

Leisure Time

There were no playgrounds or parks. The whole of the area was our playground; the fields, the lanes, the woods and, best of all, the rivers and streams. We made camps in the hedgerows and woods, played football and cricket on the fields that were reasonably flat and tried to build dams across the Asker. The farmers didn't mind as long as we caused no damage which generally we didn't. Most of what we did meant that we returned home muddy or wet through. The muckier we were the happier we were; but not our mothers.

There were so few cars that we could ride on go-carts, play cricket and football on the road without any serious interruption. For cricket we used a Corona fizzy drinks box as a wicket. At the start we played our shots straight back or past the bowler but we soon had a rush of blood so the ball inevitably ended up in front gardens and through open front doors. Most people remembered that they were young once and were happy for us to retrieve the ball. There was one exception who called the police on more than one occasion. We got a gentle and understanding lecture from the village bobby and then got back to the game.

The girls played hop-scotch. We occasionally joined in but not too often. It wasn't good to be seen playing girls' games by any school mates that might pass by and, not only that, the girls were better than the boys!

In wet weather we went to each other's houses to play cards and games. None of us had learnt to be good losers so games like Monopoly where defeat is like a lingering, painful death usually ended with a smirking winner and tantrums from the losers.

When we were about 11 or 12 years old one of our pastimes was collecting car numbers. We cycled up New Road to Lodgers Cross on the A35 and sat on the boundary wall of Gribb Farm. The wall with its cock-and-hen coping was not particularly comfortable to sit on but there was one spot where the copings were spaced just right. That was the place I headed for. The traffic was such that we could collect almost every car number and the make of car. The vehicles tended to come in batches, held up by a slow one in front. Between batches we sat and waited until we heard another lot approaching in the distance. In between times we consulted our AA books to see where the cars came from. Most were registered in Dorset so carried the letters FX, JT, PR and JK on their number plate. For example JFX 106 (my first car) was a Dorset registered vehicle. It probably seems a pointless exercise but it passed the time and we enjoyed doing it.

All children collected postage stamps. The main aim was to collect as many as we could. Packets of stamps could be bought in Woolworths but as we got more expert we preferred to go to Mr Gale's stamp shop in South Street to buy specific stamps. George Hyde, Bryan's father, was a keen collector and member of the Bridport Stamp Club. He gave us good advice and let us look through the boxes of loose stamps that he received through the post. He would spread them on the table so that we could pick out a few that we fancied. They were not very expensive so our collections built up quickly. Approval books were popular, they came through the post. There was no obligation to buy but we were happy to spend our pocket money on a lot of colourful but generally worthless material.

The apple orchards were an attraction particularly when the apples were ripe. Unfortunately most were for cider making so were not good to eat. I think the enjoyment came from the risk of being caught, or not. On one occasion a few of us were caught red-handed by Mr Alan Rice-Oxley, the farmer at Knowle Farm. He bellowed "Come here boys" which we meekly did as he knew us and our parents. We trotted over expecting a good telling off. We were surprised when, instead, he told us that the apples we were trying to knock off the tree were not ripe but there were plenty of fallers from other trees that were ready for eating and we could have some of those as we wanted. I'm not sure if we were relieved or disappointed but we took a couple each just to be polite.

We liked to "help on the farms". Uncle Frank, who lived next door, was a carter at Upton Manner Farm and as the horses were phased out he drove the tractors including the Field Marshall with its very distinctive low revving engine noise; phut-phut-phut, and so on and on. At harvest time we went along to watch and "help". The reaper-binder started cutting from the outside of the field and worked its way towards the middle. It cut the corn and tied in to sheaves. We ran on behind stacking the sheaves in to stooks (left) ready to be collected and taken for threshing. This was another thing we enjoyed watching.



As the binder worked away the area of standing corn got smaller and smaller so that the rabbits hiding in the corn moved towards the middle. Eventually the frightened rabbits made a dash. One or two to begin with

but as the corn almost disappeared they ran out in all directions zig-zagging as they went. Then the chase began. Farm workers, helpers and spectators gave chase armed with knob-ended sticks in an attempt to catch a rabbit or two for dinner. The success rate was usually fairly high.

Cousin Maureen Crabb lived next door and as neither of us had siblings we were almost like brother and sister. Aged about three (right) we are standing outside the wash-house at West View (Killick Cottage). All children looked forward to birthdays and the chance of a good tea. Maureen and Helen Ward who lived next door to her and I had an odd sequence of birth dates. My birthday is 6 June, Helen's 7 July and Maureen's 8 August which are 6/6, 7/7 and 8/8. The years will remain undisclosed to protect the ladies. All I will say that Helen and I are just over a year older than Maureen.



(Below) Helen Ward's birthday party (10th?) with her family and friends from the village and Bridport Convent School where she was a pupil. It's outside Johnwyn (now Christmas Cottage) where the Ward family lived. (Back) Aunt Sally Read, Helen's mother Winnie Ward (née Read) with Isobel "Bunch" Ward, Aunt Dorothy Broom (née Read). In front of Bunch is Ruth Willmott. (Middle) Pauline Dunkerton, Mary Willmott, Rosemary Hyde; Bryan Hyde, Bernard Paull. (Bryan and I were slightly outnumbered by the girls!) (Front) Helen Ward, Rosamund Willmott, Lynette Driver, Moira Derryman, Maureen Crabb.



Sunday School

Sunday School for children up to the age of 11 was held in Loders Church on Sunday afternoons. Mrs Willmott, who was in charge, made it an enjoyable hour or so, when our parents had a bit of peace and quiet.

During the summer holidays we had the Sunday School outing arranged with military precision by Mrs Willmott. We almost always went to Weymouth. With its sandy beach, shallow water, buckets and spades, Punch and Judy, donkey ride, floats, candy floss and crowds of trippers just like us what more could we want. The beach became very crowded so it was easy to get lost. The solution was the 'Loders Sunday School' flag to mark our pitch. It was a good day out and the weather was always sunny. Well, that's how I remember it! (Below) The Loders Sunday School party in 1954.



Back rows from left: Mrs Osborne, -?-, Mrs Pavey (Mrs Osborne's daughter), Phyllis Bunnell, Mrs Willmott, Edna Driver, Christine Harris, Caroline Elliott, Ena Crabb, Ruth Willmott, -?-, Frank Good with flag, Mary Gill, Dora Hyde under flag, and right at the end Annie Paull, my mother

Along the front row the smaller children are: Ingrid Burrell, Teresa Pavey, ? Pavey In the pushchair, Annelie Burrell, Lynette Driver, Janette Bolton, Chuck Willmott (with blonde curls), Mary Willmott, Helen Ward, Maureen Crabb, Kenny Drake (?), Rosamund Willmott, Annabel Howell, Evelyn Elliott, David Gill (?), Bryan Hyde, me between Bryan Hyde and Brian Bolton, Michael Willmott, Maurice Matterface, Juliet Willmott, -?- , -?-, Susan Elliott, Morwenna Willmott, Dianne Tiltman(?).

(Right) On the Sunday School outing, or maybe just day out, enjoying a ride on the donkeys on Weymouth beach.

(From the left) Bernard Paull, Maureen Crabb, Helen Ward and her little sister Isobel (Bunch) Ward.



In 1954 the cost of the Sunday School outing was met from a house-to-house collection around the village. Just over £15 was collected which covered the cost of the coach, a boat trip around Portland Harbour and tea on the beach for 30 children. After spending eight hours in Weymouth followed by a hot and sticky coach journey back to Loders we arrived home sunburnt, weary, a bit niggly and almost ready for bed. It had been a very good day.

Mothering Sunday was another of the big events. A couple of days before we went off to the fields and along the lanes to pick primroses from the hedgerows. We tied them in small bunches, wrote a label to our mother and attached it as neatly as we could to the bunch. On Mothering Sunday our mothers were invited to the morning service and presented with the flowers by their child. A very simple and personal procedure, no commercialisation, no money spent, no Mothering Sunday cards but our mums were invariably moist eyed as they were given their little bunch of flowers. They appreciated the effort that we had shown and our appreciation of them.

There were always bunches left over on Mothering Sunday. These were distributed to the elderly and those who were in poor health. I'm sure those on their own appreciated an unexpected visit as much as the primroses.

When we grew too old for Sunday School we joined the Church Choir. This involved junior choir practice on Thursday evenings and attending the Sunday morning service. Mr Bill Tiltman, the organist, did his best to get us to sing in tune but, in my case, without too much success. On winter evenings it was dark at the start of choir practice. To begin with, we were slightly apprehensive and walked warily but quickly through the unlit graveyard towards the lights in the church. We soon realised there was nothing to fear but there was the opportunity of hiding behind the tombstones and trying to frighten other unsuspecting members of the choir. As we got older and wiser we grew out of such childish pursuits.

Bonfire Night 1959



Guy Fawkes night was a reason for a good bonfire. The local farmers Messrs Crabb and Rice-Oxley were very obliging and allowed us to build

huge bonfires on their land. Some-times we were able to help ourselves to hedge cuttings that just happened to be nearby. This was an important factor on our choice of site! Bonfire night usually fell in the half-term week which gave us plenty of time to collect rubbish from home and around the village. The 1959 bonfire (above) built by Tommy Dennett, David Gill, Bryan Hyde, Bernard Paull, David Skeats and Ronald Tilley was memorable. It featured in the December 1959 Reverend Willmott's Parish Notes, extract below.

By universal consent the best bonfire was at Shatcombe. It had been assembled with an industry which, if only it could be applied to lessons, would surely land the boys in the university. Ronald Tilley capped it with a few gallons of used motor oil, and the resulting blaze was colossal. Here again, it seems that the older people (and of these there are not a few in Uploders) enjoyed it most. Said 83 year old Mrs Wallbridge: "When Ernest and I went to our beds that night, we didn't want the light on, t'were that bright we opened our windows and let the heat in, and really Mr Willmott, t'were the first time our old bones have really bin warm this winter". If the owners of Mrs Wallbridge's cottage should read this, and subsequently detect a lot of blistered paint, they would, we trust, not lay it to the charge of the boys, but write it off as an "Act of God."

Mrs Elizabeth Wallbridge and Ernest (Ern) Hawkins outside 4 Shatcombe, where they lived. It was claimed that Mrs Walbridge's parrot, Loretta, was 100 years old and could recite the Lord's Prayer. I cannot confirm this but I do know that Loretta had knowledge of some less savoury words. According to un-confirmed reports, she once greeted the Vicar with a few of these; and she survived! In 1949 she surprised everyone by laying an egg, the first in her 19 years with Mrs Walbridge! She also added "See egg! See egg!" to her repertoire!



Earning a Few Coppers

Like most children I received weekly pocket money to spend on the things I could not do without; sweets comics, model planes and the like. Visiting uncles and aunts boosted my income when they slipped two-bob or half-crown in my hand as they left. Postal orders that arrived at Christmas or on my birthday were gratefully received. They were acknowledged with polite thank-you letters written, usually, after a number of "Have you written your thank-you letters yet?".

Neighbours, Auntie Ena and Uncle Frank Crabb, let Ern Hawkins (pictured on page 36) use a part of their garden to grow vegetables. Ern was a bit rheumatic and could not move very quickly or bend too well so I sometimes gave him a hand on his plot. At the end of one season he was struggling with his pea-sticks so he asked for help to tie up his 'stickers' to take home for kindling. This I did and trotted along the road beside him in his 'girt' (great-big) hobnail boots carrying a bundle of stickers. For my troubles a twelve-sided brass 'thrup-penny' bit, came my way. I was very pleased!

It was usual practice for the older children to escort the younger ones to school something Pauline Legg, a very sensible and responsible girl, did for me. When I reached an age when I was deemed to be sensible and responsible I took on a similar role with Pauline's brother, Mervyn. Mrs Legg, his mother, kindly gave me the occasional sixpence for my troubles; my first regular paid income!

A lovely but very deaf old lady, Mrs D'Alcorn, lived in Sunnyside, the cottage next to the Yondover railway bridge (right). From the age of about 13 or 14 I helped her in the garden on Saturday mornings. I mowed the lawn, weeded, trimmed the river bank and with some supervision, pruned her rambling roses, trees and shrubs. She gave me half a crown, not bad money then, a glass of Robinson's Barley Water, a biscuit and sometimes a slice of cake. Many years later Marjorie Randall arrived on our doorstep with a package, a wedding present from Mrs D'Alcorn. It was a silver-plated cruet set, one of her own belongings. We still treasure it now. She was poorly at the time and sadly passed away soon afterwards. I still think of her when I drive past Sunnyside.



Before leaving school, I did various jobs during the school holidays and at weekends. I delivered mail at Christmas and carried out bar, kitchen and domestic work at the West Bay Hotel, the latter for half-a-crown an hour or ten-bob (50p) for a Sunday morning's work. Factory work in Beaminster was another job. We travelled from Bridport on the works' bus. On one occasion it was delayed and so we clocked-in a few minutes late for which we were docked a quarter-of-an-hour's pay. We considered this to be totally unjust so spoke to the management pointing out that we had no control over lateness. The company bus was at fault. We were told very firmly "Late was late!". It was not much money to lose but to us the principle was totally unreasonable. We had to accept the decision, we had no option. The outcome was disgruntled workers with, I'm sure, an associated drop in productivity. Hopefully we all learnt a lesson from what was a trivial event; I believe I did. Having said that I enjoyed working there, everyone was friendly and during the summer we played cricket on the school playing field at lunch-time, which was very enjoyable.

Loders Court

From a young age Loders Court featured in the lives of the villagers. Around about Christmas time Sir Edward and Lady Le Breton invited the children of the village to the 'Court Party'. A coach picked up those from outlying areas which included Uploders. On arrival at the Court we were escorted in to the Billiard Room. Sir Edward welcomed us and introduced the entertainment. A Punch and Judy Show (alright for the little kids was our thought as we got older) was followed by a conjuror who pulled rabbits out of hats and other magic tricks. It must have been magic, what else could it have been? Then followed the tea; sandwiches, iced buns and meringues with cream. They really were the icing on the cake!

Sometime during the afternoon one unfortunate was approached, by the Reverend Willmott and asked to give the vote of thanks. Although we really appreciated the party it was a time most of us, rather ungratefully, wished we were invisible, mainly because we lived in fear of drying-up part way through our speech. Eventually my turn came to be asked. I spent most of the tea-time mentally putting something together and, as a result, suffered from a partial loss of appetite.

Eventually the time came. I climbed to my feet and started off "On behalf of.....etc, etc" and ended up with what the others had said in previous years "Three cheers to Sir Edward and Lady Le Breton, hip-hip" and the others went "Hooray", three times. Amazingly it went without a major hitch (you will be disappointed to hear) and I had survived. As usual the party was reported in Mr Willmott's Parish Notes which I read with some trepidation only to discover that I had been given a very favourable review! It read:- *".....The vote of thanks was made by Bernard Paull, who shewed promise of making a good after dinner speaker"*. Not unexpectedly my 'friends' were quick to give me their appraisals!

On leaving the Court Party we were all presented with an orange, an apple and half-crown, 12.5 pence in new money. A half crown was enough for one of the better, but not the best, seats at the Palace cinema, or the best seats in the Lyric cinema, an ice-cream at the interval and still have a few coppers left over.

Loders Fête was, and still is, held on the first Saturday of August at Loders Court. The fête has almost always been blessed with dry weather. The Reverend Willmott hoped, and possibly prayed, for a dry but overcast day so that folks did not head for the beach in preference to the fête. When we were old enough we helped with the children's games and the like. In the 1940s and early 50s gymkhanas were held in the Park. It was much the same as it is today but without the cars or the pop-up beer tent.