

Memories

by Carol Manley

Taves an Tir Heamoor volunteer



My family have lived in west Penwith for a very long time. My maternal great, great grandfather helped to build Pendeen Church and my paternal great grandfather was a stone spaler¹ on the St Ives Road.

I don't remember the day that I was born, but it was probably a cold and frosty morn that 24th December in 1936. At that time, my mother and father were living in Long Row, Carnyorth. I think our house had two bedrooms along with a kitchen and front room. As was usual then, the toilet was at the top of the back garden, and the Council emptied everyone's waste buckets during the night once a week.

I don't remember what toys I had, but I do remember playing with putty instead of plasticine. Also I was fascinated by snails; I used to put some very tiny crumbs on a piece of glass and watch them slowly eat.

We were still at Carnyorth when the war started. There was some sort of rule that everyone had to have a least one evacuee; ours was a girl named Dora who went to grammar school in Penzance. I don't know how long she stayed with us.

Before I started school, we moved to Boscaswell where my maternal grandparents lived. I went to Pendeen Girls' School, apparently having to be chased up the road to school every morning! The Headmistress was a Miss Ida Bennets who used to poke you in the arm if you misbehaved, which of course I never did! My father was a conductor on Western National Buses at some stage - there were no calculators in those days, and he was very good at mental arithmetic. After we moved to Boscaswell he worked at Geevor mine although never as a miner, as in his youth he had contracted TB. Both my sister and brother were born in Boscaswell.

At the bottom of Boscaswell Village there was an old Mission House, now converted into a home. It was rumoured that way back the villagers had eaten the Missionary himself, but that must have occurred a little before my time! I have been told that the bell from the Mission House is now stored in Pendeen Church.

People who lived in Boscaswell were called 'scally geese' by the people who lived up Raw (the Boscaswell name for Pendeen), and likewise the people who lived up Raw were known as 'raw fish'. Tubbins² were thrown at people from up Raw going down Biscal Road from the burrows. Tubbins were also thrown on courting couples at Lover's Rock. Lover's Rock was on the cliffs between Geevor and the lighthouse, and we would pass Lover's Rock on the way to Avrock, or Avarack as it's called on the map. Avrock was a series of pools at the bottom of the cliffs accessible by steps and railings built by miners for the local children, and many hours were spent there after school and in the holidays. There was a succession of pools: first Baby Pool which had a sandy bottom, then Kitchen Pool where you learnt to swim and then Long Pool where you could even dive from. The last pool was Parlour Pool which wasn't really used as it wasn't always reached by the tide, or it could be like the parlour in a house which was only used for hatches, matches and dispatches. We would run down there after school, pinching a turnip from Noah Pearces' field on the way, sometimes going past Lover's Rock and sometimes going down Roly-Poly Hill, carrying our delightful hand-knitted costumes in our hands and a striped hand towel to dry with. I think the steps and railings have eroded over time and the pools can no longer be reached. The only organised holidays we had were a day trip to St Ives arranged by the Sunday School and a trip to Newquay boating lakes with the Youth Club.

The vicar of Pendeen Church used to put on plays in the Sunday School Rooms. There was a Pantomime every Christmas, a religious play every Easter and a popular play on Tea Treat Day on 24th June. I enjoyed these very much and I was actually Principal Boy in some pantos, even though I couldn't sing! We even took the pantomimes on tour for a couple of years – all the way to St Just and Sennen!

Old prams were very much sought after by us children to provide the wheels for buggies, but if they had 'bowgy' (buckled) wheels they were no good. We made stilts from upturned treacle (Golden Syrup) tins, and kites from old roof laths using brown paper and string, with tailings made from newspaper. Cut up newspaper was also used for toilet paper and for wrapping up the cold ashes, and you could always find a bit of news that you had missed!

In the mid 1900s, my maternal grandparents had a farm with five or six cows. My mother told me that she would walk a cow to market seven miles away in Penzance, and if it wasn't sold she had to walk it back again. By the time they got home both mother and cow had bleeding heels - not such good old days after all! I can

remember Granny Wearne making butter from the milk with a butter churn and butter pats. There were no milking machines in those days, so milking was all done by hand. I have never milked a cow myself, but I did milk our goat Nana; she was still giving a gallon a day after kidding four years before.



Many, many years later when my late husband and I moved back to Cornwall and had a smallholding, I used to make cheese from the milk our goat provided. I also tried making butter, but it was very pale. We drank the milk unpasteurised but strained it to get out any stray goat hairs! I don't think unpasteurised milk did me any harm – or did it?!

There were no washing machines in my Granny's day - water was heated on the slab and the whites boiled first, then the water was poured into dolly and agitated with a paddle. The washing was wrung out on the mangle and hung out to dry, and if there wasn't enough room on the line it was draped over bushes.

Radios were called wirelesses in those days. They didn't have batteries but had an accumulator instead; these were as big as the average sized radio today and they were very heavy. I used to hate walking up from Boscaswell to Bowjewyan to have it recharged.

In one of Granny's fields was a well, and when houses were built on the fields my mother suggested that they be called 'Parc an Pyth'. 'Pyth'³ was a well then, but this may be just used in the very west of west Penwith, as was the word 'planchon'⁴ for a wooden floor. 'Krow'⁵ was a shed, 'bullarns'⁶ were snails and 'yow'⁷ or 'yew' was used to greet people, depending on which village you came from. 'Ishen'⁸ was what the husks left after threshing were called.

Not everyone had running water in Boscaswell, so Sam May would come around with his donkey and cart and charge 1d for a pail of water, which was collected from the leat in Pendeen. Strangely, I don't remember any water butts collecting rain water from the launders⁹. I think in the 1940s a tap was installed at the bottom of Boscaswell opposite Prison Wall, and Mr Jim Roberts used to show films in the WI Hall every Saturday.

My father at that time worked at Geevor, and I remember having to go to Geevor and collect churks¹⁰ from outside the Dry¹¹, furze sticks were also collected from the craft¹² or from the moor or Pendeen Carn, and these were used for kindling.

Around the late 1960s and into the 1970s, Lord Falmouth sold off some houses in Falmouth Place and my parents bought one of these. Water at that time was fetched from a well situated opposite the Carnyorth Adventure Centre. I think the well is still there today, but covered, and toilets were still being emptied by the council every week (nice job if you can get it!). Eventually water and drainage were installed, and we bathed in a tin bath in front of the Rayburn once a week whether we needed to or not. The same water was used for everybody, so we must have been some clean! Electricity was introduced about the same time, so there were no more little paraffin Tilly lamps.



Annual Carnivals were held in the village with carthorses pulling the floats. Andrew Hall who lived at Church Road Farm had some magnificent horses with lots of brasses. I think the dressed up horses with all their brasses had a competition class of their own, and when any person was over dressed they were said to be 'dressed up like a empire oss'. Sadly, health and safety put an end to the carnivals.

Worn sheets were cut sides to middle to make them last longer, and they were also made into pillowcases. Also, during or just after the Second World War, sugar was imported in white sacks and these were used as pillowcases too, and many hours were spent embroidering flowers on them. Tiepins and brooches were made from silver thrupenny bits and sixpences, and in those days there was no such thing as pet foods; our cats and dogs just had any scraps that were left over, but I don't remember them being short lived or unhealthy.

During the Suez war my mother used to make camouflage nets at what used to be Avery's Garage, now Tolveneth housing estate opposite the Radgel. For extra money you could take materials home and

make the nets using a wooden needle and a board like those used for making fishing nets. I know I made one myself for extra pocket money.

I hated grammar school and would have preferred to go to Camborne Tech, but the Headmistress wouldn't let me. Instead I used to skip any lessons I didn't enjoy (like English and History, for example), and as I was interested in nursing, I would instead go to West Cornwall Hospital and 'help' in the children's ward. After I left school, I worked for a short time as a mother's help in Penzance, and then worked in St Just Post Office until I was old enough to start my three-year training as a Nanny at one of the Church of England nurseries in Box.

Time passed and I moved away; however, when my husband and I moved back to Cornwall, I took up my theatrical jaunts once more but gave up again when I kept forgetting my lines (maybe that's why I have trouble remembering my Cornish!). We were very contented on our smallholding, and at one stage everything on our plates was either home grown or home reared; although unfortunately Derek was not in the best of health having caught septicaemia six months after moving down. However, we managed to keep going for a further 20 years. Happy days!

*Written by Carol Manley in April 2015 for the Heamoor phase of the **Taves an Tir** project and reproduced on line with her kind permission. All the images reproduced herein are of and belong to the author.*

Notes:

D = word found in Cornish dialect K = word found in Kernewek, the Cornish language

No	In text	Other forms	D/K	Meaning and source
1	'spaler'	-	D	one who breaks stones or minerals (CDW)
2	'tubbins'	tubbans	D	clods of earth and grass (CDW)
3	'pyth'	puth	K	a well (AGM)
4	'planchon'	planchenn	K	a landing (AGM)
5	'krow'	-	K	a hut, shed or sty (AGM)
6	'bullarn'	bulhorn	K	a snail (AGM)
7	'yow'	yow/ow/hou	K	hi or hello (Maga/GMC/AGM)
8	'ishen'	usyon	K	husks (VC)
9	'launders'	-	D	guttering (CDW)
10	'churks'	cherks	D	cinders or ashes (CDW)
11	'the Dry'	-	D	the house where miners change their clothes (CDW)
12	'craft'	croft	D	Down or unbroken rough ground (CDW)

Sources:

AGM	An Gerlyver Meur/The Cornish Dictionary	Dr Ken George
CDW	A Dictionary of Cornish Dialect Words	WF Ivey
GMC	A Grammar of Modern Cornish	Wella Brown
Maga	Maga on line dictionary	www.cornishdictionary.org.uk
VC	Vocabularium Cornicum	12 th century document