

refreshment tent. This was quite a social occasion for the adults, who strolled about the field meeting friends and acquaintances, rarely seen.

The school Christmas Party was eagerly anticipated. A huge Christmas tree was erected by my father (head woodman of the estate) and several others and decorated with tinsel, baubles and presents, and, at the party, lit by many candles. After tea we played games. Christmas at home was fairly quiet. We always had a tree and decorated the walls with holly. My oldest sisters cycled home for the day and night. The stocking at the foot of my bed was filled with an apple, orange, a penny, a few sweets and nuts and always a sugar mouse. There was one good present – a *Chatterbox Annual*, perhaps. On Christmas evening, we played a card game “Three Card Lou” and sometimes I would play hymns on the harmonium, while Dad and Annie sang.

At this period I cannot recall any sort of social life for the women. Men would meet at the Whitewell Hotel, or the Lower House (now Parker’s Arms) at Newton but, of course, no respectable woman would be seen in such places. Every year in May, Irish men arrived in Clitheroe for a month’s haytime. Each morning in summer, I woke to the sound of the horse-drawn mowing machine in Mr Curry’s meadow and a day or two later would see a row of sun-bonneted and straw-hatted workers with wooden *lucks*, turning the swathes to dry.

Mr Parkinson, at Root Farm, was one of the very few farmers who grew any corn but there was great excitement, once a year, when the threshing machine came round. After school, we hared up the road to Staple Oak barn to watch. Another joy was to see the blacksmith at work at Dunsop, where the garage now stands. We gazed fascinated at the roaring fire and the flying sparks as he struck the anvil to shape the shoe.

We had a sub-post office offering a very limited choice of goods for sale. There were no pre-packed goods and all dry items had to be weighed out and put into sugar paper bags or cones. I would often be sent to Mr

Curry at Millhouse Farm about milking time, and would wait for him to finish milking, when he would fill my kit. I went home swinging it round and round without spilling any. Mr Curry used to greet me with, “Hello, Jenny Wren, come on in!”

I suppose I was a lonely child because my older sisters had already left home for work when I was born and there were no playmates near. I can remember the Peace Celebrations at the end of the 1914-1918 War. Children’s sports were held in a field at Whitewell. I wore a pink voile dress which was smeared with grass when I fell during a race but I won and so escaped a reprimand!

When I was ten years old, I won a scholarship to a West Riding of Yorkshire Grammar School and my lifestyle changed completely. As the nearest such school was Skipton Girls’ High School, it was impossible to travel the thirty miles there daily. There, every minute of the day was organized and supervised – mealtimes and bedtime. Food in general was unappetizing – memories of “dead whale” (cod swimming in water), “dead baby” (anaemic-looking suet jam roll).

Each Saturday morning our weekly laundry was returned to us and darning and mending was supervised. In the afternoon, those girls playing in netball, hockey or tennis matches would have organized matches or a walk in a long, weary crocodile. After tea, we had ballroom dancing and I sometimes played the piano for this.

After breakfast on Sunday, we learned the Collect for the Day, then got ready for church and received our silver threepenny bits for the collection.

After college at Bingley, my first teaching post was in a South Yorkshire mining village, with a class of 64 and an upright Dickensian desk, behind which one stood. *Sitting was not allowed!*

*Mrs Janet Boothman, nee Slater, taught at several Ribble Valley schools including Whitewell from 1934 to 1941. She died, aged 90, in 2002. These memoirs were written for her daughter, Lynn, who kindly gave CHLS permission to print them. The original piece has been slightly abridged.*