

A childhood worth remembering

The Escrick where I enjoyed my childhood has gone but I've still got my Memories and I would like to share them with you. Compared to the present day they may sound boring and if they were all today's generation had to interest them, well enough said.

I was born in March 1939 and I suppose a few months later my parents perhaps thought it hadn't been a very good idea.



The village consisted of what's now is called the Main Street from the Church to the park gates, just that single row of houses, nothing behind them. I lived in the house next to the Black Bull on what was then Poplar Row and over the years we only moved over the road and back again to the same house so removal costs were zero.

Somehow or other I seem to have a very early memory of crawling about in the house and getting up the step into the kitchen for the first time so your talking less than a year old, unbelievable I know but its stuck in my mind. After that the years are mostly blank, the only positive memory is being taken down New Road to look at the remains of a German bomber that crashed. There were just a few bits of metal left still smoking, and one night hearing the bombers going over to bomb York.

I started school and very quickly blotted my copy book by hitting the policeman's daughter who screamed her Dad was coming to see me at school. I'm afraid Mum had to carry me there screaming my head off the next day but it was all a false alarm.

We didn't have gangs, there weren't enough of us to do that, we just had the top end lot and the bottom end lot, about ten at the most. Top end and bottom end you ask, well somehow over the years that's how the village got split, the dividing line being the beck. The funny thing was though the top end was to the south of the beck and bottom to the north. For fun we had all we needed. Robin Hood, Cowboys and Indian's or building tree houses in Gassy wood, the beck for catching fish or eels, train spotting at the station and although our parents didn't know it (I don't think), the river at Naburn for a swim, there was no such thing as TV or games machines. While we were really young perhaps one of our favourite pastimes was to sit in the middle of the road on a hot day bursting tar bubbles.

I'm sorry Escrick but perhaps my favourite memory isn't here but at Tickhill farm near Knaresborough at my grandfathers. I spent all my summer holidays there until I was 10 and did things parents would cringe at these days. I was free to roam the farm and fields, go down to the river and give the farm dog a swim and catch tiddlers in a jam jar, get carried on the shoulders of the German prisoners of war and so much more. I do wonder now if grandma ever worried.

As we got older we organised cricket matches with Deighton, boy oh boy didn't that cause some arguments, but we managed to finish the games.

We supplemented our meals at home by eating (stealing) apples from the orchard in the hall grounds, carrots or turnips from the fields (they were fairly clean) and even water hens eggs that we fried on a rock on a very hot day one summer, but I think some of us are still around 70 odd years later.

So there you are, simple little memories, nothing that would make headlines in the papers, but they're my memories.

More memories

Yes there are a few more, some good, some bad, some naughty.

One that sticks in my mind was the winter of 1946/7 I think, a proper winter with snow, it was up to 18" deep in places and in the New field (football field) it was over our welly tops. We trudged around making roads and spent hours racing around them until some bright spark decided to take short cuts and it became absolute chaos. I think this was followed by floods and the village was cut in half, a large dingy was used to get from one end to the other but where was I? Stuck inside with mumps, measles or something, missing all the fun.

Escrick Hall brought us some excitement while it was being converted into the school when we dared to find a way in to have a look round. I think we climbed onto a lower roof round the back and found a window open. It was completely empty so we couldn't be accused of stealing anything but boy was it exciting. We also managed to get into some buildings opposite the Hall where we found a few remnants from the days of society, a fancy wagon, flags, daggers and clothes of days gone by complete with a few medals and NO we didn't dare take anything.

Other less lawless pursuits were playing in the grounds of the old parsonage and nearly being caught a few times. I'm sure we became part of Parson Trollope's sermon once or twice, and climbing on the new buildings that were to become East View resulting with the builders having to repair few bits and pieces next day.

Of course things didn't always move along happily, like most children we had our fallouts and fights with a bit of bullying thrown in and I had to run home a few times and not get caught. Once behind the garden gate I was safe.

On the lighter side during another year of bad floods a pal from next door and I saw some rabbits 'trapped' on an island in a field. Grabbing our nobbling sticks we managed to climb a tree and drop onto island and set out to catch our dinner. But we

learnt something that day, rabbits can swim and that's what they did. They jumped in and with their little white tails wagging at us, disappeared. That wasn't too bad but when we tried to reach the tree branch to climb off the island it had swung up away from us so we had no option but to follow the rabbits. Our wellies coped for a while then it was too deep and when filled with water became very heavy. Off they came and with water up to our waists we paddled out onto the road. Now what, we couldn't walk through the village like that, so we crept round the outskirts of the Hall, into the New field, over the wall at the bottom of our gardens and home. Only Gran was home, good old Gran. She had me stripped down and bathed, my wet clothes washed and dried before Mum came in and nobody ever found out.



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