

SPOTLIGHT

The following contribution was sent to us following Sue Stoner's article on Christmasses Past. As it is guaranteed to jerk the memories of long standing Tetbury residents and intrigue the new ones, we print it in its entirety.

Mention of Mr A. Groves' little cottage in West Street (Harper Street as it used to be called) brings back a lot of memories to my mind. About two doors away was the lodging house or "Padding Can" as Corny Jackson, the keeper used to call it. All sorts of gentlemen of the road and their families used to frequent it—scissor grinders, hawkers, barrel organists and even a dancing bear on one occasion. Corny used to stare at the street at intervals to see how blind Mr White, his rival in business, was faring. T'was funny, Mr White's lodging house was always painted blue. On the way to school he usually sat in a chair out front with a "Good morning my boy", as we passed. He usually did well for his house was closer to the "Drum and Monkey" (the origins for this undying name for the "Prince of Wales" are somewhat obscure) where many a star turn was put on with jugglers, spoon clapping and step dancing.

So on to school with perhaps a visit to Ria Hodges' for a sherbet dot or gob stopper, on again to whistle at Mary Cleaver's blackbird which was always stuck up over the door, sometimes also to call at Mr Bennet's down School Hill for a Hap'orth of downfall apples, or a glance in Polly Songs', the corner shop. Her treacle whirls were alright but no good for school—you couldn't get rid of it especially with "Hawkeye" Jacky Dance as a schoolmaster with his Spanish beard jutting out. He could pinpoint chewing gum, gob stopper or sherbet dip a bit quick. Hardly knowing if the second bell had gone, you had to rush for woe betide you if you were late.

We had the usual games at playtime, "Cappit" (to see who could jump the farthest after his own cap). "Saddle my Nag" (to see how many you could pile up in a human pyramid against the school wall), and "Catty" (a complicated jumping game played with a short stick pointed at both ends). We did used to have cricket and Mr "Tubby" Hodgson, the under teacher, used to play with us until one day Slogger Townsend drove one across the Nap thro' Mr Box's window and that was that.

Evenings usually meant trouble. Our Harper Street gang (there were three other main ones in Northfield, the Chipping and Cutwell) used to meet around the gas lamp or the tap which was outside the Salvation Army hut but there was no hut there then. It used to be an old cottage where our "mystery man" used to hide. (The mystery man was based on a series at the cinema. He was always the daredevil and great kudos was attached to his capture by a rival gang). All the town gangs had mystery men, Kelly Rearden was ours.

Harry Jackson used to do his rounds selling paraffin in the evening. "Oily, oily, ah, last time tonight", was his cry but he always came round again. Folks used to bring out their quart bottles for oil, t'was no electric then. One night as he was trotting up the street, our mystery man spotted Harry's tap still running. He done no more than put a match to it. T'was alright until the flame nearly caught up with Harry. We all vanished. So did Harry, I never saw him again.

On top of Black Horse Hill near the council yard was another favourite spot at night. Charlie Jennings, the hawker, used to hustle us. He used to hang up rabbit skins to dry in an old shop (it's a private garage now) and the pong from them was awful. Then there was the supper beer parade. Warns' Brewery had a retail counter and dozens of folks used to go along with their jugs for their halves and pints. Old Nellie Ball was our favourite tag coming up Cottons Lane with her two bags of bottles and half a dozen cats following her but she used to take our barracking in good tune. Phillips bread cart was a real winner. Whilst he was delivering along Arnold Terrace, we used to "deliver" a couple of hot new loaves to Cutwell Green and have a picnic. To add to that, when "whispering" Charlie Price, the carrier, gave his cry coming up the bridge, a couple of bananas or oranges would roll off the back" despite the cry of passers by of "Whip round".

SPOTLIGHT continued

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Clancy's (the proprietors of the White Hart") used to have a weekly entertainment then at the "White Hart". That was before Froggy's "O.I.C.M.S." (pronounced oh i see ums, a concert party formed by Froggy Cleaver and friends) and no matter what the play, Hazel Clancy always came on as a fairy and Bullock was the villain. "East Lynn" and "Murder in the Red Barn" were all in the bill.

We always went coal hauling on Saturday mornings to save 2d on a half cwt. We used to have a penny of it to go to the matinee. I remember being there when flames shot past the windows—the Aussies (stationed here during the First World War) had poured petrol in the gutters and set fire to it. Peace was signed and the bells were ringing loud enough to deafen you. Warns' Brewery hooter was going mad, the Aussies had taken P.C. Crouch to the Talbot and got him paralytic—it was hectic to say the least. One army truck went down Long Street with no driver, with screams coming from the back and they weren't all males screaming either. The Aussies painted the stag on the "White Hart" where it shouldn't have been painted but at any rate it was peace.

Arberstritter.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir

Re. Article on Tetbury Hospital.

The four wards were officially opened and named ELIZABETH after Our Queen; ANNE after Princess Anne; MARY after Duchess of Beaufort; HELENA after Lady Helena; and not after long standing patients as printed.

Trolley Shop—Run for 22 years by Mrs Ormandy and helpers for RED CROSS and not The League of Friends. The League undertake beautiful arrangements of flowers every week and also give a very substantial present to patients and staff every Christmas.

H. Ormandy (Hon. Sec.)

Tetbury Hospital League of Friends

Editor: We apologise for any inaccuracy in the hospital article but we only publish on information received.

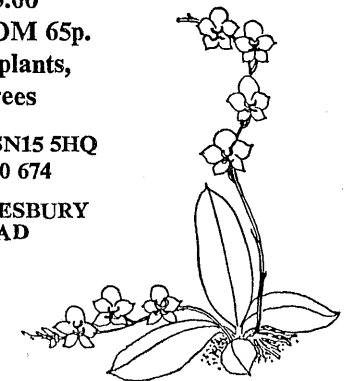
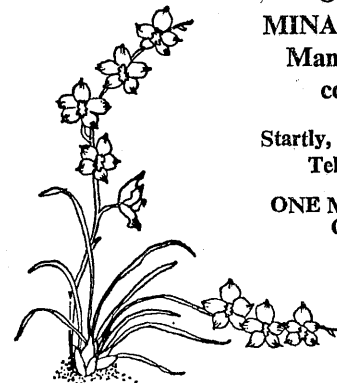
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ONE MILE OUT OF MALMESBURY
ON THE SEAGRY ROAD



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