

Granite

I lived in Bodmin as a girl. When I could understand and look around me, I seemed I surrounded by granite. Steps, window sills, boulders, all of granite. Across the road from my home was a 'Monumental Works'. Men were working on granite crosses, head stones and kerbs. Walking up the hill to the Beacon, there, taking 'pride of place' was a granite monument with three ledges. I would sit at one surveying the view.

To the right were the hills Brown Willy and Roughtor. To the left a cluster of granite rocks — Helman Tors. My aunt and I would walk there and back, five miles each way from Bodmin. Passing through the village of Gunwen we came to a cottage on its own, remote, where an old woman stood at the gate. She was wearing heavy boots, rough clothes, with an old felt hat on her head. Looking into her face, I saw it was wrinkled, weathered, like the Tors themselves.

Whether she lived so close to the elements from choice or circumstance we shall never know.

D.M.



Days Long Gone by

PICNICS on the beacon, skylarks soaring into the sky with their delightful outbursts of song. Grass lush and green, soft as velvet underfoot. Patches of golden gorse and purple heather here and there. A few seats and benches. In the background the 40 feet high granite monument in memory of Sir Walter Raleigh Gilbert, killed in the First World War. It has three ledges of varying heights, to rest upon and view the landscape round about.

Church towers, a winding river, hills Brown Willy and Rough Tor, a clutch of granite rocks, Helman Tors, Bugle clay hills.

WINDY DAYS — just right for kite flying. Old and young trailing to the beacon carrying kites of every size, shape and colour. They group themselves, amid laughter and chattering.

At the word "Go!" into the sky fly the kites higher and higher.

"Mine has dropped — it won't fly", sobs the little boy. A woman enfolds him, "Stop crying dear and try again. I will help you this time".

Grandpa calls at our home one sunny morning. "Mother, get the children ready, I am going for a walk. Let Bobby bring his iron hoop and crook and Dolly her wooden hoop and stick."

Off we go through lanes, over hill and dale — very little traffic, perhaps a farmer with his horse and cart, a jingle, one or two motors.

We arrive home at midday. "What a lovely smell, pasties for dinner, hurrah!"

WHITSUN FAIR — three days holiday from school, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Children and grown-ups, hurrying to the Fair at the top of the town. Little girls donned in new dresses, bibs and bobs, boys in new shirts and shorts.

Into the Fair we go staring wide-eyed at the Merry-go-rounds, Hobby Horses and Scenic Railway. Dodgems and the Cake Walk — we have a turn on each. Now into the Hall of Mirrors, from where issue peals of laughter. We stroll around the stalls, hoop-la, skittles etc.

It is dusk, time to go home.

Outside the gate is Mr. Peg-leg Hutchings in his chip van. We buy a bag of chips topped with vinegar, eating them while winding our way home, tired but happy.

THE CIRCUS - another highlight, held in the same Fair field.

Keepers erect the big marquee, divided into two sections. One for performers, the other ranged into tiers for the audience, so all have a chance to view. Strolling round are ponies, two camels and an elephant. Not enough water here for the big animals, so the keepers, either riding or walking beside them, have to go one mile through Higher and Lower Bore Street to the Church steps where there is a continuous source of water running into two troughs. Here they take their fill. Watching this curious sight, a myriad eyes.

Then! freedom, time, space, but much drudgery.

Now! comforts — less freedom, no time to “Stand and Stare”. Too many people, too much speed.

However, we cannot turn the clock back. We have to swim with the tide.

D.M.

