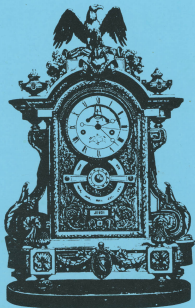
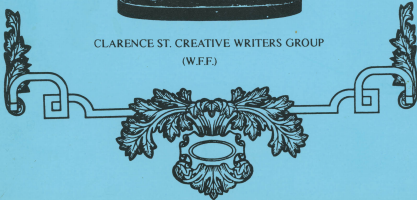




TIMES REMEMBERED



CLARENCE ST. CREATIVE WRITERS GROUP
(W.F.F.)



THE PICTURES

Not many people go to the pictures nowadays. Not like when I was a girl. It was a regular Saturday night outing. Either you went with a boy friend who tried to ease you on to the back seat so that he could have a kiss and a cuddle if he was lucky, or else like us you would rather go with a girl friend so that we could pretend the hero was making love to us and not his screen partner. People would queue for hours to see the films of their choice. There were the days when Hollywood stars were large.

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STORIES AND POEMS
BY THE FOLLOWING

May, my friend and I were just sitting in the lobby of the film, we were Jeanette Wardle sitting with the gorgeous long legs singing 'Over My Shoulder' - and getting our applause at my brother and his friend who used to come and watch us. He had a plastered lip on my

DORRIS BRAI ZIMAI TE.

KATH BROWNE.

VERE BENTWISTLE.

VERA FLETT.

MONICA GIBBINS.

STAN HARRISON.

ANGELA POLLARD.

TOM SHAW.

JEANETTE WARDLE.

May had a large house with a garden and a swimming pool. One of these we did not go to. When Alice Page began singing, using the lyrics 'Over My Shoulder' - May was rather like her. She had blonde hair and blue eyes, she was very pretty. She was once of a character, with great green eyes. We could never compare to Deanna Durbin with her glorious voice, but we did manage an impression of Shirley Temple and her 'Good Ship Lollipop'.

There were so many stars we liked, handsome Tyrone Power, Errol Flynn, Robert Taylor. Beautiful actresses such as Janet Gaynor, Madeline Carroll, Jeanette MacDonald with her lovely voice. Talented Eleanor Powell with her magic footwork. Wonderful Paul Robeson and Ginger Rogers, dancing their way to fame. We loved the musicals best. May's favourite was Tall, Dark and Handsome Oscar Brown, he was in a few films with Alice Page who was a special favourite with us both. My own special hero was tall, blonde singing star Nelson Eddy. His voice went straight down my spine.

THE PICTURES.

Not many people go to the pictures nowadays. Not like when I was a girl. It was a regular Saturday night outing. Either you went with a boy friend who tried to coax you on to the back seats so that he could have a kiss and a cuddle if he was lucky, or else like me you would rather go with a girl friend so that we could pretend the hero was making love to us and not his screen partner. People would queue for hours to see the films or their choice. Those were the days when Hollywood stars were larger than life. There was a magic, a glamour which was out of the ordinary everyday world.

May, my friend and I would sit enthralled, living the story of the film. We were Jessie Matthews, the dancer with the gorgeous long legs singing 'Over My Shoulder'- and batting our eyelashes at my brother and his friend who used to come and watch us. We bought make-up unbeknown to our mothers and plastered it on our faces.

May had a large house with two big wash cellars. It was in one of these we did tap dancing, making up our own steps. When Alice Faye became a star we used to try and imitate her singing, using the long mop as a microphone.

May was rather like her in looks having blonde hair and blue eyes, she was very pretty. I was darker, more of a chestnut, with grey green eyes. I rather fancied myself as Annabella! We could never aspire to Deanna Durbin with her glorious voice, but we did manage an impression of Shirley Temple and her 'Good Ship Lollipop'.

There were so many stars we liked, handsome Tyrone Power, Errol Flynn, Rober Taylor. Beautiful actresses such as Janet Gaynor, Madeleine Carroll, Jeanette Macdonald with her lovely voice. Talented Eleanor Powell with her magic footwork. Wonderful Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, dancing their way to fame. We loved the musicals best. May's favourite was tall, dark and handsome Cesar Romero, he was in a few films with Alice Faye who was a special favourite with us both. My own special hero was tall, blonde singing star Nelson Eddy. His voice sent shivers down my spine.

When he and Jeanette MacDonald sang together the perfect blending of their voices was pure magic. They transported you into another world, a world of romance and beauty.

I did have other favourite films besides musicals. One such was 'Lost Horizon' with Ronald Colman. Another favourite was 'The Prisoner of Zenda' again with Colman and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. He actually stole the film with his portrayal of the wicked and dashing Rupert of Hentzau.

Anton Walbrook in 'Dangerous Moonlight' playing the haunting 'Warsaw Concerto' amidst the ruins of stricken Poland.

Nette Davis and Paul Henreid in 'Now Voyager' (let's not ask for the moon, we have the stars)

So many marvellous films that now if we are lucky we see on our TV screens, bringing back so many memories of those bygone days when you could enter a whole new world of romance and glamour and adventure for just the price of a ticket at your nearest Picture House..... By Dorris Braithwaite.

* * *

MY HERO. (AN ODE TO NELSON EDDY)

I watched you on the silver screen
You really were so fine.
Tall and fair and handsome
I wished that you were mine.

You were the dashing hero
Just like a knight of old
Rescuing the fair princess
From pirates dark and bold..

You sang your songs of love
Beneath the silver moon
I wished that I could be the girl
For in your arms I'd swoon.

I know its all a fantasy
You only played a part
But for me, you are my hero
Who stole my girlish heart.....

Dorris Braithwaite

* * *

The Astor is the first in line
Followed by the Belle
I went there to the Penny Rush
And lived close by as well.
The Capitol run by A.B.C.
Seemed always cold and bare
The Crompton and the Carlton
Know as the 'Nount' round there.
The Empire down in Howard Street
So difficult to find
The Gem in Shepherd Cross Street
Was not the precious kind
On Bradshawgate the Lido
We went to their matinees
The Majestic of so long ago
I spent such happy days
A massive place the Odeon
Its now a Bingo Hall
The Palladium and the Palace
Not very large at all
At the bottom of the Station brow
Was the regal sounding Queens
Viewing from the side front row
Your favourite actor leans.
The Gialto, Royal and Regent
And the 'Titz on Fletcher Street
The Tivoli doors still open
For the Bingo fans to meet
The Windsor is the final one
Of that I will not boast
I got the last seat in the house
Right behind an iron post.....

Stan Harrison.

* * *

THIS ENGLAND.

I love the hills and vales of England
Fields of corn and rye
The crying of the Curlews
As they wing across the sky.

I love the moorlands wild and lonely
Swept by winds and hail and snow
Or soft and gentle in the Springtime
When soft breezes blow.

Unchanged through all the changing
years, silence all around
Shining waters, misty hills
Wild flowers covering the ground.

I love the quaint old villages
Of countryside and town
The sea in all its majesty
When the dying sun goes down.

I love the fields of waving grass
Scent of new mown hay
Droning of the bees in Summer
Trees that bend and sway.

I love the shores of England
Of ever changing tides

I love the people and their ways
Their ever glowing pride.....

By Dorris Braithwaite.

RAINBOWS END.

The skies are grey and cloudy
Birds twitter a welcome warning
Raindrops glitter like diamonds
From the rays of the peeping sun, and,
Look! Look, a rainbow has begun.

Arc across the sky, colours
shining brightly, then fading,
Hurry, reach the end of the rainbow
Which has promised wealth untold
Raindrops, shimmering, then scattering
Like beads from a broken thread
The arc beckons, dazzling the eye, then
Wavering it fades into obscurity. Gone!
Before we reach the pot of gold! I

* * * *

By Vee.

THE SHORT WALK.

It was perhaps natural, after getting over the shock of having to live as a single man again at a late time of life, I should look for some form of activity that would bring me companionship and interest. The advertisement for the Christian Fellowship seemed to have something to offer and so I became a member.

I cannot say that my attendance at the meetings brought with it success in either direction, to me or the other members. It was difficult to discover what the others were looking for. I was looking for friendship in a Christian way of life, but it did seem that some members were filled with a religious fervour much stronger than my own so my attendance at the meetings became fewer.

However, one day I had a visit from a lady member from my own home town. She asked me if I would like to join her and the others in a short walk. Now although we were based in Bolton the meeting was to take place in Bury or to be exact Holcombe Brook. I agreed to go with the proviso that if I was too tired to go after my day's work I would stay in the pub with a book until the walkers returned. I was of course expected to give a lift to my fellow member from my home town.

So at 6pm I picked up my companion. This was probably the primary reason for my invitation. On arriving at our meeting place I began to think it was a wee bit cowardly to opt out of the walk, so plucking up my courage I set off with the rest of the group.

After a while it became obvious that the short walk was going to be a long and arduous climb. We were going to climb up to the Holcombe Brook Cross. I was at an age, turned seventy, when climbing had become an activity to be read about rather than to want to participate in.

I should really have had more sense than to take on the challenge. It was autumn and we began to climb the footmarks of the cattle that left a kind of pattern, rather irregular, on the ground, and it was frozen hard making the going tough.

After we had climbed a third of the way up some of the party began to falter, this gave me a quiet sense of satisfaction as I was still feeling fit. But when I reached two thirds of the way up I was brought to a sudden and painful halt. A deep and agonising pain swept across my chest and left me breathless and motionless. The pain continued and I thought to myself 'Tom lad, you've overdone it this time'. I remained where I was for ten or fifteen minutes, resting on a stone wall that ran along the path. As the pain subsided I decided to go on very slowly to the top.

Eventually I arrived and sank down onto the plinth supporting the huge stone cross. I was breathless and lay down, seeing nothing but thousands of spots that seemed to dance before my eyes. Gradually my breath became normal and the spots disappeared. As I came to life, my eyes took in the words inscribed on the cross:

'Stolen in 1443, replaced in 1665, stolen in 1700 replaced in 1808'...

I sat up slowly and realized that I had made it. I had climbed over Holcombe Moor and reached the cross. I believe the distance is three and a half miles climbing. On the return journey my feeling was one of elation: 'I've done it, I've done it'. These words raced through my mind with a great feeling of satisfaction and achievement. Forgotten was the quick prayer I had said towards the half way mark.

When I reached the bottom of the hill it was the party's intention to gather in the local tavern, but I was too excited to exchange small talk. So after finding alternative transport for my original companion I set off myself for home.

I felt that I may not have set the world on fire, but I did think that, as we say in the army, 'I had carried the flag with distinction.....'

By Tom Shaw.

Mrs Mary Bates hummed softly to herself as she washed the dishes in her small picturesque cottage which was situated near the Race Course.

Today was Red Letter Day for her, at long last she was going to the Races. Now that may not sound much of an event to some people, but Mary had dreamed for months, years of actually being there when the racing began.

She had often heard the sound of the Bookies voices, they seemed to be calling her. The noise of the crowds so near, and yet so far. Her late husband Bert, didn't believe in gambling in any shape or form, so this secret yearning was at last being realized.

Stout and homely, her silvery hair shining almost as much as her bright eyes. She twisted a small curl behind her ear, a sure sign she was pleased and happy. Mary reached for a small fancy teapot on her kitchen cabinet, her 'Pot of Gold' she called it.

Every week for the last six months her care worn hands had placed as much as she could afford into it, her meagre pension didn't go far, but she was determined to save as much as possible for her great day. Her hands trembled slightly as the contents of the teapot were emptied onto the kitchen table. 'Ten Pounds, ten lovely pounds' she uttered with satisfaction. Her heart was pounding away as she realized her great moment was drawing closer, and closer.

She looked out of the window, it was a perfect day weather-wise, dry and sunny.

Her pet cat Blackie was purring at her feet. 'Good boy' she exclaimed petting the cat, 'We'll win today, you'll see'.

The crowds were gathering at the Race Course, it was Derby Day. There was the usual air of expectancy and excitement.

The Bookies were doing good business as usual. Honest Jack looked more like a Farmers boy than a Bookie with his freckled face and mop of red hair. He seemed to wear a perpetual grin on his face, come rain or shine.

Mary pushed her way to the front of the crowd, although it was hard work and an effort for her, she loved every minute. 'Now then, make way for the lady' Honest Jack shouted, Mary placed her bet 'Ten Pounds to win on Blackie please' she shouted.

with pride. 'Thanks Ma and good luck to you.' said Jack as he touched his cap. Mary found a good spot and waited for the race to begin, her eager eyes soon spotted her horse, then she heard those magic words she had waited so long to hear, 'They're Off'. 'Come on Blackie' she shouted at the top of her voice, jumping up and down in her excitement. Blackie was doing quite well at the beginning of the race, he was second for quite a while, then he was overtaken by a young chestnut mare.

Mary felt quite sick when she realized Blackie was slowing down a little. At the end of the race meeting she consoled herself with the thought that Blackie came in fourth. Besides it had been well worth it just for the fun of being there. It started to rain as Mary walked slowly away from the hustle of the crowds, she consoled herself with the thought of attending another race meeting someday in the future. She spotted a shelter and decided to have a rest before the journey home, maybe the rain would stop soon.

Her tired eyes were almost closing when she spotted something shining in the grass near by. Her eyes widened when she realized what had caught her eye, it was a ring. Her hand trembled as she bent down to pick it up, then gulped and looked closer, it was a ring alright but not just any old ring, it was a diamond solitaire set in platinum. Picking it up gingerly she held it out to get a better view.

Mary had never seen anything quite so perfect, her impulse was to look around in case anyone was watching, there was no-one so she hastily put the ring in her purse, then hurriedly made her way to the Betting Office. She asked the dark haired young woman behind the counter if anyone had reported a the ring missing.

The girl took the ring into the office and found that a Mrs Benson had lost a ring, her husband was the owner of a string of horses. As she came out of the office she said to Mary 'Ire love, what a bit of luck; her eyes almost popping out of her head as she admired the ring. 'Did you know there is a reward of a hundred pounds for its return, I'll bet you'll be sitting pretty later'. Much to Mary's delight the grateful owner handed her the reward, shook her hand and told her the ring had been his mother's and he'd given it to his wife on their first wedding anniversary. He then gave Mary a free pass to any of the future Races. When Mary arrived home Blackie rushed to greet her. She patted him and smiled. 'I have had a lovely day at the Races Blackie' she said.....

THE HOSTAGE.

I wonder if our little house
Still stands deep in the wood
If only they would set me free
I'd fly there if I could.

Perhaps both trees and house have gone
While I've been hostage here
It seems so hard to carry on
As days turn into years.

I see no light I hear no sound
While locked within my cell
I thought one day I heard your voice
But it was hard to tell.

There are footsteps outside my door
The key turns in the lock
What future torture is in store
What voices sneer and mock.

They pull me up and drag me out
Though I can hardly stand
I think I hear a friendly shout
And feel a kindly hand.

'Come on old man you're going home'
The words seem strange to me
It's true I am no longer alone
It's true that I am free..... Monica Gibbins

MY LOVE.

My love has become a story,
My love is a poem.
Told by the music of my heart strings
Only sleeping for a little while.
A lifetime of dreams
Stored in memories
Always near his voice I hear.
Not an ending but a beginning
When love will take away all sadness
I will call 'My Love, My love',
I will run into his arms
That will be happiness..... By Vera Plett.

Oh, what a lovely lad you were
When first we met,
Strangers both, and yet we did not care
We knew we would not for,et.

Oh, what a lovely lad you were
You were so tall and slim
My head on your shoulder as we walked
I barely reached your chin.

Your hair so fair and slightly curling
Your eyes so blue that hazed
When love we were sharing.
The feel, the thrill when we kissed.

The slight hair upon your lip
Like the accent clipped
Deliberately cultivated
To make you seem sophisticated.

An unexpected meeting would set my heart abating,
Faster, faster it went asleeping,
As smiles were exchanged in mutual greeting.
The old Victorian house in which we met
Had the sign, the emblem on the door,
The red leaf of your nation,
To welcome all, in celebration.

In our strolls around this English country town,
We talked, we planned, among the bluebells
Under the trees, in the untold beauty of
The aptly titled Glory Woods.
A haven of peace we found it.

My lovely lad,
You loved the land from which you came
It was your home, which me too would welcome,
And yet, too soon, we were parted
Although we had prayed we would meet
And love again, in the new country.
It was not to be, my Lovely Lad.

The curtain moved slightly, he was watching me. I waved, but he moved away hurriedly. I went about my business, and forgot about our new neighbour.

On arriving home, as I put the key in the lock, it happened again. There he was at the window, the curtain raised a fraction. I wonder if he needs some help I thought as I walked up his path. I rang the bell, no answer. Knocked on the door and the window, still no answer. Evidently he didn't want any callers. I went home and tried not to think about him.

Our new neighbour was very quiet, and I didn't see him at all the next week, though I still looked to see if the curtain moved.

Doing a bit of gardening in the back, I got talking to the lady who lives next door on the other side, and happened to mention that I thought our new neighbour wanted to keep himself to himself, as I had been to his door to ask if there was anything he wanted from the shops, but he hadn't even the manners to answer it, even though he'd seen me.

My neighbour looked at me rather strangely, and said, 'You must be mistaken, there's no one living in that house!'
'Oh, no I'm not mistaken, I've seen an elderly gentleman at the window, he moved the curtain, and I know he saw me, because he moved away when I waved.'

'Are you feeling alright?' she asked. 'Of course I am' I answered rather sharply, 'I know what I saw.'

'Well, it's just that I happen to have the key to that house so I can show people around, as the owners don't want to take time off work,' she said. 'Come with me and I'll show you.'
Reluctantly, I followed her into the house. It was as she said empty. Leaflets, free coupons, and papers were strewn behind the front door, the usual scene of a vacant house. We searched the rooms upstairs and down, no one. Who had I seen? I know I saw someone, but who? The big question, is there an answer?.....

By Vera Flett.

Sally sat huddled over the dying embers of the fire. She shuddered slightly and pulled the faded blue cardigan around her thin shoulders. Her sleepy eyes gazed at the portrait of a stout middle aged man.

'Christmas is here again love, don't suppose it will be any different from last year, worse if anything with the rising prices of everything.' She often talked to the portrait of her late husband Tom, it made life a bit easier to bear somehow. Her only child Philip lived in Australia, he had emigrated with his wife Jane three years ago. They were proud parents of a six month old baby girl, who Phil lovingly called 'Princess'.

Sally often wondered if she would ever see them all before she passed over. She looked at Tom's portrait again, 'Pity they couldn't afford to visit us, eh Dad?' well never mind, I'll have a nice parcel from Church, then there's Betty my home help bless her. No doubt she'll pop in to see me. Tell you what Dad, I have a drop of sherry in the cupboard, that will surprise her.' Sally chuckled, 'it surprises me, I'd forgotten I'd put it away last Christmas.' She suddenly stopped talking, there was a knock on the door, she slowly walked towards it and called out 'Who is it?' An answering voice replied 'It's me, Betty, open the door, I've something to tell you.' Betty seemed quite excited.

As Sally opened the door Betty said 'Remember those Premium Bonds your Tom bought ages ago, if you remember you called them silly bits of paper? Sally looked puzzled and shook her head. 'I know what you mean but I can't remember where they are. Come and sit down and I'll make a nice cup of tea.' Betty took the old lady's arm and settled her down in her armchair. As she was sipping her tea, Sally suddenly said, 'I've got it Betty, I put them with my policies.' The two women looked across at each other, their eyes met. Sally spoke first, 'Are they worth anything?' Betty tutted, 'Of course they are woman.... if you have the winning number. I have a wonderful feeling you have, remember I wrote the numbers down for you. See if you can find them and we'll check' It didn't take Sally long to find her policies, neatly tucked away with the Premium Bonds. Betty was right the numbers were correct, and so out came the bottle of Sherry. The toast! a safe journey to Australia for Sally who raised her glass and looked across at Tom's photo. 'I'll be back love, I'll be back.'

My mother hadn't told me the goose had been left to cool on the top shelf in the kitchen. If it had been left on the table it would have been too much of a temptation to Peggy, our grey hound, and as my dad used to say, We'd have been eatin' bowt'.

There were no new fangled fridges and washers in our kitchen in those days, just two large cupboards, shelves all the way round the walls, and a wire mesh fronted green painted meat safe, so most food had to be eaten fresh.

When I came in from my Saturday afternoons jaunt round the town centre shops, no one answered my call, 'Hello, anybody want a drink?' I called again, no answer. More than likely, dad would be putting the world to rights, or counting the spots on the dominoes in his local, or counting the honing pigeons in the pen at the back of the house..

Mother would be feeding the hens or collecting eggs. Peggy was very partial to raw eggs if she got the chance of a few cracked ones, which mother often gave to her. Being a greyhound Peggy had been brought up on raw eggs and sherry, but an accident had stunted her growth, so she wasn't tall enough to race on the track, we kept her as a pet.

I lit the stove, and put the kettle on to boil, and singing the latest tune 'Asapola' reached upon the top shelf for the tea caddy. I still can't remember how it happened, but my fingers must have hooked over the edge of the roasting tin as I stretched up. What I can remember, and very vividly too, was the tin coming over, the goose bouncing on my head, and grease cascading over me like a waterfall.

I was still standing in a state of shock, grease dripping from my hair, eye lashes, nose and chin, when the back door opened and my mother came into the kitchen. Meanwhile Peggy had seized the opportunity as well as the goose and done a four mile a minute down the cellar steps. I saw a hazy vision through the grease, of my mother, standing there, a look of disbelief on her face. 'What were you doing? She wiped me down with some old newspapers and dropped them in the ash bucket and said 'I don't think your dad will be too pleased when he has to have bacon and egg for his tea'. 'Well' I said, when he asks where the goose is, tell him we're eatin' bowt'....

BETTY.

You know how it happens, a glance and another closer look to make sure your eyes haven't deceived you and you're in love.

That is the only way I can describe my passion for Betty. It was a passion that was to increase over the years, indeed it would be more to the point to say she became an obsession.

I must say that when I first saw her I realized that she was getting on in years, but then I was no chicken myself. However looking back I feel that I may have spoiled her. For whatever she needed, I just went out and bought it for her.

Money was no object, but I must admit the pleasure she has given me over the years has more than paid me for the love and care I gave to her. She was however very temperamental.

One of our favourite outings was around Anglezarke. It was a spot I loved but it was always the same. If we were alone the day would simply be a day of bliss spent in beautiful surroundings, but whenever I invited a friend to come with us that was the time she would become temperamental, but I loved her so put up with her moods.

There were times when I would just go out and buy her things just for the joy of buying her something. However, time can change one's feelings, Betty was beginning to show her age more, and then again a man sometimes begins to feel a desire for a younger love. We've been together now for over five years, and that's a long time in this modern age. Betty has begun to have tantrums and moods.

I'll admit I will miss her, we have had some lovely times together and I suppose that I ought to be grateful that she has never let me down.

Still, hard as the decision has been I've made up my mind - Betty must go.

Bill Turner has promised to take her off my hands and this week end I will once again travel around Anglezarke's hills and dales with my new love. She is such younger than Betty. She's a 1978 Metro and I feel already that I'm going to love her as I did Betty, my marvelous little MINI.....

By Tom Shaw.

JUST A THOUGHT.

I decided to toss away loads of things, have a spring clean. So, off to the cupboards. An empty box will be useful to throw everything in.

What shall I do with these two little plaster figures? I remember my two little grand-daughters walking up the path carrying them as they walked towards me. They had been to Primary School a few weeks, and they held their gifts towards me saying 'Grandna, we made these for you.' So I couldn't put them in the box. I'll put them on show as they used to be, many years ago.

Well, the next thing I found was a Pencil Holder. My little grandson had made. He was so proud of it, the first complete thing he had made. Can't throw that away either, he's put my initials on it. I'll just take it downstairs and put it near the telephone.

I go downstairs and make a cuppa, and as I'm sitting there I look around and think, I'll get rid of something out of the Unit, I don't need all this work. Well, here I go again.

Decorated cup and saucer, a present from an elderly Aunt. Won't get many more presents from Auntie, she's 95! Must keep this. A Welsh lady pot figure, present from a friend. I ought to keep this.

I'd better go back upstairs and start to fill the box. I really intend to do a clean sweep. I can send what I put in the box to the Church. They will be able to sell them on a stall.

Two little cats -salt & pepper- they are supposed to be lucky. I'll just nip downstairs and put them in the kitchen, I can use them. Why didn't I think of it before.

Now what's in this wallet, not money, but a letter in a toy town envelope addressed to me. There is a green shield stamp stuck in one corner. The letter is from my grand-daughters aged three and five. They had walked down the road on their own to the post box. Oh! I simply can't throw this away as I received it thanks to the courtesy of the G.P.O. It's one of my treasures, as their Mum and Dad didn't know anything about it until I told them.

Well, I could go on. My cupboards are still full, and my box is empty, but I ask you, how can you Spring clean your Heart?.....

By Vera Flett.

FOOTSTEPS.

She heard footsteps behind her, and started to hurry, but the rain made the path slippery. It was going dark, and she had quite a way to go before she would reach home.

She looked around but couldn't see anyone, but suddenly, the footsteps were there again. She felt a cold chill, and started to run, but it seemed she had lost her way.

What was the matter with her, she wasn't making any headway at all, and the footsteps were getting nearer.

Oh! what had happened now? She felt herself falling, falling, down, down into blackness. Where am I? If I am in Hell where is the fire? It is so dark and damp, so I can't be in the nether regions. Now is it there are Stars, yet they are shining upside down?

It can't be Heaven either, so am I dead? There is no music, no sign of Angels or the Heavenly Hosts, so where am I?

I can hear whispering, but who is it, and where are they? It's so dark I can't see anything, but I'm feeling quite comfy, except my eyes are beginning to smart. I'll just open one eye.

There's a dreadful smell. What's this pad on my face?

The footsteps are there again, and now I can hear voices, but what are they saying? 'Now, now, come along my dear, how about cuddling this fine pair of twin boys, you lucky girl. Have you had a lovely dream... By Vera Flett.

HOW LONG.

How long does sadness stay
When does it go away?
Tears like crystals fall
Gently to the ground
Even rainy days were fine
With your hand in mine.
Now I walk alone..

My lonely heart so out of place
My world so out of line, if only I
could think of all the happy times,
The joy we shared, I turn away,
I watch the crystals disappear,
They were my tears.....

By Vera Flett

A CHILDHOOD MEMORY.

After the Great War I went to live with my grandparents and Auntie while my father looked for a job after leaving the Army.

My Aunt was a great film fan, she had a picture of Rudolph Valentino, the idol of the cinema at that time, pinned up over her bed. She had taken me to see him in 'The Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse' as it was a silent film the noises of the battle sounded 'Off Stage' by someone bashing a tray and beating a drum.

We went to see all Charlie Chaplin films with the boy star Jackie Coogan usually playing a waif and stray.

The highlight of our film going was to see Mary Pickford who became known as the 'World's Sweetheart' for her portrayal of innocent young girlhood.

In the film 'Little Lord Fauntleroy,' she played two parts, one was the mother and the other was the son. A great breakthrough in those days.

Children with curls were allowed in the Cinema free. My hair was straight although I always thought it was a bit curly and could have got in regardless. Anyway Auntie knew the Manager who allowed me to go in.

I didn't really understand how Mary Pickford played both parts but it was all wonderful experience which remained a Happy Childhood Memory..... Monica Gibbins.

DIVIDED LOVE.

Loves a confusing emotion
Love is a warm glowing light
Kept burning strong by our memories
Dispelling fear through the night.

No matter how we are divided
Our thoughts will forever remain
Bringing us closer together
Warmed by a bright burning flame.

Who thought at the time you left me
That so many years would depart
But though you are gone
Life still must go on
Your memory's engraved on my heart.

We may never again see each other
Separated by sea, time and space
But if fates so unkind
I'll still hold in my mind
The sweet tender look on your face.....

By Stan Harrison.

FAMILY LIFE.

By Stan Harrison.

The war ended in 1945, and my father came home from the ammunition factory in Yorkshire where he worked. My elder brother was demobbed from the Air Force, so we were now a complete family again.

My brother had been engaged to his fiancée for four years, so arrangements were made for them to be married at Astley Bridge Baptist Chapel. I was disappointed at not being chosen for best man at the wedding, but I got over it, and everything went off very well. The wedding party went down to Gready's on St. George's Road to have their photographs taken, and afterwards the reception was held in the Chapel School rooms.

Food rationing was still in force for a number of years after the war, and the common sight of people queueing for foodstuff and other commodities became the common thing and still exists to this day.

The following year, my brother's wife gave birth to a baby girl, and as they lived with us at the time, we were a bit congested, now being a family of six.

National Service was still in force, and I received papers telling me to report to Princess St. Manchester to be examined by the Medical Board. I was passed Grade 1 for the Royal Navy, and a few months later got my calling up papers along with a voucher which paid my rail fare to join H.M.S. Royal Arthur at Corsham in Wiltshire. I was looking forward to the experience. Six of us arrived at the training camp together, and were taken to the kitchen which they called the 'Galley' and were given bread and jam. The slices being as thick as doorsteps.

Collecting our blankets we settled down for the night, all of us feeling very homesick.

One of the talking points of the camp was the fact that Prince Philip or The Duke of Edinburgh as he was known then happened to be an Instructor there, although we never actually saw him in the flesh. He was courting Princess Elizabeth then who later became our Queen. On one occasion, during one of his flying visits, he managed to drive his sports car through the hedge, but fortunately he escaped serious injury.

I thought I would be in the Navy for at least two years, but after having x-rays, it appeared I had a scar on my lung and was discharged after serving my country for just TWO WEEKS. I told everyone back home there were no vacancies for Admirals.

WILLOWS PARK.

Of Willows Park, I am left with memories of beautiful flower beds, with bright red and yellow dahlias growing in abundance in the dark rich soil, where the Parks gardener had cut and shaped the centre of the beds, and had lovingly planted the array of colour. The rest of the beds were grassed over and mowed carefully into a fine lawn, leaving the smell of newly cut grass.

A wide path surrounded the beds, and on the perimeter of the path forms were stationed in a semi-circle for the benefit of those who would partake of a peaceful rest.

On the opposite side to the flower beds was a bank of Rhododendrons, their sticky buds opening in colours of white, pink and fuschia, whilst bees, collecting pollen, entered the clustered trumpet like blossoms. By the base of the bushes the soil was undisturbed, and a narrow grass border with a 'Keep Off The Grass' sign ran along the edge.

To the Park Keeper, the upkeep of the Park was a serious business, and his beady eyes were always on the look-out for any children who dared to disobey the writing on the sign, and any who were caught, were promptly escorted to the outer side of the gates, and told to go home.

There were separate swings for boys and girls, and each were supposed to use their sections. As I was a bit of a tomboy, I always had the urge to have a go on the gymnastic rings, and the horizontal bars, which unfortunately were situated in the boys section and out of bounds to girls. Also the boys had a beautifully tiled swimming pool within their section, and I always thought that this was very unfair, the boys seemed to have everything.

It was one quiet day when there seemed to be no-one about when I spied my chance, and nipped smartly into the boys section, tucked my gymslip into the elasticated legs of my navy knickers and swung myself onto the trapeze swing, where I twisted my legs around the bar and began to swing back and forth with ease, humming the tune 'The Man On The Flying Trapeze' and imagining I was the star in a circus.

My imagination was short lived, as the Park Keeper's face appeared below mine, and upside down at that!

His nose almost touched mine as he said, 'What do you think you're doing?' With as much bravado as I could muster, my mouth and lips feeling as though they had been glued together, I replied in almost a whisper, 'I'm just having a go on here!' 'Oh, you are, can you read?' he asked, his eyeballs nearly leaving their sockets as he glared up at me.

'Yes, of course I can!' indignant at the idea that he was questioning my ability to read, I looked into his protruding eyes. 'Well, what does it say on that notice board there, he pointed towards the boys entrance, over there by the gate?'

I sat up on the bar, straighted my gymslip, coughed and said loudly, so he'd know I could read, 'Boys Only, Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted.' 'Are you a boy?' 'No sir' I replied, letting him know I'd been brought up to have my manners about me, 'but it's not fair, why can't the girls section have some of these?' His eyes had now gone back into their rightful place, and he sighed down his nose, as looked into my face, 'There's no buts about it' he said as he adjusted his peaked cap, a part of his silver buttoned black uniform, 'girls are meant to be upright, not upside down showing their knickers, now get down and don't let me catch you in here again'.

I jumped down, and ran as fast as my legs would carry me, as with outstretched arm and finger pointing the way, the Keeper uttered his last word, 'Out'.

I steered clear of him for the next few days, but the heat from the sun's rays urged me to sneak through the boys section once more and into the open air pool, where, as my hair was close cropped, I did get a good half hour swimming even if I did get the odd mouthful of leaves from the over hanging trees, at least no-one detected which sex I was, that is until it was time to get dressed and I had to scamper through the Park with my wet costume clinging to my body, the keeper, red faced, shaking his fist, and chasing me past the bowling green, the Rhododendron bushes, the flower beds, through the main gates, and down the length of Hawthorne Road. I dodged him at the bottom of the road, and ran pell mell across the open field, opened the door of the house where I lived, rushed in and stood panting with my back against the door.

There was no way I could incur the wrath of the keeper a third time, and I never did.

Today, Willows Park is a far cry from the Park I once knew. Gone are the colourful flower beds, the soil and grass verges flattened by thoughtless people taking short cuts.

There are no swings, no boys and girls separate sections, no swimming pool, nothing but a wide open space, and maybe a lonely flaggpole, where once the Union Jack fluttered proudly...

By Vee

Summer Memories.

In summer,	These in turn provide
The rose buds bloom	A pot-pourri of
Tenderly nurture these	Sweet fragrant memories
From this young life	Of times past.
Will come maturity.	Which still enrich
As petals fade and fall	The older life remaining.
Collect those, cry carefully.	And so the cycle continues.
	In summer
	The rose buds bloom.

Kath Browne

AMBITIONS

Most people have ambitions. Mine has always been to go on the stage or in films. A bit late now I know. When I was young I went to Drama lessons given by Miss Phillis Smale who was the Aunt of the well know filmstar Deborah Kerr known in those days as Deborah Trimmer.

She went to school with my cousin when we lived in Bristol. Needless to say Deborah was the star of all the School plays.

Unfortunately I was unable to continue with my studies as Mother was left a widow with three children and couldn't afford the fees, in spite of the fact I was offered a free term as a promising student.

I joined Amateur Productions and had visions of becoming a second Bette Davis and having Paul Henreid lighting two cigarettes and handing one to me as in 'Now Voyager' and Humphrey Bogart saying those famous words 'Here's Looking At You Kid' like he did to Ingrid Bergman in the film 'Casablanca'.

If I had the chance now to be in a good play I expect I would have to be satisfied with just a few lines like 'Dinner is served Madam' or 'The Police are at the door.'

This would be an ambition fulfilled. 'Ah well I can dream can't I?

Monica Gibbins.

A PRAYER FOR LONELY HEARTS.

We all have a dream or two
My darling mine are all of you
Such wondrous moments they imply
Our wildest hopes, how high the sky?

So, with each letter that I pen
I pray you'll soon be here again
Sharing life as days gone by
Golden hours for you and I.

How far will that day be?
Hurry, hurry, home to me
I've waited patiently sweetheart
So many words are in my heart.

I'd like to share then all with you
Until that day my prayer will be
Make all our hopes and dreams come true
So I may spend my life with you.

Jeanette Jardie.

DAY'S OF CHILDHOOD.

Can you think back to your earliest childhood memories?

I can, faintly remember getting up from the couch where I had been sleeping, and while my mother was busy at the front door telling some boy's off for hitting the window with a ball, creeping to the fireplace, and knocking an egg off the cast iron grill in front of the oven. I must have only been about five years old, but I realized what a terrible thing I had done, for when my Max came back inside the house, I was back on the couch, pretending to be fast asleep.

Saturday was 'buying in day', and my mother would ask me if I would like to walk to Bolton with her as I would only go if she promised to buy me an American comic book which cost the enormous sum of 6d. (2½p today)

On getting the assurance, I would leave my friends playing in the streets of Astley Bridge while I accompanied my mother on the long walk to Town.

Halfway down Blackburn Road we came to the Iron Church and right on the top of the steeple was a gilded, golden cockerel, part of the weather vane. I chined in again with the same old plea "When can I have that hen?" and back came the same reply "When they pull down the Church" and she would pull me away from the scene, my little face still looking up at the top of the Church.

Just further down the road was 'Day's' lamp oil shop. There we would make our first purchase, a packet of lamp wicks for the paraffin Kelly lamp that we used in the bedroom. Across the road was Knott's Chemist, the shop lights illuminating the giant glass phials of coloured liquid in shades of blue and red, that formed the window display. Onto Higher Bridge Street we passed the Palladius Cinema with the bill-boards showing what films were being shown that night and during the next week. We priced the flannel trousers and blazers in Wises Clothing Stores, knowing full well that these items would be finally purchased from the Co-op Tailors with the use of Club Cheques. My mother was a fanatical Co-op shopper.

On arrival in town, we would pop into the Co-op Butchers to see Jack Livsey. He had been promoted to the Central Branch after serving at Astley Bridge for years. He was a kindly, jolly red faced man, whose bald head was concealed beneath a black bowler hat, and was good enough to supply a shilling parcel of Offcuts to the poorer customers.

After walking round the Market Hall to see if we could pick up any bargains, we would stop at Pot Bailey's, and listen to the clash of dinner plates and the ring of bone china tea services, as the salesman sold his wares.

We would then make our way home in the dusk, the brown carrier bags still half empty, but the string handles digging into your fingers as you walked.

Across the road from the Iron Church, we would call at the Chip Shop and as I waited I would look for the golden bird on the steeple, but the Sun's rays that had given it life, had long since faded, and the bird had gone to roost.

Back home again, I would read my comic under the gas mantle. That daring detective Dick Tracy and his many adventures were always serialized, so you would continue buying the comics.

I will have to go down Town again with mother, I wonder, will they have demolished the Church by then.....

By Stan Harrison.

The Blue Plaque

Every day, when on my way
To earn a honest penny
I pass the place where I was born,
And every time I ponder
As alone, the way I wander,
That p'rhaps one day,
There yet may be,
A plaque upon that wall
For me

Kathleen Mary Brownie
1921 -

THESE FOOLISH THINGS.

These foolish things remind me of you' so the song says. Here are some of my personal foolish things, places, people, food, smells.

'Michelle' sung by the Beatles, as an accompaniment to a charcoal grilled steak meal, served on wooden platters, in a cafe, on St.Catherine Street, Montreal in 1967.

'La Vie En Rose' played on a piano accordian, in a Lakeside Cafe, in the Italian lakes, the proprietors were French speaking from Jersey.

A Denmark memory, a visit to a seaside fish restaurant, when a female soloist in rehearsal garb sat at a piano, singing 'Sunny' with an American accent, reminds me of the occasion, when my American pen friend Eleanor and I, watched and listened to the music of a West Indian Steel Band, as they played in the Festival Gardens in the heart of London.

From Venice, it is not 'Just One Cornetto' for me, but a small party of Italian opera students singing for our party, in a small 'smoky joint' in the heart of Venice.

Viennese music has always been a favourite with me, although I was shown over the Opera House, it was impossible to get tickets, we had to be content with a visit to a beer garden in the Vienna Woods to join in the chorus of songs! My memories of the Viennese Folk Opera, are of the season they spent in Manchester, soon after World War II, when I saw 'Die Fledermaus', 'Vienna Blood', and 'Roses from the South' all sung in German.

The Georgian State Dance Ensemble appeared at Belle Vue, in mounting whistling excitement, this inspired me to see the visiting Kirov and Bolshoi Ballet Companies, but my favourite remains Markova, in the Festival Ballet in 1951.

On the lighter side, Mother and I visited Drury Lane to see 'South Pacific' Sean Connery being in the chorus line, we ended up with all the music on records. Later on, I went to see 'Kismet', based on the music by Borodin, the audience consisted of a large portion of G.I.'s eying the scantily clothed females.

Two years after 'South Pacific' I saw 'The King and I' quite enchanting!

By Kath Browne.

THE GROCERS SHOP.

When I left school at fourteen I went to work in a Photographers Studio. I enjoyed the work, learning how to develop and print proofs, besides helping to keep babies and children amused. I was there for two years and then there was a Slump, and no one could afford the luxury of having photos taken. So I was out of a job.

I'd always rather fancied being a typist in an office, maybe one day becoming private secretary to some big executive.

This wasn't to be. There was no office work to be found.

I was offered work in a shop as an assistant. It was a well known grocers shop in the town centre called 'Melis's'.

I didn't want to work in a shop especially a grocers, but mother thought otherwise. She needed the money that I could earn. Fifteen shillings a week. (75p by today's money).

She insisted I apply and even took me herself as I was so reluctant. To my dismay I was accepted. Though I think due mostly to mother's personality than my own.

The hours I worked were most unsoiciable. From nine o'clock in a morning until 6pm at night. Eight on a Friday and nine on a Saturday. It would be very quiet from eight until nearly nine as most people went to the picture house on a Saturday and then enjoyed a walk round town, going into shops just before closing time.

None of the assistants were very pleased about this as we had to brush the floor and clean the counters after we had closed the door.

During the week, on Mondays usually. Between serving customers we had to weigh and package, sugar, peas, rice and lentils. Periodically an Inspector would arrive and pick at random any package and weigh it on the scales. Woe betide if any was under or over weight.

Joan one of the assistants was the daughter of mother's friend. We had known each other all our lives. She was a year older and more interested in boys than I was. She was seventeen tall, slim and blonde with lovely green eyes.

She got to know one of the assistants who worked in our rival shop across the street. His name was Bill. The shop was called The Maypole Dairy'. I became the bearer of messages between the two.

Suddenly out of the blue Joan gave in her notice and applied for a job at the Maypole. She was taken on but when it became known she and Bill were courting she was sent to another one of their shops in a different district.

But love finds a way and they eventually married. Next year God willing they will celebrate their golden wedding anniversary. Anyway to get back to the story. After Joan left, the Manager informed me I would have to take on the job Joan had been doing. This entailed going out to people living in the country who were unable to get to the shops or lived too far away.

I was a bit apprehensive as I had never gone very far from home before. Anyway I would set off about nine thirty, having supplied myself with a bacon sandwich and a bag of biscuits to fortify myself during the day. Biscuits then were 6d a pound. Collecting my list of customers and my order book I would take a tram car to the outskirts of town where the open countryside beckoned.

Crossing the road I had to enter bluebell wood as it was a short cut to my first call. 26

It was a beautiful Springday, as I entered Bluebell Wood I could hear the birds singing and I felt free as air, my spirits rising with every step. Not a soul disturbed the peacefulness, a breeze caressed my face. It was good to be alive. I found a fallen tree trunk and opened my lunch packet. The woods reminded me of a film I'd just seen 'Rose Marie' with Nelson Eddy and Jeanette Macdonald.

After finishing the last crumb I began to hum and then sang the lovely 'Indian Love Call' from the film. My voice rang through the woods and I was transported to the Canadian Rockies. Suddenly I realized someone else was singing and it was a man's voice. I thought at first I was dreaming and I turned, half expecting to see Nelson Eddy himself come riding through the trees.

I stopped singing but the voice still carried on. I stood for a moment quite petrified, then I came back to earth and took to my heels running as fast as I could out of the wood and on to the road leading to my first customer. I arrived hot and breathless.

As I recounted to her my experience she laughed and I too saw the funny side. She offered me a cup of tea and when her small son woke from his nap we all sat munching biscuits. I waved them goodbye and set off for my next port of call. It was a farmhouse, where the farmers wife gave me her order already written out. Then I had a twenty minute walk to the next village where I took an order from the small grocers shop that supplied most of the villages. The surrounding countryside was beautiful, rolling hills and valleys stretching for miles.

I decided I had done enough walking and caught the bus to the next village which was Cospstall. Sometimes I would talk to people sometimes not. I never minded my own company. I had a few more calls to make and once more caught a bus that would take me to Roniley where I had a meal with a lady who had an Off Licence.

It was a very pretty place with a lovely old Church. I liked to go inside for a few moments of quiet prayer.

My hostess would usually have meat and potatoe pie ready and waiting for me. She would often put the radio on, as she liked to listen to Radio Luxembourg and we would spend a happy lunch hour listening to songs from the films and inevitably, as Nelson Eddy was very popular at the time there would be a request for one of his songs.

I would leave about 2-30pm and travel back to Stockport on the bus. On arriving back at the shop I would then have to pack all the orders in boxes ready for the Carrier to deliver next day. He would arrive with his horse and cart and stack the boxes to his satisfaction.

I enjoyed my days out even though I used to see Joan's boy friend driving the 'Maypole' van doing the same kind of job I did, except I had to use public transport or 'Shank's Pony'. Still Tuesdays and Thursdays were a special treat for me....

Dorris Braithwaite.

* * * * *
KEEP FIT.

My face is older than me I'm told
When I catch up with it, then I'll be old
Meanwhile I work in the garden and cycle and swim
'Cos I'm terribly fit- for the shape I'm in!

Now and again I get a few twinges,
A little creaking perhaps at the hinges,
Varicose veins don't stop me from walking,
My tongue's in good shape- I seldom stop talking,
I get a bad cough when winter sets in,
But I'm otherwise fit - for the shape I'm in.

Hard work killed no-one, they told me when young
As I slaved in those satanic mills,
Now my lungs are fluff - laden, I'm deaf from the din,
Still - I am quite fit, for the shape I'm in.

During the war I worked on the land
And grew weather beaten and wrinkled;
I breathed the fresh air and soaked up the rain,
Nor flinched when the icicles tinkled,
Now I'm knobbly and knotted and twisted as sin -
And hard work's to blame for the shape I'm in!

Friends at this juncture suggest acupuncture
Put mind over matter's my motto,
I'll never give in - I'll just bear it and grin
And insist that I'm fit - for the shape I'm in....

Dora Fisher.

CYNARA.

I was trying to watch Ronald Colman,
But there came a knock on the door.
There was my friend on the mat
Who came in for a chat,
So I couldn't see that anymore.

I was hoping to see Ronald Colman
In the wonderful land 'Shangri La'
When the man from the Frue said,
'Your Policy's due,
So I could not watch that any more.

This evening they're showing 'Cynara'
So I'll watch though I've seen it before.
I'll be with you tonight 'Dear Ronald'
And refrain from answering the door....

By Monica Gibbins.

* * * * *
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.

I'm sorry to bother you doctor,
But I've a terrible pain in my toe,
And whilst I am here, will you look in my ear
There's a buzzing that won't seem to go.

I'm sorry to bother you doctor,
I've developed a twitch in one eye, and I think
You should know, that my heart beat is slow,
Do you think there's a chance I may die?

I'm sorry to bother you doctor, but I can't
put my foot to the ground, I've a pain in my
thigh, my blood pressure is high,
And the room seems to spin around.

So, you don't seem to think I need worry,
In fact there is nothing to fear, Did I hear
a low curse, about folk feeling worse,
Is the nearest G^o far from here?

Monica Gibbins.

A view from a sash window in the back room of a terraced house, has many memories for me. On bonfire nights, when very small, what spectacles of Catherine wheels, Silver Cascades and other fireworks, as the little girl watched with awe and wonderment.

Later in my teens, I had a recurring dream, perhaps it was a fear of war, or it may have been the effect of reading H. G. Wells' "War of the Worlds", and the film "Things to Come".

In the dream I was sitting, in the dark looking out into a faintly pink tinged sky, and from the direction of the town, the beams of searchlights, criss crossing in the sky. When the war broke out, I never had the dream again.

Nowadays, the window is no longer a sash window, there is no coal in the coal house. Over the wall, there are mature trees on the Corporation estate, which has been there since the 1930's.

We cannot see the Town Hall clock from the back bedroom window, as we used to be able to do. We can however, still hear it, if the wind is in the right direction. The sound of the trains has returned once more, since the new railway station has opened on Cropton Way.

The sound of the trains brings to mind a pleasing, picture of the view from the top of Turner How, looking over the valley, to the railway bridge of beautiful curves.

Bolton, although a Lancashire industrial town has some pleasing views, so one can be proud to be Bolton bred.

Kath Browne.

The first musical memory that comes to mind is, Butterflies in the Rain, the introductory tune to the aunts and uncles on the wireless, which after hearing a few times, I was able to hum, though a little out of tune from a six year old with two front teeth missing. I often wondered why the rest of the family used to put their fingers in their ears when I was doing my party piece.

Later on, visits to the Grand Theatre with my parents I remember hearing the tune 'Entrance of the Gladiators' although the rendering of it, a rather tinny and brash version, played before the opening of the show by Joe Mills orchestra, was a little off putting, after hearing it as it really should sound on a record which my mother bought from the music shop in town.

At the Grand, three artists, Wilson, Kepple, and Betty, did a comic sand dance to the tune of 'In A Persian Market' another pleasing tune, again, played as it should have been. A great favourite of mine was 'Marta' a haunting song which Arthur Tracy known as 'The Street Singer' did justice to.

When I left school, it seemed as if good music, for a short period was being replaced by nonsensical songs like 'The Hutsat Song' and 'Mares Eat Oats. I remember singing Amapola so often that my brother used to tell me to 'Put a sock in it' or 'Change your Tune'.

When I joined a dancing troupe in Fantomine during the war, a good number of the songs which Vera Lynn, the Forces Sweetheart sang, and were all the rage. 'We'll Meet Again' 'Yours' and I recall being on stage when the Fairy of the Ring in the show began a sweet rendering of 'White Cliffs Of Dover', except there were no 'blue birds' over that night, only the droning of heavily laden bombers of the enemy aircraft. The theatre lights were dimmed, but the show carried on, with the audience joining in the chorus.

It was after seeing the Jolson films, that I realized, here were songs which I enjoyed listening too. 'The Anniversary Song' 'Sonny Boy' 'Toot Toot Tootsie' 'Mummy' 'You made me love You' and 'Swanee'. Though not all the songs appealed, Al Jolson put his heart and soul into every song, as did Judy Garland, with 'Over The Rainbow' 'Meet Me In St. Louis, 'Trolley Song' etc.

Billy Cotton and his band let no-one nod off, as the loud opening of 'Wakey Wakey' blasted through the wireless, followed by his signature tune 'Somebody Stole My Gal'.

Visits to the Hippodrome bring more musical memories as I was introduced to 'Your Tiny Hand Is Frozen' from 'La Boheme'. From 'The Student Prince' came 'The Drinking Song' and 'I'll Walk With God'. My taste in music seemed to alter somewhat as I grew older, the tunes of the 'Sabre Dance' 'Ritual Fire Dance' and 'Zorba The Greek'.

Having what we at home termed as 'A mad half hour' my brother would grab the sweeping brush and use it as a bass, whilst the rest of us imitated the Ink Spots in 'Whispering Grass, Bless You and Java Jive. The Mills Brothers were noted for 'Paper Doll' and sounded similar to the Ink Spots.

During the war, Glenn Miller, who was later killed in a plane crash, had a good following by many of the teenagers of that time as he conducted his famous orchestra to the tunes of 'Pennsylvania 6-5,000', 'String of Pearls' 'Moonlight Serenade' and 'At Last'. For ballroom dancing, 'Jealousy' was the most popular tune to dance the Tango and 'Green Eyes' the rumba.

Gracie Fields, a Lancashire lass was one of the few singers able to be at ease with both comic songs such as 'Walter, Walter' 'Little Bottom Drawer' and 'Sally' 'Isle of Capri' where she eventually went to live. 'Sing As We Go' and 'Love Wonderful Love' from the film 'Looking On The Bright Side'.

Coming to the present time, there is Aled Jones singing 'The Snowman' & 'A Winter's Story'. Cliff Richard and Sarah Brightman's duet 'All I Ask Of You' another favourite of mine is Michael Crawford's 'The Music Of The Night'.

My taste in music and songs has become quite varied, I find Greg's music very soothing, and I suppose it all depends on the mood I'm in, though I cannot stand the blaring music we are now subjected to in most of the shops and restaurants. Ah! well, I suppose my age will have to be taken into consideration and like the song 'I'm getting into 'A Little 'Old Lady' so perhaps that accounts for it.....

VILE

THE WRITING ON THE ENVELOPE

He stared at the writing on the envelope. Was it his past catching up with him? Of course not, although there was something familiar about the writing, he hadn't a clue. Somewhere in his mind he recollected having seen it before, but where?

His thoughts went back quite a few years. No, the pain from that still lingered, but he dismissed it from his mind as he turned the envelope over in his hand. It had nothing to do with this. His hands began to tremble and the envelope fell to the floor. He bent down to pick it up, but tripped over the hearth rug and went crashing down, banging his head on the corner of the fireplace.

A neighbour, hearing the noise from her flat above, rushed downstairs, pushed the door open and called 'John, are you alright? but there was no answer. Then she found him, lying motionless where he had fallen. She phoned for an ambulance, and as she sat waiting, noticed the envelope on the floor beside him. Had he had a shock? No he couldn't have the letter was still unopened.

She pushed the envelope into his cardigan pocket, and went to open the door, the siren on the ambulance stopping as it pulled up outside the flat.

John came too just as the ambulance drove into the forecourt of the hospital. He did not feel as if he'd broken any bones, but he felt bruised and sore. The staff rallied round to make him comfortable. They had taken his cardigan off and the envelope had fallen onto the floor again. The nurse picked it up and put it on the locker beside his bed.

Feeling more like himself, John leaned over, and taking the envelope into his hands muttered 'You have been the cause of my being here, so let's see what you have to say'. Tearing it open he extracted a small white card and a slip of paper which read,

'Sir, We are pleased to inform you that we now have a bed vacant for you. Could you bring the enclosed card with you and report at the enquiry office when you come.
He lay back in bed, reflecting on how long he'd been waiting for this information, and let out a hollow laugh, but the pain in his back suddenly silenced him!.....

THE OUTING.

Ann and Bob had met at a Writers Club, he was in the main interested in short story writing, but Ann seemed to shine with her poetry. As they both lived in the same town and travelled to the meetings on the same bus it was inevitable that they should become friends. Perhaps the fact that they were both pensioners was also a common bond.

One day in the summer as they returned to the bus station for their journey home, they noticed an advert for day trips to various places and the decision was mutual. A day out to York was very appealing. The trip was from Bolton at 9.00am the following Tuesday.

When the day arrived the sky was rather overcast but as the coach approached the moors the sun began to shine and both felt they were going to enjoy the day. Well! looking back it's difficult to say whose fault it was but things really went wrong as they arrived in York.

Bob was slightly deaf and didn't hear the driver call out York, but Ann got up and Bob simply followed. Before they got off Ann did ask the driver 'Where will you pick us up?' The man pointed to a pub across the road 'The Lion And Lamb' but before they could grasp what was happening the coach shot off to Scarborough..

'What time did he say he would pick us up?' Bob asked. 'He didn't' she replied. 'I thought he would go further into the City, I only knew he was going on to Scarborough when the lady I was sitting near told me so.' Well, after a little confusion, they both decided to have lunch first and worry afterwards. It didn't help that the lunch was a failure. They then walked towards the Minster which was quite a trek, but once they reached the quaint old streets they became quite captivated and decided they could return to 'The Lion and Lamb' about 4.30pm and wait hopefully for the coach to arrive. Maybe they would be able to sit in the pub and have drink. They had reasoned the coach would take an hour to come from Scarborough so they would be at the rendezvous early.

As the afternoon wore on they wandered down the various little side streets, watched a juggler and a trick rider, and then went into the beautiful Minster to savour the peacefulness of the great Cathedral.

Ann had wanted to go to the Viking Museum but it was quite a long walk, so instead they visited the small Church where they could see a Viking ship and many of the old utensils used by these invaders so many years ago and had given York its name.

By now both were feeling tired and seeing a bus that would take them round the city they boarded it and enjoyed seeing some of the sights in comfort. The wall that surrounded the city was impressive.

When they got off the bus, they realized they were well and truly lost. So, who do you turn to when you are lost? A policeman of course. Well he was helpful in his way, he spoke into his walkie talkie and got directions to the 'Lamb and Lion' telling Bob it was in Blossom Street. But in answer to Bob's question he said the Police Station was two miles away and he didn't think they would be able to provide beds for the night to abandoned travellers!

By this time both Ann and Bob were hungry and tired, so the immediate answer to their problem seemed to be to find somewhere to eat and take the weight off their feet. They wandered around for a while until they found a really nice cafe, but had to wait a while as many more people had the same idea. Finally a table was found and they sank gratefully onto the small white chairs, ordered a boiled egg, toast and a chocolate eclairs, plus a pot of tea.

It didn't make them any happier when they were presented with a bill for £6. It was outrageous robbery. Bob asked Ann did he look like german tourist? Now they had to face the problem of getting home, but first they had to find out how to get to Blossom St. They left the quaint streets behind which are known as 'The Shambles'. Bob spotted a bus and said 'Let's see if it's going near to our destination. They dashed across the road, well stumbled would be more like it!

'Yes' said the driver for thirty pence he would take them there, and a lady who had listened to the exchange said she would tell them where to get off. By this time Bob was fast bordering on a mental breakdown, and he said they might have to find a hotel and stay the night. Ann didn't seem taken with the idea at all. (Who would believe us!) However, Bob wasn't beaten, walking into a shop near the pub, which incidentally was closed; he met two rather nice young ladies. 'No, they didn't know what time the Coach came, in fact they didn't know if it came at all, but gallantly offered to phone the Coach Company to enquire for them.

It was information that the couple didn't know as they had booked the seats at a Travel Agency in Bolton Bus Station. There were two travel agencies in the Bus Station so it was necessary to phone them both. No luck, they denied all knowledge of the trip.

All in all, the young women made eight calls to various companies, commencing at 4-o'clock and only giving up at 5pm when we all realized the firms would be closing. As a last resort, the older lady phoned her son at Scarborough and asked him to go across to the Coach Station to ask what time the Coaches left there.

Ann thought this was extremely good of her, especially as she refused to take any money for the phone calls. The young man rang to tell his mother the coaches usually left about 5.30pm and should arrive at York an hour later. They both thanked the ladies for all their trouble and went outside to wait.

'I think it would have been better if we had gone to Scarborough with the others' said Ann. Bob nodded in agreement. He wondered if Ann's legs were aching and idly looking around he saw a milk bottle crate, so bringing it over to her he said 'Here take the weight off your legs'. It began to get cold as the sun went in. Ann was worried that the Coach would fall to turn up. Then at six thirty two women appeared and Ann went to ask if they were by any chance waiting for the Coach to Bolton. 'Yes' they replied. 'It comes at a quarter to seven.' Ann then proceeded to tell them the tale of woe. They said 'But didn't you ask the time when you got off the Coach?'. It really is an asset to be quiet natured at times! The relief they both felt as the Coach came into view was beyond telling, Ann told the driver, who said he had called out the time as they were getting off the Coach. Bob was so relieved he went to his seat without a word. Both sat down with a sigh of relief. When they arrived at the Bus Station, Bob said 'Did you enjoy the outing Ann?' She replied 'Oh, yes Bob, I enjoyed every minute of it'..... Tom Shaw.

CITY LIFE.

Great city of mine
Each day that dawns I pity
Your smoke and grime
gnarled upon you 'til the end of time!
Night and day we work and play
Still we stay in your embrace
To me, your mother and father too
In some strange way I belong to you.
Workers in early morning light
'urry along as if in flight,
Monsters on wheels, small ones too
Cover your roads like morning dew,
Those fat wobbly pigeons, feathers shiny and blue,
Never a thought for me and for you
Life is sweet for them and theirs,
To-day, tomorrow, who cares?
Great city of mine one must agree,
Your magic holds forever my heart and me...

Jeanette Wardle.

A STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

Sometime ago I had a strange experience, which cannot be explained. It took place in a pleasant leafy avenue, not far from the centre of Bolton.

No doubt you have noticed these days I need the help of a stick. My doctor recommended this, so the attic was searched and a walking stick was discovered. As time went on, it accompanied me everywhere, including a Painting Class at Clarence Street School, where the Tutor remarked it was a very fine stick and quite a valuable antique, walking sticks being one of his interests.

One evening, having made a prior arrangement to visit a friend, I set off using the Ring & Ride Bus. By the time we reached the Haugh we realized there was a power failure, as the lights went out along the main road.

When we reached our destination, the driver got out and helped me up the path to the front door asking would I be alright as we discovered the door was ajar and Audrey had said it would be if she could not be there at the appointed time.

Using my stick as a guide, I went along slowly, trying to work out what lay in front of me, deciding my best move would be to find a chair.

I shuffled slowly to the right and caught my knee on a protruding object, deciding it was probably the sideboard. Eventually I found a chair and cautiously sat down, holding on to my walking stick with both hands.

Then I became aware of a knocking from above. I called 'Audrey, is that you? There was no reply only renewed knocking. I felt myself shivering, yet my forehead was covered in perspiration, panic was taking over, there was a mystic glow over to my left- I realized the street lamp had come on, but the knocking continued, increasing to a crescendo.

Suddenly there was a call, 'are you there Kath?' It was Audrey returning home. The knocking ceased, and I was relieved to see Audrey's familiar figure behind the light of a borrowed torch, almost immediately we were able to have a welcome cup of tea. There was no further knocking. I asked her if she had any experience of a similar happening, but she had not.

The knocking had been so demanding, it had been very strange. Some days later doing some family history research, I discovered that my grandfather had died in Halstead Street in 1910, after a long illness. My walking stick had belonged to him. Had he been trying to get in touch.....

Kath Browne.

THE CHEMMY-TREES OF KRETE
Summer 1963

Gazing at ripe fruit on those
Vigorous Cherry-trees of Krete
It's paradise !

Wrapped in the warmth of the rays
Of the glorious sun -soothing hands-
It's paradise !

The ripe fruit that burst with glee
-Like children of happy hold-
Close to the mother, the foliage, the tree.

The insects' harmonious humming
The buzzing of the honey-bee
Wrapped in nature's nectarious perfume
You wish for ever to be.

The infinite, the eternal touches your being
No flesh, no pain ; why, has there ever been ?

And you acclaim
And you exclaim !

And the refrain
It's paradise !

Angela Pollard

ATHENIAN HALCYONS - 1972

Halcyon Days !

Januarian, Februarian
Luminous, lukewarm
Subtle
Unknown perfume
Birds of good omen
Glide through
The shimmering blue
Of the Attica sky
Heading for Home
To Africa, they fly

My body, my soul
My whole being
O N E
With the Divine

Angelic -invisible- Hymns laud
Let the Athenian Halcyons be
Your dream come true !

Oh, Greeks
Of Ancient Times
How I envy you
How applaud you
In your Halcyon Days !

They expiate you
Purify you
They lift you
In the world
Beyond the grave
O N E
With the universe
The Earth
That is paradise

I was chosen to be lucky too
Wrapped up in the
Athenian Halcyons
in 1 9 7 2!

Angela Pollard

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