

H for High Days and Holidays

Long summer holidays. Brown legs with a clear dividing line showing where my socks come up to. My last year's Clark's sandals have holes cut out in the toes for my growing feet. They're relegated to "playing out in"; the new ones, bought from Harry's stall on the Market ground, are 'for best'.

My Mum wants us out from under her feet so we are sent off with butties in a bag and a bottle of pop to play out and 'see you at teatime'. It's only hunger that drives us home from building dens, scrumping apples or paddling in the brook. We walk for miles along the canal to Daisy Nook and back over The Boodle. We count the steps at the Bunk Steps but never get the same number twice. We wander by Crime Lake, entranced by stories of a flooded village.

We are going to Cemaes Bay for two whole weeks. "Seaview", a rented cottage, is high above the beach. I can't wait to get down there to collect a bucket full of shells and see if Mary Jones remembers me from last year. I have to help my Dad pump water for cooking and washing and carry it home in big buckets. I hate the toilet here. You have to walk up to the top of the garden to a small shed and sit on a plank with a hole cut into it. My Dad has to empty the bucket from below the hole every day. Yuk!

I have sunburned shoulders. When I'm in bed I peel off long strips of skin.

The smell of Palmolive soap and Skol sun cream make a heady mix.

My little brass figure of a Welsh lady, whose apron changes colour with the weather, told us to expect rain. She was right. We are all taking the bus to Amlych. There's 'the pictures' showing in the village hall. You have to sit on hard forms and the rain makes a racket on the tin roof but Alec Guinness in 'The Ladykillers' is very good. Next week 'Calamity Jane' is on. My Dad calls me that sometimes when I am 'specially clumsy'.

The Sunday School Anniversary or Sermons Sunday is in July. We have singing practice as each age group has to perform. A tiered platform is erected on the stage in the big Sunday School room and there is a real orchestra to accompany the choir. One year, the Sunday school had been freshly painted only the week before 'Sermons Sunday' and, high up on the tiered platform, I began to feel faint. I was prevented from falling off the platform by the girls sitting in front of me but came to in a back room, with my aunt's sal-volatile bottle thrust to my nostrils. The choir always ended the afternoon with a rousing rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus, at the end of which there is a brief pause of anticipation before the climax. My friend was in serious trouble when her voice was heard talking to her neighbour during that pregnant pause.

The annual **Wakes Fair** punctuates the summer. It takes over the market ground when a lot of the factories and even the shops are closed. We like to wander around the stalls and the roundabouts, clutching sticky pennies in hot hands. The Waltzers look scary. The men in their leather jackets and greased hair push the cars around to make the girls scream. There's a Muffin the Mule roundabout which I always look out for. I win a teddy bear on the Hoop-la stall.

Harvest Sunday marks the passing of the seasons. It's usually the last Sunday in September. My grandad's prize-winning chrysanthemums are always at their stately best

and I only have to smell chrysanthus today to be reminded of the harvest festival with its rosy red apples, potatoes, cauliflowers and cabbages and the Sunday school children singing "We plough the fields and scatter...."