

Sunday School Trips on a Chara in the Summer

Mary Tweddle was born in 1904 and interviewed in 1996

My father worked at the Burneside Mill. He was temporarily moved to Otley near Leeds. His intention was to come back to Burneside when he had finished whatever it was he was doing there. The war came along and he was in the Territorial Army and called up in 1915. He was killed on the Somme in 1916 when I was only eleven years old.

In 1915 mother then moved into Wakefield Yard in Stricklandgate. It belonged to Lord Wakefield who lived in the big house opposite what is now the County Hall. Our house was just a small cottage. There was a living room and a good big kitchen, two bedrooms and a place under the stairs for coal and that sort of thing. It was one of ten in a row I think it was in the middle about number five.

It had been sort of semi modernised. There was a cold tap in the kitchen and a sort of stone sink with a draining board. There was no indoor sanitation we'd to go up the yard to the toilet. You had a key and you shared one with a neighbour which wasn't at all unusual.

There was no wash boiler in the house, the whole yard shared a communal wash house in a place built off altogether from the houses. It was flag floored and all whitewashed inside. It had an old fashioned boiler which had to be filled with water. It had a tap with a thing that used to pull over the boiler to fill it and you could swing it back again and a coal fire underneath. The tubs and mangles were kept in there and mother shared with one other lady. Usually taking all morning in those days to do the washing and all afternoon for the second person. It was Monday for us.

There was no electric light in those days. We had gas in the house with a mantle over the fireplace. You had to be very careful because they had incandescent covers and if you banged the door it broke. They were only about three pence, but even threepences were precious in those days. Electricity never came while we were in that house. Mother got a letter to say she could go to Underley Hill the very week before I was married. This was a very modern, nice place that had everything.

I went to the St. Thomas's Church of England school at the bottom of the House of Correction Hill (Windermere Road). We used to wear a dark blue dress with a Holland pinarette over it with a pocket and a yoke which had to be washed each week, but the under-dress had to last a bit longer. We wore long black woollen stockings which were very warm in winter. As we grew taller our dresses used to be halfway down our legs (no knee length dresses) and when they wouldn't let down any further it had to be passed on to the second child and so forth. As the oldest I was the lucky one who got new clothes each time.

We would go to Sunday School every Sunday. We had to go 'cos we got a little card and if we got so many we could go on the Sunday School trip in the summer. One year I well remember going on a canal boat to Levens. Later on they used to get what we called a "chara" – a bus. You climbed up the wheel and sat on a rope. Mothers were allowed to go and they sat on the end and we sat in the middle. I think we used to go to Cunswick with the church people and have our tea in a bag. Sometimes we went to Sandside for the day. We set off about nine in the morning on one of these horse drawn charas. When we came to Orphans Home Hill all the young ones had to get out and walk because the horses couldn't pull the weight up the hill. Sometimes there was four horses and we used to run along behind and then the driver stopped at the top of the hill and let us climb up again. When I was fifteen I had my first real holiday. I went to stay with some cousins we had in Liverpool and I stayed a week. I went for a fortnight but I came home at the end of the week. I got homesick.

I can remember when we started to have buses and we used to hear them coming. Two young men came out of the army at the end of the war. They bought three buses to run this service. It was a way of earning a living and it was a huge success. We used to run down to watch them go by and wave at the people in them – they were such a novelty.

Every Monday morning they used to drive all the animals down to the abattoir, some to be sold some to be butchered. They used to drive them down Stricklandgate, down Sandes Avenue on to Shap Road where the abattoir was. Mostly they were sheep but now and again there would be a cow. Cows used to run down the Yards frightened and everybody had to dodge in or hide somewhere until the man with the cow managed to bring it back again. All shouting and bawling and slapping of sticks.

When I was fourteen I left school and went to Grange-over-Sands to the Hazelmere Hotel. I had to work under the cook and I learned plain cooking. I was happy at the hotel there were about six or eight of us and we had to live in. The cook was very firm and she would go home in the evening but we got very strict instructions of what we had to do. There was a confectioner and after so many months in the kitchen we had to go into the confectionery department and we learned cake making, pastry making and tea cakes and all that sort of thing. Two girls shared a room and when I was about eighteen I came back to Kendal and that was when I met my husband.

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