Pollen on my shoes

Memories of an
Odd Down Childhood
In the 1930's
by
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GWENDOLINE COTTAGE

I can well remember as a child asking my mother for an old mat to lay on in the fields which surrounded our cottage. The long days of Summer seemed so hot, so very hot, I dragged the mat through the buttercups, watching them bow under its weight, and then springing back into their original position. My shoes even as I watched became more and more colourful. I spread the mat with the carefulness of a small child, and I went to each corner in turn and pulled it neatly into shape. I bent and picked a buttercup and ran to my sister, laughing and pushing the buttercup against her chin, calling to her how much she liked butter.

I sank in a heap on the mat, and then turned and lay flat, my chin cupped in my hands, watching the bees sailing over the sea of gold, here and there visiting a flower. How I wondered did they know which flower to stop and alight on. As I lay there in the warm sun, I felt a peace, I knew I belonged there. This was home. I stretched, and turned lazily over. Somewhere, way above the down a tiny lark was singing as it climbed higher and higher into the blue sky.

HAY MAKING

My thoughts began to wander, how long the grass had grown! What a lot of different grasses there were! Dogs tail, Cocksfoot, Rye, Timothy, and our very own favourite the Common Quaking Grass. Try as we would to hold it in our hot sticky hands as still as could be, it seemed impossible. We called them Wigwams.

When would my father begin cutting the grass around the cottage ? The grass had such a sweet smell. Perhaps tonight, he would go to the long low shed, and fetch out the long handled scythe, and with a word of warning to us children to keep well clear, we would watch him swing the scythe backwards and forwards through the grass. It would take a long time to get through the whole field, and if the weather turned unsettled, then he would only be able to cut a small patch at a time. But time did not matter, as long as it was done, for the sweet grass would make wonderful hay for our cow Ivy. She was a Jersey, and Father had bought her from a farm on Combe Down. The cream she gave

us was both nourishing and very rich. She was so very gentle, and we children would climb on top of the gate which kept her in the paddock. Ivy would amble up, lowing softly and place her head in the crook of our arms, and half close her eyes, while we stroked her between the horns, and whispered our secrets to her. But before she could be fed the sweet meadow hay, there was the joy of making it. My father would call to us, my sister, Christine, and myself, and give us a long wooden rake, to turn the hay. We did this several times a day while Father was away at work. I might say we also played as well, jumping into the piles of hay, hiding in it, building houses, boats, castles, seats, and dens. But if the weather kept fine, we would soon have to help rake it up, and Smut, our pony, would be hitched to the small flat cart to pull the hay in.

Father would gather together lots of sticks, and place them in a criss cross pattern to form a large square, or oblong. Many sticks were needed for this, and old bean poles and pea sticks, from our garden, and friends and neighbours, were always useful at this time. The hay would be placed little by little on the sticks, so carefully and very neatly. With each return of Smut from the field, the pile of hay grew and grew, until it towered way above us. "How much higher ?" we would call excitedly. "Another load or two" was his reply, for he knew that the hay would sink quite a lot as it dried out. As soon as the hay had all been gathered, and before the next storm was upon us, it always seemed to us a message would be sent to a neighbouring farmer friend in a village close by, to ask if he would come to thatch the rick.

Two or three weeks later, we would see the local farmer come cycling over the field along the track. In some ways, he was rather like a rick himself, for his hair was bleached by the summer sun to the colour of ripened wheat, and his face was very bronzed. "How be ee then, did yer father git that straa." I would run to fetch my mother, and wiping her floury hands in her large white pinny she would show him where Father had put the straw, twine, and spars. "Thanks missus, I'll call ee if I needs anything."

Thanking him, my mother would hurry back to the house to see to the apple pie or pudding in the old black oven, by the side of the fire. She usually cooked all our cakes and pies, but not our bread as we had an excellent baker who called daily. But more of "Noad's" the bakers later.

Back to Haymaking and Smut the pony. Smut our pony was an Exmoor pony. He was very nice, but liked to take the occasional nip if we weren't careful. We had been taught to hold our hands out quite flat and let him take food we had for him from the palm of our hands, but sometimes we gave him sugar on the old black coal shovel, which he always licked as clean as new.

One day my father who was frequently called upon to visit a sick animal, or see to a bunch of piglets, or even kill a pig for the house. He (Father was a registered slaughterman) was going to visit a farm in a village somewhere near Trowbridge. We asked if we might go to. There was much discussion with Mother, as it was to be a long journey and we wouldn't be back too early either. "Very well " said Father. "I will go and hitch Smut to the trap and you can both come." We clapped our hands in glee, and ran to Mother to be washed, with best household soap, (no toilet soap for us). Our hair was brushed and combed until it shone, and then held in position with a brown bone slide. Dressed in two fresh gingham dresses, we ran to find Father, who was hitching Smut to the trap. The pony appeared rather restless while being harnessed. However when we started he seemed quieter.

My Father had placed a strong wooden shelf across from side to side of the trap, but it was not nailed down, as he liked to be able to move it backwards or forwards as needed on the slopes, and hills, as we rode along. One on each side of Father, there we sat as near perfect as possible. At the end of the track leading from our house to the road, there was a slight descent and then a sharp rise to the road (Rush Hill). Smut, being rather fresh decided to take this with a rush, and with a whisk of his tail, and a blow through his nostrils, and a flash of the whites of his eyes, there we were all three of us, in a heap on the floor of the pony trap. Father was struggling to get up as quickly as possible to steady Smut, who had bolted off as quick as he could up Rush Hill, and on towards St Lukes School as it was then called. "Whoa there" Father called, "Whoa", and gently, and carefully Father managed to bring the wayward Smut under control, just before we reached Noad's Corner.

However it was two not so spick and span girls who arrived at the farmhouse some while later with their Father. How the farmer's wife laughed, and whilst Smut was given a good rest, drink, and food, we were armed with large paper bags, and told to go and pick as many apples as we could from the orchard, to take home for apple pies.

TWO COTTAGES

Our cottage was one of a pair, standing on their own in the middle of a field, at the top of Rush Hill. I was one of four children, being born in the cottage in the early morning of November 12th. 1928. My brothers and sister had all been born elsewhere. Father owned the two cottages, and a quantity of land around them. But other land, to the west of the cottages, was common land, where animals could be grazed free of charge. At one time I remember there was a large brown goat tethered on a chain, near the road. "Why keep it on a chain all the time?" it seemed very cruel. But I did not know then, as now how mischievous goats can be.

DENNY – Mrs Densley No2 Gwendoline Cottages

Our next door neighbour, was known to us children as Denny, this being an abbreviated form of her surname. Denny always fascinated us small children with tales of the past, and some of her songs also, which Denny would often sing to us. We loved to wander in and out of her little cottage, with its white scrubbed top table, and stainless steel fender and irons. Sometimes in the mornings we would see her cleaning the steel with Bath Brick, and emery cloth, or black leading the old range, then carefully sorting the cinders from the ash, and placing the cinders back on the fire. On the hob was a large black kettle. Denny would often tell of how one winter's night a little grey mouse had come down the chimney and sat on the kettle, washed his face, and then turning had ran back up the chimney to his hole.

The linoleum on the floor was a mosaic design polished each day with "Mansion" Polish. Colourful rag rugs were scattered here and there with a very large one at the wide hearth. These were made by Denny from old coats and garments, which she had cut up into strips, and pegged through hessian. The china on the dresser was neatly stacked, and there was usually a china candlestick, with the remnants of a candle caked to its side. The walls were adorned with pictures and photos of generals, who had fought in bygone wars. Sometimes, while we were sitting and watching Denny there would be a loud P.O.P. from the cupboard under the stairs. Denny would smile, and taking down the candle, she would light it and disappear into the inky darkness, to return a few minutes later with a stone jar in one hand, and a cork and a candle in the other. "The wine is good this year. Be ready in time for Christmas. You shall help me pick the yellow dandelion heads for the wine next year if

you are good" said Denny, and indeed we did when April came, staining our hands brown with the milk from the flowers.

Denny liked bright colours. Her dresses were always of vivid shades of blues, acid lemon, reds, and emerald green. Her favourite was a royal blue and lemon dress which she had knitted.

Sometimes we were allowed to climb the little wooden staircase which led to Denny's bedroom. The walls had striped pink wallpaper, with roses strewn down in bands. But it was the bed we liked here most of all. It was an old feather bed, which she had made herself, baking and cleaning the feathers first, in the little oven under the hob. Denny would strip the bed, to the striped ticking and this she would pounce on, as a cat with a mouse, shaking, and scratching, pummelling and beating. We girls begged to be allowed to have a go. Then we fell upon the bed beating it with our small fists, till Denny called a halt. Soon the bed was remade with freshly laundered sheets, which were never ironed, but had been put through the large wooden rollers, of Denny's enormous mangle several times. Last of all would come a large patchwork quilt. Again this was made of very bright scraps of material, some of which had stories attached to them.

Before returning to the kitchen below we would often ask Denny to go to the bottom drawer of an oak chest. She knew we wanted to see her beautiful wedding dress and veil complete with the orange blossom.

From time to time usually on Denny's Birthday or when Mum had gone to town, and Denny was keeping an eye on us for an hour, or for some festive occasion, Denny would decide she would give us a treat. Just inside her living room was a large gramophone, and all complete with a large trumpet on the top. In the cupboard of this magnificent piece of furniture were many records, which Denny had collected. With a word to us to stand to one side Denny would pick up the rag rugs which she had so carefully made, and also the coconut matting. If it was good weather, out the mats would go into the yard for an airing, and the fun would commence.

Round and round the table we would dance, march, or waltz according to the record being played. I am not sure that mother really approved of this entertainment, for my mother rather frowned upon dancing of any kind, having had a rather strict upbringing herself. But nevertheless we girls thought it

great, and time and time again we would beg Denny to play us the gramophone please. We would slide the pocket for the new needles on the corner of the instrument backwards and forwards, but we knew never, never, to touch the record, or we may never have this wonderful contraption on again. Suddenly between the records, there was a thudding, sound in the fireplace. There it was again. Mother was knocking with the poker on the burr of our fireplace, Mother was back from town, and it was time for dinner, tea, or supper. How we longed for just one more record, but if we did not heed the warning, we may be banned from our fun, so we spilled out from the cottage, up the yard avoiding the rag rugs, and rounding the water butt, and skipped straight into our scullery.

DENNY'S VISITORS

Denny had many people visit her. Sometimes we would see an old lady struggling across the field with a very large basket on her arm. As she neared the cottages, we could see it was the old umbrella lady, going to Denny for a cup of tea and a chat. She was as brown as a berry, and on her head she had an old black velour hat, the brim of which was turned down against the gales or the hot sun, whatever the weather. From beneath her hat we could see two tight pigtails peeping, these were looped up to keep them dry and tidy. On her feet she wore boots, which came some way up her spindly legs. These were buttoned tightly, also to keep out the bad weather.

Her basket held many fascinating things, which use to thrill and delight us, beautiful lace, colourful buttons, hairpins, hairslides, elastic, safety pins, and of course several umbrellas, some to be mended, and some for sale. We loved to see her come, and wondered, where did she live? Under a hedge perhaps, or in a wood, or a tree house. Perhaps one day we would find out. We asked Denny, but if she knew she never told us.

Gypsies often called at the cottages, calling first at our door and then on to Denny's. They sold wooden pegs, and paper roses and chrysanthemums, made from wood. The flowers often adorned Denny's windowsill.

Another traveller was a very old man, with a moustache singed at the corners, and he wore a suit which looked many sizes to big, and indeed it had seen better days. His shabby old grey trilby was so battered and flattened permanently by a square box, which he always carried everywhere on top of his

head. On rare occasions we caught a glimpse into this box, which we found held tomatoes, lettuces, oranges, apples, or other greengrocery in season. It had been said that he once owned a horse and cart, but that he had come upon hard times, and could only manage a tomato box now.

One very hot summer day, Christine, my sister, and myself had been sent outside to play in the back yard. We looked over the field and saw a stranger coming along the track. Not the umbrella lady, not the old man, not a gypsy, but a tall upright figure wearing a beautiful turban made of silk. The colours glistened in the sun, as he made his way along the track towards the two cottages. We two disappeared into the house and told our mother. There was a tap on the door, and we hid behind her, and peeped to see this new traveller. He opened the attaché case which he had been carrying and it held beautiful silks and velvet cushion covers. But with six mouths in the family to find food for mother could not be persuaded to buy anything, and so he was sent on to Denny next door. On our next visit there, we were shown two beautiful cushion covers, each with kittens peering back at us. They looked so real. Later a silk runner covered her chiffonier top. But no matter who came to Denny's be it travellers, or acquaintances they were always found a cup of tea to help them on their way.

MONDAY WET OR FINE

On Monday mornings, wet or fine Denny would be up with the lark to light the copper in the corner of her scullery. It took quite a bit of wood, chopped and dried the night before, and buckets of coal fresh from the Somerset mines to light that copper. Next Denny would make sure the long white topped table was clean enough to scrub any stubborn stains. Then the rollers of the huge mangle would be inspected to see that they were clean and ready to take the washing before it was taken to the line. On the table she would lift an enormous grey galvanised wash tub, and wash and rub and scrub, until her washing was clean, topping up the bath as she went with panfuls from the copper in the corner. Only household soap was used with a little soda, and then with fresh rain water from the barrel outside in the yard she would rinse the clothes, two or three times and finally rinse them again in Reckitts Blue Water.

If the day was very hot we would ask her if she was going to bath the dog (a rough haired loveable mongrel). Denny loved this task as much as we

children, and I am sure Fluff must have been the cleanest dog in the neighbourhood. He stood there up to his ears in soapsuds, while we washed him over and over again, and then he also went into the blue bath, to improve his large white patches, I wonder? Then being lifted carefully out, he was carried to the side of the cottage and encouraged into the long grass, to run and rub, and shake and shake, until his coat was dry. Dear dear Fluff, I don't know how he came to his end but one day in the corner of Denny's garden there was a little mound of earth, and a jam jar filled with Denny's sweet peas, and somehow I knew, never again would we see Fluff standing in the soapsuds, or standing on his head as he often did when he wanted a titbit.

OUR GARDEN

Our garden around the cottage was in small patches as we had to have several sheds in which to keep equipment and feeding stuff for the pigs, fowls, and Ivy and Smut. In the entrance of the yard there was a rustic arch, covered with tiny pink roses, and at the side of this there was a large tree of Buddleia. In the hot July and August days, I never saw a more lovely sight than when this tree was in full bloom, and hundreds of tortoiseshell and peacock butterflies would settle on it, and bask in the sunshine, joined by many bees. Surely the honey made by those bees must have been of the very sweetest flavour. Marigolds, Lupins, Grannybonnets, Snapdragons, Salvias, Candytuft, Dahlias, Nasturtiums, and Lily of the Valley all decked our garden from time to time. They were planted as near as possible to the door of the cottage, and in the long summer evenings Father would sit with the evening paper for a while and perhaps enjoy a cigarette, whilst enjoying the beauty of their colours, before he was off again up the garden to the pig sty or to the cow shed to milk Ivy.

At the back of the sties fenced very securely from the pigs and hens, was Father's pride and joy. It was a plot of land about eighteen yards by six yards, which had seen many many loads of pig and poultry manure. Here Father grew potatoes, peas, beans, lettuces, radishes, young turnips, beetroots, in their basketfuls as the season went by. He would proudly bring them down to the house for the family meals. Only once I think did the pigs disgrace themselves and break through the fence and gobble greedily the peas, for they seemed to know that it was forbidden ground. But many, many times my Mother with her pinny flying would shoo them back from her flower garden, which she liked so much. "Back you go" she would say as she drove them

into the sty, and pushed the large metal bolt safely into position. "You just stay there until Father comes home.

All around the cottage we would hear the different songs of many birds, we children knew many of them by name: robins, wrens, and blackbirds were our favourites. While Denny loved these, she always seem to hear the cuckoo first before any of us. "I heard the cuckoo this morning. Over in Padleigh Woods" she would say. The next hour or so would find us children outside straining to see if we could hear that wonderful bird also. As the summer evenings drew to a close, I would often from the field to the west of the house, looking towards Hedgedown, see the sun setting over the distant hills of Wales, very, very far away. To us it seemed it must be the edge of the world. The great crimson ball would sink slowly until in the end, gathering momentum, it would slip from our sight. Gone we knew to wake the people of other lands. To call the children of other nations to rise and begin their daily round.

WINTER COMES

Gradually the days grew shorter, and we would find the heavy dews of the lovely days of September. How beautiful to walk by the hedges, which glistened as though, thousands of sequins had been placed by fairies, interlaced with gossamer that had been spun by many spiders during the night. We would run to pick a small soft twig, and bending it double, we ran to each web in turn gathering more and more on the stick.

Many summer flowers had now gone with the first frosts, but some like the snapdragons, defied these and stood dwarfed by the michaelmas daisies, and sunflowers, whose heavy heads would soon be cut and given to those ever hungry hens. The peas and beans were over in the vegetable plot and Father had dug the potatoes, sackfuls, before the frosts had spoiled them. Large marrows and onions were brought into the house for Mother to make her special chutney. With the coming of the Autumn, leaves from the trees and bushes began to turn yellow, gold, and bronze. In the distance, the fields turned gradually to gleaming gold before the reaper's scythe. It was such a long day for the farmers, up at dawn, working till dusk, trying with the farm hands to get the corn in safely. There were no combine harvesters, just many hands trying to make light work of the task.

The days became cooler, and the days grew shorter. Wood and fuel must now be fetched to the cottage, and coal must be ordered for the winter fires. Mother always felt happier when there was coal in the shed. It had to be brought from Bath. Plenty of oil for the paraffin lamps must be set aside in a safe place too, for in my early childhood I remember well the paraffin lamp, standing on the cloth in the centre of the table, and my Mother or Father calling to "keep the door shut, or the lamp glass will crack." But the winter brought many delights for us small children. From the cottage window, we would wait, and watch for the lamplighter to come up Rush Hill and reach the lamp at the end of the track. With his long pole he would open the glass at the top of the lamp and with a quick twist the light would shine out piercing the twilight. Then we knew it was time to draw the thick warm red curtains, they would glide over the gleaming brass rod, and shut out the shadows and gloom.

THE FARROWING

It was one evening such as this, we girls sat with Mother round a large fire. Mother had been reading to us (We had no television in those days) and we had long ago cleared up all the paper strips and scissors, with which we had made numerous paper spills to place by the side of the fireplace, to be used by Dad to light his cigarettes or by Mum to light the lamp. It seemed Dad had been gone for a very long time to the pigsties. Suddenly the door burst open and in Dad struggled, with his tweed jacket bulging. "Got something to put these in Bake."(This was his favourite shortened version of her maiden name "Baker"). He pulled five or six new-born piglets from his coat. They were placed gently in a tin bath lined with a warm woolly, the bath was then put on the hearth rug near the fire to keep warm. After making quite sure of their safety, Dad returned to the sties with the aid of a hurricane lamp to return even later, his face beaming, and muttering to himself "A lovely bunch, a lovely litter, and so even too. He took the piglets from the woolly and placed them in a box and hastened to replace the firstborn with their mother. I have known him spend hours in the sties while his sows were farrowing.

Father having returned to the sties, we would have our drink of milk, and the thrill of seeing the new-born piglets over, we would be sent to bed. The stairs led directly from the living room up to the two bedrooms above. My sister and I shared one room, and our two elder brothers the other. Mother

and Father slept downstairs in the best front room. Mother would usually read us a story, and then hear us say our prayers, and then off to sleep.

SCREAMS IN THE NIGHT

One dark night I awoke to a most fearful sound of screaming, coming again and again, I peered forward into the inky darkness, and I realised it was coming from the fields outside, or maybe I thought, was it coming from the woods nearby. I was terrified, I dived under the bedclothes, and pulled as much of the blankets as I could over me. I could still hear it . Whatever could it be. My throat was dry, I couldn't call out, and there it was again. I pushed my fingers hard into my ears. At last I came up from under the bedclothes and listened. It was quiet except for the shriek of an owl. For some while I lay there listening. I knew I had not been dreaming. But I also didn't know the answer to those terrifying noises. I never told anyone of that awful noise, and I never heard it again, but Denny said next morning, "There's been a fox around."

FRIDAY EVENINGS

Once a week, on Friday evenings, an extra large fire was made, and kettles and pans of water were placed on the black hobs to boil, at the side of the fire. Later in the evening the round bath was brought in from the large nail by the back door, where it was kept. Cold water was put in first, and then a good handful of washing soda, followed by panfuls of hot water, and lastly a large bar of red carbolic soap. We were washed thoroughly, and our hair as well. Our favourite bathtime game was blowing bubbles, we would blow with all our might, to blow the biggest and best bubble. In our excitement we often touched the side of the bath nearest the fire, and jumped when it was hot. But there was something very comforting about those baths in front the fire on winter evenings. After climbing on Mother's knee for a brisk rub down we would be enveloped in large flannelette nighties and told to sit still, while mother made us a drink of warm milk. On some Friday evenings we had to have our long hair rolled into rags.

POCKET MONEY

Pennies and halfpennies were to be treasured and worked for, mainly by running errands. We would often have to walk to Odd Down Corner, and just at the top of Wellsway there was a little wooden hut. This was the local cobblers, and we often had to take shoes or boots there for mending. But if we had been extra good, we may have had a penny in our pocket, and here, as well as mending shoes, they sold the best Jumble Bags we knew.

Another errand would be to "Noads" the bakers. At the time of my childhood Noads was still in Rush Hill. We would have to pass the bakehouse on the way, and often on a hot day we would stand and watch the bakers preparing the dough, or we may see the large oven open, and Oh! how delicious the bread smelt. A few yards along from the bakehouse, was their shop. Through the stone porch we would go and over the old flagstones, the shop was to the left, and through a glass curtained door to the right we could often see a large fireplace with a large fire, always lit it seemed to us children. Mrs Noad knew us by name and would always have a kind word for us.

Then there was Jimmy Parker the Blacksmith. His forge was on the corner of Oolite Road and Upper Wellsway. Dad would send us to ask if it was convenient to shoe Smut. We liked this errand, and would pass quite a time watching the blacksmith, sometimes shoeing horses, which had been brought in from farms and smallholdings around. The patient animals would stand quietly, occasionally blowing through their nostrils, and shaking their shaggy manes. The old blacksmith was dressed in a leather apron and an old brown trilby. Hard wearing cord trousers, and a thick shirt kept him warm. With such skill he shaped and hammered the shoes to the right size, and then fitted them on the horses hooves. The smithy was filled to its beams with bits of iron, and many many horseshoes, an altogether fascinating place.

Groceries would sometimes have to be fetched from one of the nearby shops. There was Browns a shop next to the Rose and Laurel pub in Rush Hill. I can remember large hams being hung from "S" hooks and they sold very good butter. Then a little further up the hill, in fact opposite our cottages there was Dollings. This is where we were most often sent. Sometimes for a quarter of tea, or a pound of sugar, or Dad would send us for a quarter pound of mints or a bottle of Tizer and when we were older a packet of five or ten Woodbine Cigarettes. Mrs Dolling also sold ice cream, which was made on

the premises. Even further up the hill, just beyond the turning into Old Fosse Road there was Linterns, who also sold groceries, sweets, and cigarettes. Once a week an order would have to be taken to the Odd Down Co-op, which was some way away, but as this was quite a large amount, the groceries would usually be delivered by a lad bringing them on a carrier bike. But sometimes we were told to take the order to the Co-op. In the large store all was hustle and bustle, and again the manager knew us by name. As we went into the store, to our right was a very long wooden counter, with shelves at the back holding many groceries. Facing us also there was a long wooden counter, and shelves also with a mass of goodies. In the centre of this wall, was a large door leading to the back of the store, where the orders for the customers would be put up, and where many of the dry goods would be packed. On the left side of the shop there was a high desk with a young lady, who it seemed was confronted with many books and papers, but, what Chris and I liked to watch most was the wires which criss-crossed the ceiling of the store, and which as if by magic wooden cups would speed to and fro from desk to counter, and back again carrying money to pay, or change from the bills. Then there was Allens the Paper Shop. Father would go to this shop to have his hair cut. The shop was divided in half by a curtain. The back of the shop being for Men's Hairdressing, and the front of the shop was our delight. While we waited to be served we would wander over and gaze at the large jars of sweets. What marvels could be bought with our wealth of a penny or even a halfpenny. Bars of milk chocolate, halfpenny cornets, penny cornets, topped with raspberry syrup, jelly beans packets of sweet cigarettes with a ring, lucky bags, strips of toffee, or liquorice, a bag of sweet rosebuds, watches, rings, rainbow sherbet, sugar mice, and pigs, apples, oranges, marbles, twopenny kites, and exercise books, Jumbo Bags were a real luxury, they contained an assortment of everything from heads of sugar mice, chocolates, toffees, coconut chips, chews, and biscuits. etc. etc. Somehow when we were armed with some of these delights our journey back to the cottage seemed shorter even though we often had a basket of shopping to carry for Mother. We would clutch the change wrapped in a sweet bag tightly in our hot sticky hands, so as not to lose it in the tall grass which edged the track leading back to the cottage.

BLACKBERRYING AND PLUM CARRYING

Once a year, usually in September or early Autumn Mother would decide it was time to make jam. If Plums were to be used, Chris and I would

walk to a house at the bottom of Rush Hill to fetch the necessary fruit. There was a short cut from the field where we lived. It took us down some steps past a castle shaped building. "Barrow Castle." The steps were very worn, as though armies of soldiers had marched here, as indeed they may have done. Perhaps Roman Soldiers, for the Fosseway was indeed very near here. The castle itself was always very quiet, and we felt a little bit afraid, as we sped across the drive way at the bottom of the steps. We never saw the occupants of the Castle. But we knew an elderly lady lived there, and that we were forbidden to touch the flowers which grew in the grounds of the castle. We squeezed through two large upright stones and then as fast as we could we would race to the wooden stile at the bottom of the field. Up and over the wooden structure, a glance to make sure no bikes or horses and carts were approaching, or even an occasional car, and across the narrow road and up a short drive to Mrs. Helps at Plum Cottage. Here we were usually met by a rosy cheeked lady who would ask us what we wanted, and then she would weigh out the plums on a large pair of scales, tipping them gently into the baskets, or bags we were carrying as evenly as she could. " Wait a minute, I'll get an apple (a Morgan Sweet) for you." With a nod and a quiet reply, we would say Goodbye and Thank you, and start the long slow walk, back up Rush Hill. What a long way it seemed to be. But eventually we would come to the edge of the track, and our pace would quicken, Mother may have made some real lemonade, or even some appleade while we had been on our errand. If so, that would soon revive our tired limbs, and parched throats. Also we were usually allowed one or two plums on arrival at the cottage. "But not too many or you'll get the tanterlarem skitters." The plums were deliciously cool after the hot climb, I wondered if we planted the stones would they grow into an orchard of our own. It would be lovely to have our own plums.

Blackberries were a favourite fruit for jam, also, and these would be coupled with Bramley Apples. Armed with paper bags and baskets, we would walk through woods and fields to pick blackberries for jam. We were always accompanied by one of our brothers or Denny or occasionally Mother and the dogs on these outings. Blackberrying was lovely. We ate as many as we put in the basket, and as the hot day wore on our hands and mouths became stained with the juice from the ripe fruits. Scratches we had in plenty, but gloriously happy we wandered on and on looking for just a few more, and a few more, while the dogs would race after the rabbits which moved through the bushes all around. After an hour or so if Mother was there she would say," We really must get back to the cottage, or Father will be back from work, and no tea

ready on the table" As we retraced our steps with heavy baskets we pulled the hazel branches down, to look for the clusters of nuts. But perhaps the squirrels had been this way before us, for many shells were ground into the soil under the bushes where cows had sheltered from the summer showers. How thirsty we were, but near the stile which led into the cottage field, there was a metal cow trough which was fed by an ice cold spring. The water was always so clear. We stooped to scoop the water into our cupped hands and would drink and drink, and drink. Then over the wooden stile and through the warm grasses and back to the cottage. But though we could rest, for Mother the day was not over, her work seemed never done. The tea must be laid, the fowls fed with warm mash before they went on their roost, and had the evening turned cool enough for a fire to be lit. After tea the fruit must be sorted, and prepared for jam, for only perfect fruit was used, or the jam would not keep. It was washed and placed in large china bowls where it stood sprinkled with sugar, and left overnight for the juices to run. To be made the following day into jam.

WRENS IN THE COWSTALL

Wrens would often build in the cowstall, and one in particular used to sing to Father as he milked Ivy early in the morning. Then came a very hard winter of 1940-1941. Well I remember this for even the older folk said "Never had a winter been so bad. It wasn't the snow, although it was very deep, but that ice" Then after a temporary thaw, it froze very hard again before daybreak, and when we awoke, the roads were like a sheet of ice. Every blade of grass, every piece of evergreen, every twig, stick, stone, telegraph wires, all were encased in its own glass case of ice for weeks. Food was hard to get for man and animals alike. Yes indeed it was a cruel winter. The wild birds suffered dreadfully and we children were told by our teachers, to be sure to feed the birds, and to put water out for them, a never ending job, for of course it was frozen within minutes, and more was needed. I think our little wren fell to that winter, for never again did he sing to Father and Ivy, at milking time in the early hours. It could have been of course that he had fallen prey to Maisie our cat.

MAISIE

Maisie came to us as a kitten, a black kitten, a May kitten, and Denny said that she would be trouble. Later Denny said that that accounted for her

wild ways, for wild she was, but just the cat to keep the rats and mice at bay, with an occasional lizard from the pile of bricks, leftover from the building of the sties. But birds were Maisie's favourite dish, make no mistake. Many times Christine and I chased and frightened birds when Maisie was about to spring. Mother declared May cat or not Maisie would have to go if she continued in her wild ways. The curtains which had been bought from one of the best stores in Bath, only a short while before, had many threads drawn in them, where Maisie would take exercise, running up and down the curtains. Furniture was used to sharpen her claws and the wallpaper also in her favourite spots. But Maisie had one good point. She only presented us with one lot of kittens, just once a year. If we became too motherly to her offspring, she would carry them off and hide them in the remains of last year's haystack or in one of the sheds, bringing them back to the house when they were old enough to defend themselves.

THE DOGS

As long as I could remember we had a dog around the house. The first dog in my memory being a black mongrel and I can remember well helping to bath him under a large tree in a tin bath. A large round tin bath, lots of not too hot water, and a rather smelly mongrel. Carbolic soap was called for, and afterwards a good run through the grass at the side of the house. Blue the Lurcher must have been the next dog, and of all the dogs Blue was mine, my very own dog. He went everywhere with me. I could talk to him, whether I felt sad or happy. I would tell Blue everything and I was sure he knew what I meant. Blue was well known on Odd Down, for he would raid dustbins, tipping them over, then rolling them down the garden paths. But to me he was most faithful, and kept me company many hours. Then one night after Chris and I had gone to bed, I heard voices downstairs, and Mum and Dad speaking in hushed tones. There was a stranger in the living room, and I was told to go back to bed. I went to the bottom of the stairs, but I was uneasy, I knew something had happened to Blue. My very own Blue had been knocked down, and killed, returning from one of his raids. The driver of the lorry had come to say how sorry he was. I was very distressed for some time, to me it was like losing my best friend. I couldn't talk to the pigs or hens in the same way, but Blue had always been there at my side. Some while later my brother on leave from the Army came home with Fluff. A more beautiful puppy one could not imagine. Fluff was a Samoyed. He should have been all white, but Fluff had some fawn markings, and he was considered not good enough for showing.

So Fluff was our next dog. Then Fluff was very ill with Distemper. Mum who had grown to like dogs, nursed him as well as she could through many weeks, until he was fully recovered. But Fluff disappeared, with many more long coated animals, and although we made enquiries all around, Fluff was never seen again. Then came Bob, a rough haired terrier. A perfect scamp, a good mouser, and most mischievous. Bob just loved food, and nothing could be left within his reach, whether it be potatoes, or meat, he would devour it so quickly and be ready for the next meal. He grew fatter, and fatter, but still he lived to a ripe old age.

THE WELL

Water for all our needs had to be fetched from a well at the top of the garden. We girls were not allowed to go within yards of this. I wondered many times in my childhood how deep it was, but I was much to afraid to have even a peep. I did know that the water must be as deep, as deep as the sea! I was sure for no matter how many buckets were carried to the house, there was always more there. Lots of water was required for the house, and especially at weekends, when we were all at home, and then there were the baths, and washing, and all the vegetables to be cleaned for Sunday Dinner.

CHAPEL

On Sunday mornings accompanied by our youngest brother we would go to the little Congregational Chapel at Noads Corner. We were attired in our Sunday best dresses. These were always kept for Sundays, and after the day was finished they would be put away, after being fresh laundered, in the big chest of drawers until the next weekend, along with the matching ribbons which had held our hair neatly in place. But never were they worn for week-days, until they had been replaced by new ones, which we usually had for Sunday School Anniversary. But back to our visit to Chapel. We sat in the front seats, and joined in the hymns we knew. Very often we would see an elderly gentleman sitting to one side of us with a large trumpet shaped object held to his ear. This so amused us, that I am sure it helped us through some of the long sermons, some of which we just could not understand. Our collection became sticky in our hot sweaty hands, and when two gentlemen came to collect it, we would hold our hands high above the wooden plates and wait for the plop of the coin as it fell among the silver and coppers. On several occa-sions I remember boys, in their teens having created a disturbance being re-

moved from the church by the old man who gave out the hymn books, and the stern looks of the preachers as they looked over the top of the wooden pulpit, sometimes they would even stop the sermon, until order was restored. As the last Amens were said we held hands and made our way quickly to the door, and out into the world again, and home to Sunday Dinner, Roast Pork and Apple Sauce, Roast Potatoes, Spring Greens, or Peas. Pork, for had not Father recently killed a pig for the house, I dared not ask, for I might have held that piglet close until it had squealed for the sow. But it must be, for surely there had been more liver, kidney, and offal lying lazily over the edge of the large meat dishes, all covered so carefully with the washed mutton cloth to keep the flies away. There had been faggots for supper too, made from Aunty Nell's recipe, a guarded secret. Teatime too on Sunday always meant something special. We would come in after our walk home from Sunday School, yes and lay the tea. Usually we had bread and butter, followed by home made fruit cake, and fruit and cream, the latter, having been taken from the large pans of milk, and whipped by hand, until it was thick enough to stand in peaks in the bowl. We had no electricity and no electric mixers. But the cream which had come from the top of Ivy's milk was most delicious. Teatime on a Sunday always meant something SPECIAL.

CAKES

Cakes remind me of a very special cake my Father made. My Mother had taken Christine and myself out for the day. On returning home, we found the cloth laid and sitting on a best plate in the middle of the table, a cake, which would have taken a prize anywhere and gained Father a place in the best hotel. He proudly told Mother how he had baked the cake as a surprise. A seed cake. "Nothing better than a caraway seed cake Bake," he said, Mother raised her eyebrows, "Seed did you say, I thought I had used the last of the seed." "No". said Father "There's plenty there in the cupboard." Mother went to fetch more jam and sugar from the cupboard under the stairs, and cast her eye in the direction of the Caraway Seed jar. It was empty. Taking the jar, she showed it to Father who hurried to the cupboard and pulled out a jar of Dried Thyme. How we all laughed. But Thyme cake or not, the cake was most delicious and secretly I hated Caraway Seeds.

But to get back to Sunday School, at the age of three years, Mother decided it was time for me to go to Sunday School, and Christine also when she reached that age. I wasn't quite sure I wanted to go, but there was no choice

anyway, so face washed with good carbolic, shoes cleaned, and my best Sunday dress fetched from the chest of drawers, and away I went to Sunday School. Not my little sister, just me and my brother Roy this time. Mother waved us across the field and out of the track, on to the road, and safely across, and away we went up the hill again. I dragged my feet I know but already I had listened to one long sermon, and now I thought there was to be the same again. Just before we came to the Chapel on the corner, I was ushered by my brother through a door and into a large crowd of children, mostly older than myself. I turned quickly, but where was my brother? A large lady was playing a harmonium quietly in the corner of the large room. She came and took me by the hand, and assured me, he would be back soon. That first Sunday afternoon seemed like a week, but later on I began to look forward to and enjoy the company of all the other children. When my sister came, I was quite used to the idea of Sunday School, and indeed began to think it better than the Evening Services, for by now Mother thought it was right that we should attend Chapel regularly, three times a day. Mother usually came to the Evening Service, and quite often Father would meet us all after, and we would go for a walk, sometimes towards Southstoke, or Englishcombe village, or towards The Fuller's Earth Mine. Sometimes we went as far as Combe Hay. We had no car at that time, and so walking quite long distances was quite the thing to do. We would run and skip and thoroughly enjoy ourselves, for we had been sitting still in the service for sometimes over an hour. It was often on these occasions, as we rounded a bush or hedge, we would startle a family of wild rabbits playing, they were also letting loose the power which they had accumulated since last twilight, for all day long they had lazed in the maze of their underground burrows. Now as they ran, their wary eyes were ever looking for their enemies, a fox, a stoat, or man. With a warning from the sentry on the hillocks, a dozen or so white bobtails, would race off to the safety of their holes. So our journey would continue through fields, over stiles, along lanes, and as we went we would select as carefully as only children can, the wild flowers from the hedgerows, and banks, all to be carried home and placed in the vase on the piano in the front room. Little did we know that before many years had passed we would be scurrying through these lanes for quite a different reason.

SUNDAY SCHOOL PARTIES AND OUTINGS

In no time at all of course, I knew most of the children in the Sunday School, and had made friends with some of the children from cottages near

us. The Sunday School Parties were great fun and early in the New Year, we went to a large hall on the other side of the road to where we met for Sunday School. (This is now the Rush Hill United Reformed Church.) There many children would gather one Saturday, and take part in a concert. Some would recite poems, and Christine and myself would usually be asked to play the piano. All this was followed by a lovely tea of jelly, cakes, and sandwiches, and tea to drink. When all the food had been consumed, and the tables had been cleared, there sometimes followed a quiet game and then we all sat down. All our eyes went to the enormous Christmas tree near to the front of the hall. This was decorated, not only with ornaments, but many, many parcels. Rows and rows of children all looked longingly at those parcels, would there be one for them they wondered. But at the end of the party, no one was disappointed because for weeks before the ladies of the Church, had been meeting, and not just talking. No they had been sewing by hand usually. Flannel Shirts for the boys, and Flannel Petticoats for the girls, and sometimes dolls all dressed from the remnants of material left from the garments.

As we grew older we were moved to other classes in the Sunday School. We still had our parties, but then instead of shirts and petticoats there was a huge pile of books on the table at the front of the hall. Most children would have been enough Sunday's in the year to be eligible for a prize. If you had been 52 times (every Sunday) you would receive a special prize called a Shellards Prize, as well as the other book. The Shellards Prizes were bought with money specially given by a local person on the Down.

In the Summer there was always an outing to the seaside, usually Weston Super Mare, but I do remember once we went as far as Weymouth. For most of the children, this was the only time during the year, that they would go to the sea, because there were very few cars still on the road. On outing day, five or even six or even more charabancs would pull up in front of the school, and crowds of children with parents, and teachers, would scramble on board. What a long way it seemed! On arriving at the beach, some form of flag would be stuck in the sand, which we had to look for in case of being lost. Then came many happy hours of digging, paddling, and endless fetching of water, (when the tide was in.) At a certain hour we all came together for sandwiches, and cakes, etc. and gallons of lemonade. After which a few games on the sand followed. Later, all on board the charabanc. Was anyone missing? Oh dear where was ? But at last the doors were closed and we were on our way back home. In a short while a hush would settle on everyone.

Some of the little children would fall asleep. But not for long, for we were nearly at Rickford Village, and we knew that on the last outing, we had seen "hundreds" of rabbits in the fields by the woods. Just after this every one would burst into song, first a few choruses. "Jesus wants me for a sunbeam.", " I am H.A.P.P.Y.", " Wide wide as the ocean.", " Two little eyes to look to God." On and on we would go through lanes and past lakes. After many miles and when we were nearly home, we had a steep hill to climb, to bring us up to Odd Down. Again there was the sound of many voices, the charabanc in front was finding the going hard, and the one behind had steam coming from the front. "Come on driver, we will be first we shouted and then we all burst into the song "For he's a jolly good driver and so say all of us." Having had a rousing chorus of this two or three times we went on to For we'll roll the old chariot along. and suddenly here we were back at the Sunday School Hall. Fathers, and Mothers, if they had not been accompanying their children, peering to see their child was safe. When we got back to the cottage, Father said "I could hear the Charabancs coming up the Hollow, and you children sang so loud. "Have you had a good day?" "Wonderful " said Mother, and Chris and I agreed.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL ANNIVERSARY

This Sunday was very special. We girls always had a new dress each for this Sunday. No "left offs" for Anniversary, instead two dresses would be bought, from the divi club, usually they would be the same style, but different colours. We girls were really polished up for Anniversary Day. Our hair had been trimmed, faces and hands scrubbed with that carbolic soap. Shoes had been polished and shone as if they were new. To round off our appearance all the children in the Sunday School wore a flower for a buttonhole, on that special day. It was expected of us, and with the help of Mums, Dads, Grandmas, Grampys, it seemed all the children came with their flowers. The Anniversary day was a very happy day. For weeks before we would have been practising special hymns from Hymn Sheets, and those hymns would be used at the three services that day. Mr W Rumble was our Choir Master on these occasions, and he held the practices every week. There were usually special speakers for the day, and we had to be on our best behaviour.

When we were about eight years old some one told us that if Chris and myself went to the Sunday School Hall on a certain evening we could join G.L.B. (Girls Life Brigade.) I had always wanted to join the Brownies, but as

the Chapel didn't have a pack at that time, and Mother didn't want us to go elsewhere, we were allowed to try G.L.B. The leader was Miss Bowler, a very kindly person. We had games and craft work sessions, and on some Saturdays as a special treat she would take about a dozen of us for a ramble. Many times, armed with sandwiches we would go to Odd Down Corner, and catch the tram to Hadley Arms at Combe Down, there we would get off the tram, and really start our Ramble. All along to Claverton, through fields and over stiles. Down to the River Avon, and on this time climbing up the other side of the valley, until we came to the village of Conkwell. Here there was a tea-room, where we could indulge in a glass of lemonade or cool spring water. How nice we thought, we have had a lovely walk, but then, horror of horrors, we found we had to walk all the way back again. But we all learnt a lot about the countryside. On other occasions we would ramble to Midford Valley, or Southstoke, or Combe Hay. We were usually accompanied by a lovely fat black cocker spaniel who also enjoyed those days.

SCHOOL

At about four or five years old, I was taken to school. This was only a short distance away, and called St Luke's School (now St Philip's) at Odd Down. My first teacher was called Miss Brewster. She was very kind, and all the children were quite happy to be taught by her. Indeed it came as a great shock to us all as infants, when one day she had an accident during school hours, and was taken to hospital. I can remember the next teacher was Miss West and then Miss Cutter, who walked up Rush Hill every morning pushing her bike. She lived in Padleigh Hill. These were the infant classes and then there were several Junior Classes. Some of these teachers were called Miss Pilling who always played a rousing march, for us to walk in from the play-ground. Then there was Miss Down, Miss Barber, Mr Robinson, Miss Ruth French-Smith, Miss Joan French-Smith and Mr Anstey. These are the names I remember. Every morning and afternoon the school bell would be rung and it could be heard all over Odd Down. Children would all walk to and from school. After leaving our coats on our pegs, we would go to our classrooms. These were lit on dull days by gas lights, as the school didn't have electricity. In the middle of the classroom, and sometimes at the front, there would be a large tall grey stove which burnt coke. A great big metal guard shielded us from the stove, for they became very hot. During the day at times Mr Pickford the caretaker would come into the class, there would be a clatter and from a huge hod he would replenish the stove. We sat at large wooden desks, with

heavy lids which lifted up. Inside we kept our books from which we were taught (the three R's) Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. We used pens with wooden handles, and metal nibs, which sometimes became crossed, and then we would have to ask for a new nib as it was impossible to write with a crossed nib. We used ink, which was in inkwells at the corner of the desks. In some classes, there was an ink monitor, whose job it was to see every morning that all the inkwells had ink in them. When we weren't writing, we had to sit up straight in our seats, and clasp our hands behind our backs, and listen to what was being said, at all times. On rare occasions when the head-master came into the class, we all had to stand to attention, until told to sit down. We had two playtimes, one in the morning, and one in the afternoon. We played all the children's games, some of which we would play day after day. The farmer's in his den. Pray Mary why you weeping. Here comes Mrs Macaroni, riding on her snow white pony, I sent a letter to my love, The big ship sails, to name but a few. At the end of playtime a whistle blew and we stood still until a second whistle beckoned us to our class line, and waited until we were told to march into our classroom. The toilet block was in the middle of the playground and on wet or snowy days we would get soaked if we needed them. At Lunchtime, I think everybody except the teachers went home for their midday meal, for all the children lived on the down. Sometimes as we left the school at 12 o'clock, there would be great excitement. Outside the school gates would be a large lorry. Some one would give us leaflets to take home for Mother. It read. "RAGS WANTED. FREE GOLDFISH FOR ONLY 1 CARRIER OF CLEAN RAGS. WE SHALL BE COLLECTING TOMORROW BETWEEN 12 and 1 o'clock." Well needless to say we sped off home to give Mother the news. It was not greeted with much enthusiasm, I must say, but after much pleading and begging from Chris and myself, we were told we could have a bag of rags the following day. So we became the owners of a goldfish, which was given a large bowl, and swam aimlessly around, in a large amount of well water, until one day when we looked, the bowl was empty, and on the top shelf in the scullery.

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT

Living as we did on top of the Down, we had wonderful views of the city below, and of Bristol, and on clear days of the Welsh Mountains, in the distance, but as the nights grew dark, we knew it must be getting quite near Bonfire Night. This was always heralded with great glee by all the children in the neighbourhood. As the afternoon drew to a close and the school closed,

we could hardly wait to get home, and for once we were impatient for the darkness to fall. Then after tea the curtains would be flung back, and we would peer out into the inky blackness, and shout over and over again, as the rockets, and wonderful displays of fireworks soared up into the sky from the valley below. It was about this time of the year when Chris and I were quite young that Denny called us into her house. It was almost dark, but our tea wasn't quite ready, and we crept into the house. Denny had lit her oil lamp, and turned it down low. It stood in the middle of her scrubbed table, and as the flame flickered it cast moving shapes into all the corners of the room. This particular day, Mr. "Denny." was at home as well, which was quite unusual, as normally he would have been out cycling around the Down, brushes, and canes over one shoulder, and a black sack tied to the bar of his bike, for he swept chimneys in plenty on the Down. "Hello" said Mr. D. "Hello Mr D." and "Hello Denny" we answered politely. Suddenly there was a thud from under the stairs. Mr. D. got up from the old wooden chair and moved towards Denny's wine store. "Just look who we have here," he said, and out from the cupboard came the most terrifying image I have ever seen. A huge Guy Fawkes. Denny and Mr. D. fell about laughing, but Chris and I fled from the house in terror. I have a feeling Mum was rather short tempered with our neighbours for a day or two, but one could never be cross with Denny for long and soon we were running in and out again.

Another time I remember we had a particularly severe thunderstorm, even Mother was worried as Father had not arrived home from work, and the storm had broken overhead. As we all knew he would have to walk a long way from Bath to our cottage, and nearly all the way up hill, and there was very little shelter. We were all most relieved, when he appeared at the end of the track. Mother went upstairs and soon appeared with a change of dry clothing, and in came a large wooden clothes horse, to dry some of his clothes on. They were spread very carefully, and then the wooden contraption was placed out in the scullery. Later when we had all gone to bed, the horse was brought back into the living room and placed near the fire to dry the clothes. In most houses, washing was done once a week, and many times on wet days the old wooden horse would be in use to dry the clothes .

DAD IN THE WHEELBARROW

"Where's your Father." said Mother one very hot Saturday dinner time, "I'll have to put his food under cover if he doesn't come soon or the flies will

get on it." One of us was dispatched to find Dad. First we searched the open side shed, and then wandered up the path to the pig sties. The heat was terrific. A really hot July day. Denny's plot to the right of the path was a blaze of colour with flowers, and her washing line was bright with her skirts, and dresses. There was Ivy laying quietly, softly chewing the cud, but Dad couldn't be found anywhere, until turning the corner of the sties, there he was fast asleep in the upturned wheelbarrow, its handles dug in the soft earth. "Dad " we called quietly, "Mum said your dinner is ready." "Oh" was his reply, "I'm just coming, I was watching to see where that Rhode Island is laying out, and I must have dozed off. Could have only been asleep a few minutes." Indeed as we looked at all the Rhode Island hens and the cockerel they were descending from the "mountain," through a cloud of moondaisies, cascading like a red stream towards us in search of a handful of corn, or any other titbits we may have had in our pockets. "The Mountain" played a great part in our lives as children, as did the quarry.

All around us there were many cottages made of local stone, and I suppose that the huge hole in the corner of the paddock, had once been delved in by man, to fetch stone for this purpose. It could have been that the stone for our own cottage, and that of next door had been taken from here. The quarry in all our childhood days was a place to dump all our household unwanted items, and also those of Denny's, plus another row of cottages would often use it as well. But all that time the quarry still greedily consumed this refuse, but it never seemed to get any more filled.

The "mountain" was our castle, throne, den, and ours to sit on and play on. In between it was grazed by Ivy, and pecked by numerous hens, and turned over and over by the pigs. It was really only a mound of earth, but to us children it was a mountain, as big, well, as big as the Sugar Loaf Mountain, that we could see on clear days on the horizon far beyond Bristol. Oh yes it was quite as big as the Sugar Loaf.

CAMPING OUT

One year our two brothers decided it would be nice to have a tent, and to spend the night out in the paddock, with some of their friends. Ivy the cow was away at the time, so there was little to worry about in the field. After all the pigs would be locked in the sties, and the hens would be locked safely away for the night by the time the lads wanted to sleep. At this time Chris and

myself were sleeping in the back bedroom, overlooking the gardens and the paddock. We had been called in (Time for Bed). It seemed early, and we were cross, why couldn't we stay up a bit later, but no, and off to bed we went. We were almost off to sleep I suppose when, just below the bedroom window there was a terrific commotion. Running of feet, dogs yelping, and bicycle bells ringing. What on earth was wrong? We jumped from our bed, and together quietly lifted the window. We could hear our brothers, and some of the others. In all the confusion, we learnt that one of them had said that a bat had flown into the tent, and he wasn't going to sleep in there. Everything came out of the tent, was shaken, and then placed back in orderly fashion. But no bat was found of course. We crept back to bed. Perhaps after all we thought it was better to sleep indoors. Or was it. There was a rustling in the chimney, and then in the fireplace, we screamed, and suddenly the room seemed to be filled with a swarm of brown bees, to us this is what they seemed to be, brown bees, which flew at you, and if one of these came on you, they just clung to you, on your clothing, or on your hair, or anywhere on you, and even if you tried to shake them off, they seem to refuse to go. We yelled and yelled. "Quick, quick, come quick." "The harvest bugs are here and in the bedroom." "Open the window Bake and try and drive them out!" said Father. But even when they had all gone, we were quite frightened, and we took a long while to go to sleep.

THE SANDPITS AND ROUNDHILL

Mother was not one for trekking around the countryside, but during the school summer holidays, she would always try to take us on trips around Bath. So it was, one day during these holidays, she called us, and said., that if we were good, we would go for a walk that afternoon. "A walk, goodie " we said. At about two o'clock we started out along the track, and down Rush Hill. About half way down, we came to a path in front of two houses. Down we went and over the stile into a large field (Kingsway Fields.) "Careful" called Mother, "Watch the cows, and don't forget there is water at the bottom of the field." Too late! My new socks, and my sandals looked terrible. As best she could Mother tidied me up and on we went. On and on and on through streets of houses and past allotments. "Here we are " said Mother" This is the sandpits." Chris and I enjoyed our visit. There were lots of little wooden bridges, a long stream of clean water, which seem to come out of the hillside. When we were tired of paddling in the water, there were swings, a slide, and a roundabout, all to be enjoyed. Children appeared from all ways, and mothers with

toddlers, too. We had taken a picnic, which we later enjoyed, and as usual on these trips there was Eiffel Tower Lemonade for us to drink. After a lovely time, Mother called us to get ready to go home, but what Chris and I hadn't realised was what a long walk home it was, and NO BUS. We were so tired that evening, the only thing we wanted was to sleep. Another day we were taken to Roundhill. This was at the bottom of Rush Hill, not far beyond Plum Cottage. At the top of Roundhill at that time, there was a small hut like construction, with paving slabs all around, and on all four sides there was a seat facing outwards. One seat faced North, another South, another East, and the other West. We had great fun on Roundhill, and at the bottom of the hill again there were swings and slides. But this time after our picnic, we didn't have so far to climb.

Just occasionally we would be taken to the Cattle Market, which was held on a Wednesday in Walcot Street. Farmers would be arriving with horse, and cart, with sheep, pigs, or calves, in the back and sometimes but not often a farmer would arrive on foot with animals. I cannot say I liked these visits to the market, and I was always glad when we went to catch the next tram back to Odd Down Corner.

THE WOODS

Edging the field where we lived were the woods. "Coming down the Woods? ", was a familiar cry to myself, Chris, and our numerous friends. The woods were our special place. We spent hours there, always having told our Mothers where we were going first, and being told by them to stay together and be back by a certain time. Barrow Castle clock struck the hours, so we knew when to leave, and return home. "Where shall we go?" and a chorus always followed. "Oh lets go to the Grandfather Tree" We climbed the stone stile, and ran to the edge of the wood. There standing it seemed to be waiting for us was our special tree. It was covered with ivy, and hung about with lengths of rope like foliage, and occasionally a real piece of rope would swing to and fro from one of its outstretched boughs. We didn't know how old the tree could be but we were sure it was ancient, for many children from the Down had played games here, for it was known to be a palace, home, castle, and school, and everybody's special den. On very hot summer days, we would climb as high as we could, and then slide down, down to the cattle trough below, and drink from the cool water. As we lifted our heads there spread before us was the rest of the wood. It was dark in there. Very dark, and we had been

told to keep together if we went in the woods. But in there were all the flowers we loved, dog violets, bluebells, primroses, and wood anemones, and they all followed in their own season. There they stretched into the inky darkness of the woods. We often took a bunch of wild flowers home to our mothers. We didn't have to venture in to woods to pick a few of the little white flowers, which grew under the walls of the castle, or the lovely dog roses a beautiful pale pink sweetly scented flower, which grew all the way to the castle steps on many, many bushes.

Further on again, there was Padleigh Brook, and Breach Wood, and going there was a real treat for us. It usually meant a picnic, with someone older, but oh the joy of a paddle in Padleigh Brook and a walk in the wood through the flowers, and moss, all followed by our sandwiches, home-made cake, and yet more Eiffel Tower Lemonade. Then we would either walk on through the fields to Kilkenny Lane, or walk back the way we came whichever way we went it was a very very steep climb.

CHRISTMAS

This was always a wonderful time for us, and Denny being a child at heart loved it too. She always had a Christmas Tree, with beautiful glass ornaments which she treasured and kept from year to year. We sometimes had a small tree, and Chris and I sat and made miniature chains, with small strips of coloured paper, which we had sat cutting up for hours it seemed. We used a mixture of flour and water for our glue. We spread the tiny decorations from branch to branch, and on Mothers next visit to town little nets of gold and silver coins, and packets of foil wrapped chocolate would be purchased and arrive home to be tied to the tree. The tree was always placed well away from the oil lamp, usually on the sideboard, or sometimes on the piano in the front room. After dressing the tree, we set about making larger chains, and after some while we had enough to hang from corner to corner of the room. Cries of "Be careful with the lamp," were all too familiar, yet very necessary. Father would have very little to do with all this, he was always busy at this time of the year in the long low shed, where all the cockerels were being fattened. Mother however would be very busy with the preparation of the Christmas Puddings, making as many as five or six large puddings, which would need several hours boiling. Denny would also be on the pudding making and she always boiled hers in the big copper in the corner of the wash house. Wood

was chopped and fetched in and fed to the fire to keep the puddings boiling, for hour after hour.

Next the cakes were to be made, and then marzipaned and last of all iced, and again last years decorations were found and placed on top of the cake. First the little fir tree, then a little igloo, followed by a small Eskimo. In all the preparation for Christmas food, took a large slice from the family budget. Dad always insisted on having a large ham, home - cured, and a large leg of pork, and all this beside a cockerel, from the fifty he had bought earlier in the year. Occasionally for a change we would have a large goose. (The grease from the goose when it had been cooked, was put into jars, and put away to rub on chests, for cold or coughs.) Nuts and other goodies were bought, little by little, and stored away in the cupboard under the stairs, and we knew not to ask for them until Christmas. Also nearly every year, before Christmas Eve Father would buy in a large case of oranges 144 or a gross. It was always the same shaped double box, it always stood in the same corner of the living room. About a week before Christmas we could start on the box of oranges. A piece of wood would be carefully lifted from the side of the box, and then a second piece. These would be split, ready to light the fire in the early hours of the next morning. Then we all sat round and sampled the first of the gross of oranges. After Christmas when the box was empty, it was either used for the fire, or for a nest box for the hens to lay eggs in, or even to house a broody hen, or even made into a hutch for a pet rabbit. There really was very little wasted in our house. Even the orange peel was dried, and kept to help light the fire on the next morning, for with lino on the floors, and no double glazing, the house could always be very cold. In winter the windows were nearly always frozen when we awoke, the patterns of frost were really beautiful, but we would always rush downstairs, and dress by the open fire, which may have been lit as early as four o'clock that morning.

Always on Christmas Eve, early in the day, Mother, Christine, and myself went on a journey. We always knew what to expect. We would walk to Odd Down Corner, and there we would wait with other people to catch a tram into Bath. This in itself was something we enjoyed. The tram would come down the road on rails, and a long metal rod would lead from the top of the tram to overhead cables. The seats inside the tram were made of polished wood, with perforations in patterns all over them. Upstairs the seats were made of metal, and it could be very cold or wet, as there was no top; to the tram. On reaching Bath, we had to walk through the city, to Queen Square,

and we would catch a bus near the Victoria Park, which took us to Bristol. It seemed a long long way, and even after we left the bus, we had a long way to walk. We were going to visit our Bristol relations. They lived in a small flat above a garage. Mother had carried a basket, in which there was another of the fifty cockerels, all neat and ready for the Christmas Morning oven. Also there would be gifts for the family. When we arrived at the house we knocked loudly as the buses, taxis, and horses, and carts went by. Eventually footsteps could be heard hurrying to the door, and there would be our Aunt with a hug and a kiss. We went along the passage, and through a beaded curtain, and up many stairs. It was very dark in the flat, but suddenly we were in the room where there was lots and lots of gleaming brass But although we loved to wander around and look at the brass, we were spellbound by a large green parrot, in a cage in the corner of the room. We had never known such a bird, and then it began to talk, and call out, "Mum, Mum, Where are you Mum?" It really was beautiful. We always had tea, and cakes, before we made the return journey, and after exchanging gifts, sometimes a clean bag of clothes which had been outgrown by my cousin would be given to us. It was always very late when we arrived back home. Later, as we climbed down from the bus at the end of the track, it was very dark, and as we walked over the field to the two cottages, everything seemed very still except for the hooting of the occasional owl.

We came into the scullery of the house, and there would often be six or eight cockerels all ready for people to collect for Christmas Dinner. While we had been out, an old Uncle, of ours had come to the cottage, and most of the cockerels which had been bought earlier in the year, had been humanely killed, and plucked and made ready. Father was most particular about the way the birds were prepared, and dressed for the customers. In the long shed over the yard there were what seemed thousands of feathers. Sometimes people would ask for some of these, and would take them, and heat them in the oven on the side of the fireplace, to cleanse them, and they would stuff pillows, or if they collected enough would even make a new mattress with them. But for us travellers, it was Time for Bed. We never did get to see Father Christmas, try as we might each year, for our journey to Bristol had been too tiring.

However Christmas morning was always wonderful. There was always something on the bed for us, a doll, a game, or a book, and also a stocking filled with fruit, and sometimes a bar of chocolate, or sweets. Sometimes a tiny pink or white sugar mouse would peep from the stocking. We would of-

ten have new clothes to wear on Christmas Day, often a new dress, or jumper and skirt. Nearly always on Christmas morning if we went outside the house into the garden we could hear lots of bells being rung by the Churches round the Downs, and from Englishcombe, and Priston. About 10 o'clock Mother would tell us to go to the end of the field by the road and wait for Granny Baker. We were always ready for this, and we would both race off towards Rush Hill, clutching our latest gift from Father Christmas. After a while we would see her small figure coming sedately down the road, dressed in her Sunday best, umbrella at her side, (even if the sun was shining, and carrying a little black bag . Perched on her head a dark felt brimmed hat with a large hat pin." Here she comes", "Gran's coming" we would call to one another, and we just couldn't wait to escort her back to the track, and to the warmth and cosiness of the cottage on Christmas Morning. Father would pile more and more logs and coal on the fire, until it almost seemed as though we were trying to heat Denny's house as well. During my early childhood we had no wireless, so we would quietly play, while the adults sat and talked. But one Christmas Day, Dad came up trumps with our first wireless. We thought if was wonderful, even though it made a funny crackling noise, and squeaks, and groans, and occasionally music or a voice could be heard. To make it work, it had to have a square glass accumulator, this was like a square jar, with acid inside. This had to be charged about once a week, and then we could use the wireless again. The wireless was not touched by us children. Dad would turn it on and off in case it got broken. Soon Mother would have dinner ready, and we would all have an enormous meal. Roast Chicken, Stuffing, Bread Sauce, Carrots, Roast Potatoes, Sprouts, Parsnips, etc. all from the garden. All this followed with a large portion of Christmas Pudding, and lots of cream from Ivy the cow. If one corner of space was left in our stomachs, the mince pies, would come to the table.

After all this, we would help wash and wipe up when we were old enough, and sometimes squabble over who would wash and who would wipe. The large table meanwhile would be re-laid with usually a new chenille or woven cloth, which would reach well down over the sides. The adults would sit and talk, Dad with his Woodbines. We would scuttle under the table where there were wooden supports. Sitting on these we would play with our new toys. I know one year we decided we would play Barbers. What on earth possessed us I cannot think, but it was two different children which emerged from under the table, when we were called to help lay the table for tea. Pieces, and clumps of hair lay strewn under the table, and a good smack was called

for. We were both very frightened, and wondered if we dared even face the world outside. But soon after Christmas we were taken to Mr Barnes, in Bloomfield Road, a man's hairdresser, and there sat on a high chair, and best as he could he cut our hair straight. One consolation was that for a while we didn't have to suffer the endless tangles, and pain when our hair was being done, and we didn't have to sit and cut up strips of rag for our hair to be wrapped in, because for weeks after we looked more like two boys, than two girls.

Christmas Tea was another meal of the Year. The table was always piled high with different food. In the centre would be the Christmas Cake. Dotted over the rest of the table would be jellies, blancmange, peaches, and other tinned fruit, trifles and bowls of thick cream. All to be eaten, as much as we liked. Later in the evening the curtains drawn, the chairs circling the fire we would eat nuts, apples, oranges, sweets, and chocolates. Often Granny Baker would stay Christmas Day night, we were always happy about this for she would be there the next day, and the day after perhaps.

Long after we were in bed, we could hear Dad up the sties, tending the pigs, checking Ivy, and Smut. Mother would be busy getting a bite to eat "if" they needed it, and when we were asleep no doubt there was much talking, taking place, before they all retired to bed.

I remember one day, not too long after Christmas when we were woken up by voices in the room below "Sounds like our Roy and Mum" said Chris. "Yes and Dad too, He is usually gone to work by now." But sure enough it was Dad, and he was groaning. It transpired that he had set off to work on his bike, along the track, on a dark and foggy morning. He was being very careful, because he had several eggs in his coat pockets, which he was taking to work for one of his pals. Fixing his eye on the street lamp at the end of the track, as he thought, and thinking about those precious eggs, he cycled away. He thought the path seemed very bumpy, but then the track was very rough. At the end, to the left of the track, there were what we called "The Cliffs. Unbeknown to Dad, he had mistaken the lamp at the end of the track, and followed the one further down Rush Hill, and in so doing he cycled right over the edge of the rocks and fell 15ft. below, but fortunately he landed on a patch of grass. Nevertheless he was very shaken, but managed to make his way back to the cottage. His bike needed much attention to get it roadworthy again.

Some years later the area where Dad landed was covered to a depth of some feet with soil, and grassed over.

THE SCULLERY

Our house had a large scullery, it had been our back yard, and a lean-to stone building, but with a few alterations by a very helpful builder, who lived nearby, it was made into the scullery. During the early spring, there were nearly always a 100, or even more tiny chicks, all happily pecking away at dishes of chick mash, in the corner of the scullery, usually under the end, with a glass roof overhead. Soon after the New Year, Father would have asked Mother to write to that place in Yorkshire and order the day old chicks, much discussion would take place, as to how many day old, unsexed, and how many day old cockerels were to be ordered, but in the end all was decided, and a letter would be duly dispatched. As the time drew near for the arrival of the chicks, we would see Mother down on her knees, scrubbing the cement floor, cleaning it thoroughly with disinfectant, in all the cracks and crevices, for as she would say, no chicks in her charge would die because of dirty conditions.

The chicks always seemed to arrive at one of the Bath Railway Stations very early in the morning, or very late in the afternoon. So at these times there were endless trips to the station to see if the chicks had arrived. We knew it was important to get them back home, fed, and given a drink as soon as possible. Hardly anyone on Odd Down had a phone at that time, so these journeys were really necessary. In later years a neighbouring store had had a phone installed, and we would be sent to ask if they would phone the stations. Then after confirmation that they were at the station, one of my brothers, either Roy or Ted, would be sent to fetch them. After some years a Railway lorry would sometimes appear, perhaps quite late in the day bearing the tiny travellers. Fresh sawdust or shavings, would have been scattered to cover the concrete, saucers of chickmash, and grit, all would be carefully placed in the little pen with fresh water drawn from the well. Soon all we would hear day after day was the chirping of chicks, which Mother didn't mind, but if one should start to pipe (making a different sound from the others) as she called it, immediate action was called for, and the chick would be watched carefully, and if necessary isolated from the rest. The others would be kept happy, and warm with their food topped up and the old stone water bottle which had been covered with one of Fathers old woollen socks, would be filed with water fron the iron

kettle, which was singing on the hob. The remaining little chicks would all gather around this and settle down.

It was never ending it seemed, food, and warmth, food, and warmth, until after a little while we would see the yellow fluff of the new chicks being replaced by minute feathers. Very soon after this my brother Roy would go to the side of the house and cut a fresh turf, for the chicks to peck. This would go on for several weeks, until at length it was decided to put the young birds out of the house into a covered pen, where a careful watch was kept on them from the kitchen window. If the night turned chilly or wet, then the chicks would be brought back into the scullery, until at last they were old enough to go into a large shed, and later have the freedom of the paddock as well.

BIRTHDAY PRESENTS

As I have mentioned earlier, I was born at Gwendoline Cottage, Rush Hill, Odd Down, Bath. The third child of Ted (Edwin), and Eva Russell My birthday falling a day after Remembrance day, I always hoped to have, and usually had a British Legion Poppy given to me. It was usually the one Roy had worn the day previously to school, or later to work, but I didn't mind that, and I wore it several days after. I remember one year Roy came back from work cycling from Claverton Down, and his coat bulging. "Happy Birthday " he said as he stepped into the living room. "Here's your poppy, and I have something else here. From the inside of his coat he pulled a lovely little black and white rabbit. There were so few cars as I have said in my early childhood, and as he came from work, out on to the road, there hopping along the gutter, amid the remaining autumn leaves, he saw the ready made Birthday Present. An old orange box was found, and chicken wire was nailed to it and Blackie the Rabbit, had a new home. A hot meal of Smut the pony's bran, and the tealeaves from the teapot, and all was well with my new pet.

When we two girls ran errands, Roy was given other tasks to do. He would always have to clean the cutlery with Bath Brick, on Saturday mornings, until Chris and I were old enough to do this. But also Roy would have to chop the sticks, and bring them into the house to be dry enough to light the fire early next morning. Also to fetch the water from the well in the garden. Buckets of water, such an important part of our life at that time. He would have to collect pig swill from our neighbours to feed the pigs, and help light the boiler, which was near to the pigsties, and make sure it did not go out, for

the pig food was always very well cooked. He had to fetch and carry things that we were to young to handle. Yes the pigs and all our animals were very well looked after during their life.

Dad loved all the animals, and the people on Odd Down often brought sick animals to him to see if he could help them. There were very few vets in those days. Ivy the cow and all her offspring were always taken great care of. When she had a calf we were allowed to help with them when they were being weaned. A bucket of warm milk, and sugar on our fingers, and we would soon have the calf drinking from the bucket.

At one time Dad had some spare grazing land, and he was asked by a greengrocer in the town if he would take a large white horse. She was really beautiful, and with her came a black and yellow phaeton, a kind of large carriage. It was a very grand affair, and we just couldn't wait to go for a ride." Can Denny come too" we asked Mother. Denny was asked to join us for a ride, and with Uncle Jim, my Father's, youngest brother, who was visiting us at the time, off we went for about an hours ride all around the Down and along Combe Down. We felt very important, just like royalty in fact. On our return to the cottage we all had our photos taken with Denny's old Brownie box camera.

Sometimes when were playing near the edge of the track, we would see the local farmer with his horse and cart, and packed into the back of his cart, there were large metal churns, holding milk, which he would dispense into jugs or vessels, left out by our neighbours.

It was one of those hot sultry days, when nothing seem to stir. We had been playing all the morning at the side of the house. We ran into our Mother pleading to be allowed an ice cream from the Cabin Stores at the end of the track. "Just this once, and woe betide you, if you don't eat your dinner" we were warned. Off we sped clutching a halfpenny each in our hot sticky hands. First Chris was in front, and then I was, then Chris again. As we ran up the steps to the Cabin, a black and tan coloured dog appeared. We both loved dogs, but as Chris went to smooth it the dog turned and snapped. I was very frightened by her screams, Mrs Dolling came running from her shop. The dog had disappeared back towards Rush Hill. But Chris had to have a lot of treatment before the bite healed. At that time Ice Cream had not been on sale in many shops, but I do remember the "Stop Me and Buy One" bicycle and trol-

ley being pushed up Rush Hill. People would come out of their houses and buy iced sticks of fruit, or flat wrapped ice cream bars. This was a real treat, and for many years the trolley with its distinctive sounding bell could be heard, and the man with the hard flat peaked cap could be seen pushing their bikes.

DIPHTHERIA AND SCARLET FEVER

Whilst I was still quite young my brother Ted had Diphtheria. He had been poorly for some days, and my mother was most concerned. He was taken to Claverton Down Isolation Hospital where he had to stay for some weeks. Eventually he was allowed home again. But a while after I became poorly. The doctor was called again, and an ambulance summoned. Wrapped in a scarlet blanket I was taken to the same hospital as Ted, but I had Scarlet Fever. Later Chris also had Scarlet Fever. We were kept in isolation for seven weeks, and no one but the nurses were allowed to come into the wards, but Mother and Father could look through the windows, and try to talk to us. We were very glad when we were allowed home again.

There was as I have said earlier, a school at Odd Down at this time, but it was called St. Luke's. It was about eight minutes walk from my home. Chris and myself would usually wait at the end of the track for two of our childhood friends, Mary and Edna to come with us. On the left side as we started to walk there was a garden belonging to two cottages. Next behind the cottages, was an entrance to the Golf Links, which if you followed a path through the Links you could get to Mr Green's farm.(This entrance now leads to Corston View). If you kept slightly to the right and followed the path further you could get to Bloomfield Crescent. However we passed the entrance to the Golf Links, on our way to school and Evergreen Cottage came next. Then belonging to Evergreen Cottage there came a very long garden over a wall. This took us nearly to the school gate. But just before we reached school on the right side and just before Barrow Road, we would join three more friends, Jean, Poppy, and Betty, and then continue to the school gate.

RUNNING WATER

I was about seven years old, when my Mother and Father decided it would be nice to have running water. As our house was in the middle of a field, it was a major job, and many weeks of work followed, digging a trench from the road to the two houses, as all this was done by a pick axe and spades. Both my brothers had to lend a hand, and Denny's husband downed his sweeps brushes, and took up the spade. But eventually, amid much excitement the magic taps could be turned on, both in our house and Denny's. The well at the top of the garden was left for a while, and water from it was used daily for all the livestock.

Having these "mod cons", a tap, it was decided that perhaps the lamp could be put away, and a different kind of lighting be installed, but electricity was far too costly so for a while lamps still had pride of place on the sideboard during the day, and centre table at night. After some time enquiries were made as to whether gas would be less costly, and very soon after a second trench had to be dug alongside the water pipe for the laying of the "Gas".

Mother then turned her thoughts to a new stove. It was bought from the Bath Gas Company. and Mother who had always loved cooking was ready to try out all her recipes. Gone for ever were the days of testing the oven on the side of the fire, by pulling up her sleeve, and plunging her bare arm into the opening to see if it was the right temperature for the cake, or joint of meat or milk pudding to be cooked. No! just a turn of a knob and a twist of that tap, and a match to light the burners, and cakes of all descriptions it seemed poured from the new oven. As for lighting, a gas man came, and instead of one lamp on the living room table, and candles to carry around the rest of the house, it was decided that each room in the house should have a light of its own. We felt very special. Now the cry was "Mind the gas mantle." not the lamp glass, for each gas light had a flimsy gauze-like middle with a glass globe fitted outside.

THE DAY THE TAR LORRY CAME

It was in my very early childhood, and as I have said before, there were hardly any cars on Odd Down. The occasional coal steam lorry would puff its way up Rush Hill, or a steam roller would come to mend the roads with tar and gravel, it was one of those days, along came the lorry loaded with tar. It was very carefully spread all over the road and this having been done the steamroller would constantly go backwards, and forwards, over the piece of road, before moving very slowly on to the next section of the road to be laid. We girls, having just had a bout of Whooping Cough, were sent to the end of the track, to stand and inhale the smell of the tar, to help us get well, it was said.

THE CAR

I don't know whether my Father had received a good price for a bunch of pigs, or had he been left some money by someone, but he decided he would like to buy a car, and so that was our next treat a ride in Father's own car, a large Singer saloon. A mud coloured car. The fact that he couldn't drive hadn't entered his head, or if it had, it soon left his head again. No, instead it was decided by Father, that my eldest brother Ted would act as chauffeur, not that he was always happy about this arrangement. The car was kept clean and bright, but it was never used for short journeys. Smut the pony was able to cope with those quite well. The Singer was kept for trips to the sea, or to other cities, and towns.

MY GRANDPARENTS

I can remember two Grandmothers, but I have no memory of Grandfathers. One of our best loved trips was to visit Granny Baker, who lived on the other side of Bath. We would walk to Odd Down Corner, or Glasshouse Cafe,(now a garage), where we would board a tram. We liked this form of transport. Sometimes we sat downstairs, and at other times up on top, on metal seats. A large metal pole would lead from the tram, to the overhead wires, and sometimes sparks would jump from the overhead lines to the poles as you went along. When we reached the Guildhall in Bath, we caught another tram which would take us to Walcot where Gran Baker lived. Then we had a long walk up Snow Hill to 8 Highbury Cottages. These were a row of Alms Houses. Gran Baker was always waiting for us. We knew her house, although

we couldn't visit very often. But her window, full of red geraniums, with white net curtains, always welcomed us. Gran's house was very small. She nearly always had a fire burning in the grate and on the table there was a thick green woollen cloth, and always a large family bible, and a book of Spurgeons Sermons. Along one wall a chaise longue was draped with a rug and cushions. A large chest of drawers stood against another wall, and on each side of the fireplace, there were shelves with beautiful china, and ornaments. But what I remember most was that when the table was laid for our tea, there was always a blue and white semi porcelain pot with handles on both sides. This always held condensed milk, which we could have on our bread and butter, and Gran Baker always had this milk in her tea.

One of these visits stand out vividly in my memory. My Mother and Gran were busy talking, and Chris and myself were given some old spoons to go and dig a small patch of Gran's garden. We worked away at this for some while, when suddenly, Chris let out a yell. She had disturbed a red ants nest, and they had well and truly shown their anger at this intrusion. They stung Chris very badly. Neighbours were called from the other cottages, to see what was the best remedy to soothe the stings, and eventually all was quiet again.

My other Grandmother was named Gran Russell. She lived when I visited her at 18 Paradise Street. just off Holloway. On my visits to Gran Russell, I was accompanied by Roy, who every so often was told to be ready to take eggs down to her. I would walk with him down Bloomfield Road, and then down Holloway. Gran Russell was usually sat in her Windsor chair when we arrived. A rather stern lady I thought. Her hair was parted through the middle, and strained back into a bun at the nape of her neck. She wore a navy blue pin stripped dress, and sometimes just a plain black high buttoned dress. Over this she wore a large white apron, tied or buttoned securely at the waist. Thick black stockings on her legs and boots with buttons and hooks on her feet. On her face she wore a pair of silver framed spectacles. Her chair was always on the left side of the fireplace as we looked at it. Gran Russell had had a very large family, and had always worked very hard. As far as I remember my Aunt Nell still lived with Gran at that time, and in a house opposite my Aunt Alice lived with her family. Just below Gran Russell's at 21 Paradise Street, lived her youngest son, my Uncle Jim. After our visit, we would walk back up Holloway keeping to the high pavement, and if we were lucky Roy would have the money to catch a tram back to Odd Down Corner from the Bear Flat.

When I was about nine years old, it was found that I had a form of Rheumatic Fever. In those days it was an illness taken very seriously, because if you did not rest, it could damage your heart. So it was to bed for me, not just a week, or a month, but several months, with regular visits from the doctor. My illness started in the April, and as Spring went into Summer I was still confined to my bed. I became very restless, and bored, and as it was such wonderful weather, my Mother and Father decided that my bed, an iron one should be moved out into the garden. Having found another bed to take its place indoors, the mattress would be carried out each morning, with the aid of Denny, and then I was taken out, and there I would lie day after day. This went on for a very long time. I loved it of course, the birds and insects were around me all day, and many hours were spent watching those huge billowing white clouds. Besides all this I had my dog Blue, my ever constant friend, he rarely left the bed side. Blue the lurcher, a true gypsy dog. Rescued by Father and his young brother, from being beaten by two men near Westbury White Horse. Evidently he at that time would not fetch the wild rabbits back quickly enough for their meal. My Father and Uncle Jim approached them, and threw a halfcrown at them and grabbed the dog away from them. Blue was put up in the cart, and he was on his way to his new home at Odd Down. He was nothing to look at, but he made up for this, he was the dearest gentlest creature one could wish for. A wonderful house dog, and good with all the animals and birds around the smallholding. Sometimes Mother would go off to the shops, or even a quick visit to town. Denny would be in her cottage with the occasional glance to see if I was allright, and Blue would stay by me for long spells with one eye to the end of the track, waiting for her to return.

WINFORD

After some months of this, one Sunday afternoon I was told I was going for a ride. From time to time I had heard the word hospital mentioned, but never did think. Then as we headed down Rush Hill, past the Plum Lady's cottage. past the little tin church of St. Barnabas, on the right, and sped on towards Pennyquick and Newton St Loe. the truth dawned, and I asked where we going. Out it all came, I was going to hospital for a while. It was a very tearful child who some while after arrived at Winford Hospital. I did not settle very well. My Mother and Father came all the way from Bath once a week to see me, and each time they came I begged to be able to see Blue. One Sunday all our beds were out in the sun on the Veranda, and one of the nurses came over to me and told me to look towards the hospital fence, "There he was" it

seemed he was as pleased to see me as I was overjoyed to see him. Blue came to see me several times after that, and I was soon on the mend. I then began to enjoy my stay at Winford, and when the time came to go home I had made many friends with other children and the staff.

Two years later, I had a reoccurrence of this illness, but this time thankfully my Mother noticed I wasn't well, and called the doctor in quickly. After yet another spell in bed it was decided when I was well enough, that Mother, Chris and myself should have a holiday.

THE HOLIDAY

Dad never went on holiday while we were small. I don't think he ever wanted to go really, but also he had all the animals to look after. After much discussion Mother said we would go to the Isle of Wight. When we were small we had gone to Weston Super Mare, and once for a short stay to Southsea, and Portsmouth, where we had seen Nelson's ship The Victory. But the Isle of Wight in those days, this was like going abroad, and for Mother it must have seemed just this, for she was terrified of the sea. Her sister had lost her only daughter in a drowning accident a few months before I was born.

However the Isle of Wight it was to be, and after what seemed to us a very long way we arrived at Ryde. In fact a farm just outside Ryde. Both Chris and I enjoyed ourselves. We wandered through the fields amongst the cows, and collected eggs. We enjoyed the food, and had Baked Beans for the first time in our lives. Then we went to the Beach everyday, watched over very carefully in case the water came above our ankles!

I remember on the Sea Front there was a Bubbly Bubbly man. He would let you hold a net similar to a butterfly net, and if you caught three table tennis balls, when they rose up in the machine you won a prize. We had never seen such a game, and begged for one more and one more and just one more go. We did not travel the island because we were just content to sit on the beach, and play with the sand, with the occasional "watched over paddle" And so a very happy holiday came to an end. The year was 1939, and I was two months from my eleventh birthday, and we were going home. Standing on the Promenade were crowds of people looking out to sea. Chris and I did not know why but they were talking about a very very large grey ship. Sadly the word war was on many lips. My Mother was very fearful, and urged us

girls, to get a move on. "We must get home" she said and all in a rush, we caught the next Ferry back to "England," and the safety of GWENDOLINE COTTAGE.