper flowers.

There were always a lot of tramps around when I was a child. They would always have a tin. Sometimes they had some tea, and would ask for boiling water to be poured on, and sometimes they asked for tea, which my mother always provided. She also added milk and sugar, and provided bread and cheese. They never left our house empty-handed.

The tramps would wait till the workhouse could take them for the night. Up early in the morning, having had breakfast, and their tasks done, they would move on to another town or village.

I felt sorry for them, but my father said they liked their way of life, and would usually go into the workhouse for the winter.

Mother went to the town to do her weekly or mid-weekly shopping, and sometimes we would accompany her. Mum bought her meat from Mr Fisher, who had an old-fashioned shop with

steps going up to the door. He always wore a blue and white striped apron, and a straw hat. There was sawdust on the floor, and the large wooden chopping block, about 12 ins thick was scrubbed down every night, with first of all sawdust and a wire brush. It removed all the stains, then it was washed in the usual way.

Fish was purchased at Hardings. Lovely fresh fish, and as Mr Hardings was also a pork butcher, they made the tastiest pork sausages in the town. I have never since eaten pork sausages as good as those.

There was always a lovely smell of ground coffee from the grocers shops, and one, Newmans, had a large coffee grinder working in the window. We children were fascinated by this and would stand and look, and the assistant tending the grinder would wave to us. Then there was the greengrocers, where one could buy a "sparky" orange for 2d, one with a soft part just beginning to go bad. They were delicious. It seems so wasteful nowadays, that all those things like oranges, apples, cabbages etc, are thrown away if they are slightly past their peak, instead of being sold cheaply.

In the grocers the butter, margarine, cheese etc, was not sold wrapped in that horrible cellophane, but cut off a large slab or round as you required it. You stated how much you wanted, and the butter or margarine, was patted into shape with wooden butter pattens. Sugar and dried fruit was weighed up and put into thick blue paper bags. One could buy broken biscuits, and there were usually ~~you~~ quite a few nice pieces. Lovely!

The drapers shops were wonderful places then. One was given, or indicated a chair to sit on and the assistants were most helpful. Bale after bale of material was brought out for you to choose from, but the most fascinating things for me were the wires over the counter, from which heavy wooden cups. When any change was needed, the assistant would unscrew the bottom of the container, put in the bill

and money, screw the container back into the top partain, pull a handle, and off it would travel along the wire, to the girl in the cash desk, who would send back the change, and receipted bill.

If Mother had not spent as much as she expected to, she would buy us a doughnut or an iced bun, not to be eaten until we reached home.

Occasionally there would be an organ grinder, churning music out of his tummy old organ, with a little monkey, dressed in a suit and hat, collecting the money. He would be moved on by a policeman, and take his stand in another part of the High Street. There was always something exciting to see when we went shopping with Mother.

School

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I started school at the age of five. It was quite a long way for small legs to travel, about a mile, and as we went home for our midday meal, and back to school in the afternoon, a distance of four miles was walked every day. No mums taking children to school in cars in those days, or even buses. We just had to walk. It was the accepted thing. We girls wore white cotton pinafores with frills on the shoulders and ties with tapes at the back, for the first few years. Later, the pinafores were discarded and we were trusted to keep clean.

In my first class in the Mixed Infants, we were taught by Miss Walker, and Miss Schultz. We wrote our first letters and numbers in trays of fine sand with our finger, then progressed to slates and slate pencils, which squeaked, and with a little help, could make horrible noises. We were taught to sew on buttons, using odd pieces of material, the boys as well as girls. In the afternoons, the teacher read stories, or we crayoned pictures, which we proudly took home to show our parents.

At about 7 years old, we were separated from the boys who went to a senior boys school in a nearby street.

The whole of our school building was rather small, which meant 2 or 3 classes shared one large room. Somehow we managed to pay attention to our teacher, without listening to what was happening at the other end of the room.

In Standard 3, we were taught by one of my favourite teachers. Kind, calm, and very efficient, I learned a great deal from Miss Chambers.

My arithmetic improved, also English and composition. This teacher was a good pianist and played the piano for our morning and evening hymns. She also arranged and produced any school concerts and plays, helping us to make our costumes, mostly out of crepe paper. We had a hilarious time in

Standard 4, but learnt very little, being taught by a sweet-tempered, but very absent minded lady, who had hair which was an impossible shade of red. It was plaited, and coiled around her head. She loved music and singing and was always humming.

I remember her teaching us "The Bells of Aberdovey" "The Ash Grove" etc, and playing the harmonium, which the school had as well as the piano. We children pulled that harmonium out from the wall, once or twice a week, because Mrs Sainy - Green (that was her name) had dropped something behind it.

When she had time for our singing, she would get carried away with enthusiasm, and would nod and shake her head so vigorously that her hair pins would fall out, and her hair was always tumbling down. Just imagine the effect that had on the class!

The teacher of the next class was the most disliked in the school. She was sarcastic, never smiled, and rapped knuckles with a ruler for the slightest indiscretion. The only time Mother complained to the school, was when this teacher hit my sister on the side of her head with her ruler, breaking her glasses. She apologised grudgingly. I wonder what would happen if such a thing occurred today?

Our headmistress taught the top classes, with the help of a pupil teacher, (unqualified) as well as her administrative work. She (the headmistress) was firm but very kind, and a marvellous teacher. As she continued to live in Elough after she retired, we old pupils who had kept in touch, were invited to a little reunion party at her house, every year. Every morning we started lessons with Scripture, from 9 to 9.45, then out to the playground for drill for 15 minutes. Not like the P.T. which children have today in gymnasiums. This was just arms bend and stretch, touch our toes, and running on the spot. Then back into the classroom for Arithmetic until 10.45

After that came what we called Playtime for 15 minutes. No morning milk for us, if we were thirsty we drank water. Playtime over, the next lesson was probably Geography, or History which I loved. Our history lessons were about Britain, from the Stone Age, or about the Empire which in those days included quite a lot of countries. Recently on a television programme, a lady who had been Head Teacher at a modern school, said the only history taught at her school was about America and Russia. What has happened to patriotism?

Afternoon was the time for composition and English, my favourite subjects, alternating with singing, needlework, and drawing, (another favourite). In the summer we practised country dancing in the playground. We learned ~~to~~ a "Sword Dance", with crossed sticks instead of swords, and danced Sir Roger de Coverly, Gathering Peascods etc.

There were no school dinners provided in those days. We hurried home and back again, not lingering, or we risked getting a black mark for being late. The children who lived too far from the school for them to be able to go home to dinner, had to bring sandwiches. Each classroom was heated by a large coke stove, into which one of the teachers periodically tipped more coke. A pan of water was always on the top, to absorb ~~or see~~ the fumes. There were large square fireguards round the stoves, and our nice headmistress, feeling sorry for the girls with sandwiches in the winter, would give up some of her lunch time to make them warming cups of cocoa.

The cane was used at school, not very often, but it was considered a disgrace to be caned. If a girl was punished in this way, she was not considered to be a heroine. It was a deterrent and a punishment to be avoided.

Also the kindly discipline that was the rule was good for us, we certainly were not cowed.

or frightened. We laughed a lot and were happy. I think children must be disciplined to a certain extent, they need guidance or they feel lost. There is so much said against learning parrot fashion these days, but I think it really sinks into your brain. I can still repeat tables, and recite poetry that I learned parrot fashion. A friend and I recently tried to remember poems we learned parrot fashion, and found we could still recite almost all of. "The Wreck of the Hesperus" "The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna" "Alone Ben Adhem", "Excelsior", Not bad for over 70!

Quite frequently we read about children, or young adults taken before the courts for stealing, mugging etc, and the excuse is made that they come from deprived homes. Some of the children I went to school with really were deprived, yet not one of them ever committed even the smallest misdemeanour.

One family of four children, had parents who were never at home in the evening, they were always out drinking, consequently their mother was fit for nothing during the day, and did nothing, never prepared any meals. The children were wonderful, the older ones looked after the younger ones, kept themselves and the young ones spotlessly clean, and got their meals. Their mother committed suicide, and they continued to look after each other, and all obtained good positions when they left school, the boy becoming manager of the firm for which he worked. Another family were in a similar position. I do not remember them ever coming to school without shaven heads, because of lice and one very popular girl was often made to sit apart from the rest of us, because she was covered in flea bites. Lots of children rarely had a proper midday meal but I can honestly say they all turned into decent law abiding citizens. I am sure a lot of today's children are in the

I am sure lots of children today are in the same position as the ones we knew, and in the same way overcome their troubles. There are some wonderful young people about today, but the media only brings to our notice the hoodlums and wrongdoers, giving the impression that all teenagers are alike, which is so wrong. There was an attendance officer, who visited all the schools, and if any child had been absent several times without an explanation, he visited their homes to see why they were not attending school.

Also, we had a dreaded "head" nurse, who looked at our heads to see if anyone had lice or nits. She was very grim, and very rough. She pulled our hair, nearly tugging it out by the roots, then gave us a push in the back to show she had finished with us. We disliked her because she was so unpleasant, but I have thought about it, and have come to the conclusion that nobody could enjoy a job like that.

I quite liked school, but as I was so often away through illness, I seemed to spend all my time, catching up on what I had missed. We had our Prize Day on Empire Day, and sang patriotic songs. The prizes were presented by the rector, and the most coveted was the Bishop's prize. There were also certificates for good attendance, one of which I never obtained. My sister did, she loved school, and would never stay away even ~~and~~ with a steamy cold.

I tried hard at school, and in spite of so much illness, I think when I left, I had really learned a great deal, which was to help me in later life.

Recreations.

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We were never at a loss for ways to use our leisure time. When we were very young we played Hide & Seek and Ring-a-Roses. Skipping was a favourite pastime. It was something one could do alone, or with friends. We had no fancy skipping ropes with handles, any old piece of rope would do as long as it was thick enough.

If someone had a very long rope, a worn part of a clothes line perhaps, it was turned by two girls, one each side of the road or playground. Others had to run in at just the right moment and skip. If one missed they were "out".

We also had wooden hoops and sticks. We bowled the hoops tapping them with the sticks. The boys had iron hoops and a hook. They would bowl the hoop, hook hook the hook round and away. In the field, we played cricket, using a shaped piece of wood and a soft ball.

Another favourite game was rounders, the English equivalent of American baseball.

We girls would play the age old ringery game. "The Farmers in his Den", "Poor Jenny sits a-weeping", "Here we come gathering nuts in May".

Another game I remember was 'Simon Says' in which one did everything that Simon said, but were caught out by the caller when she said 'Do this' without mentioning Simon.

Then of course, there were tops and whips. We chalked the tops with gay colours. They looked lovely whirling round. Boys also liked catapults and pea-shooters. We bounced balls, ~~throwing one by one over the ball,~~ but they were just hollow rubber balls and split easily.

Indoors we played card games, Snap, Sevens, Beat your Neighbour, Slappy Families, also Draughts, Snakes and Ladders and Ludo, also Halma.

The boys had a ring board, a circular board with hooks. Underneath each hook was a number

One played the game with rubber rings, rather like the rings now used on fruit preserving bottles. You aimed for the hook with the highest number, and added up the scores.

Another favourite pastime of my sister and I was making paper beads. Any coloured paper would do, but we found scraps of wall paper were best for this purpose. You also needed paste, and a steel knitting needle. The method was to cut an elongated triangle, paste it on the wrong side, then starting with the wide end, one rolled it round the knitting needle, slipped it off, and there was a pretty bead. After making several, when they were dry, we strung them together with thread.

We also pressed flowers, learnt to knit, and to do french knitting, which you did with the aid of a cotton reel with four small nails in the top. One wound the wool round the nails twice, then hooked the ~~top~~^{top} round over the ~~bottom~~^{top} and pulled it through the hole in the cotton reel by means of the end of wool at the beginning.

I loved dressing up, and as I never had very long hair, and longed for plaits, I made some from rags and attached them to my own hair, and would keep tossing them over my shoulders. The boys in the street were more venturesome, but they really did not do much harm. In a row of terrace houses, two front doors are close to each other. The boys would ask their mothers for strong thread and attach each end to adjacent door knockers. Then they would knock one door and run off, but hide nearly where they could see the fun. As one door was opened in answer to the knock, the next knocker would be lifted. When the first door was closed, the second knocker would bang bringing the neighbour to the door. This might go on for some time before the occupants realised what had happened. Of course, the boys

were doubled up with laughter.

My favourite pastime was reading, as it was for us all. Mother had trouble with us at bedtime,

The plea was always, "Just one more chapter please"

This went on until Mum really got cross, and off we went to bed.

When we were older, and had more pocket money, my brother, sister and I would hire bicycles from a garage in the town for 6ⁿ or 2½ⁿ per hour, and ride around the countryside. They were awful old machines, but we enjoyed those trips.

I left school at 14 years old, and found a position in an office, earning the princely sum of 7/6 or 37½^p per week. After one months trial, if you were suitable, your wage was raised to 10/- or 50^p per week. After that, it depended on your ability and hard work as to whether you received a rise, no automatic yearly increases as today.

When I was sixteen, there was a general strike, we thought it rather fun. The Eton College boys drove buses and delivered food in lorries, and all sorts of people helped out. In 1933 or 34 was a World Depression, and ~~things~~ the situation was grim. I had by that time met my future husband, and when we married in 1935, money was still scarce.

We moved to a bungalow in Biffenham, a village 2 miles from Slough, which sad to say is being built up all around the outskirts. In 1937 our daughter was born.

We still had to live carefully, but were always able to afford a holiday each year.

We had a car, but both my husband and I loved to walk, and he shared my love of reading.

When I was a child, the days were never long enough, for all we wanted to do.

For me, at the age of 73, the situation is still the same. I am now a widow, with a

wonderful daughter and son-in-law and a lovely granddaughter. My sister still lives in Slough, and to her I am still the little sister, to be spoiled occasionally. I knit a lot, and love gardening. I also belong to an over 60s art class, and paint in oils, and as a member of the W.R.V.S. I help at a local hospital one day a week. I am not a television addict, but have never lost my love of reading.

Like many others of my generation, I have lived through two world wars, a General Strike, and a World Depression, and have seen amazing changes in our way of life. We used to rush outside to see a little aeroplane, but take hardly any notice of the monster planes roaring overhead. Super and Hyper markets, have taken the place of the family grocers. Medicine has made huge steps forward. Tuberculosis is almost wiped out. It was very prevalent when I was young. Two car families are commonplace. The clean air act wiped out smog, but we now get ~~dirty~~ diesel and petrol fumes.

There have been lots of other changes, but in spite of these, I find that people are much the same as before. They have more money now, and like to "keep up with the Joneses", but in an emergency, or any trouble, they are only too ready to help out.