

THORNTON ABBEY TO WOOTTON CORNER.

Having left the Thornton Abbey Farm Cottage Charlie Barker and Family moved to Wootton Corner, where the red painted flat iron railings bend half way round Goddard's house near Mollet's Farm in the Nineteen Twenties and take the road on to Immingham and Grimsby.

I used to run round that corner every day to and back from school.

And across the road was the Wood where I would climb up a very high tree just for the fun of it, or to escape from my Dad's wrath when I did something wrong and thought that if I got out of his sight and give him time to cool off a bit when I could come down and try to negotiate a peace as it were. (Talk my way out of it.) But once me Dad had made his mind up, nothing but God or a shot in the head would put his mind to rest until he had achieved his sadistic rights.

Gawd! Was I ever wrong and had to learn the hard way, 'cos my Dad would talk as he was removing his heavy leather belt that looked like the back strap from a Pony's harness held together by a heavy brass buckle, and the only time he would pause in trying to denude my bum of it's skin was to spit chewin' bacca juice at me Mam's fire grate, where if it hit it would sizzle and steam dry itself leaving a pale mark on the black polished hot metal, and no pleading from my Mother would side track him once he had got the rhythm of hitting and spitting.

"Since thee ran away ti avert a hidin' tha's got intrest comin' an' next time tha' runs awayer tha'll get double!" panted me Dad.

One time when I got a hiding I got a hiding the following day and my Mother chided Dad, "So what has the lad done today that displeases you?"

"Nowt!" replied Dad, "But yisterdi 'e went numb on me an' couldn't feel owt not no moor, so ah left off an' gid him the rest on it t' dayer, an' e' can be thankful ah didn't add interest fer not payin' fer it yister dayer.

I had climbed this tree many times but on this one occasion as I was browsing the landscape and could see for miles I heard the noise of an engine but could see no motor vehicles on the roads that I had a good view of.

While I was pondering where the noise was coming from I suddenly spotted an airplane hedge-hopping and with it's wheels and prop wash almost flattening the buttercups and daisies in the grassy field I thought it was going to land but it continued coming towards the Woods then veered to fly along side the Wood and it was then I was spotted by the pilot.

It was Amy Johnson and as she flew over the field alongside the Wood.

I waved my arm and she waved back and I could see into the cockpit of the plane as it passed almost below me and Amy was wearing Jodpers and brown boots, a pale blue shirt and on her head a brown leather helmet with goggles.

Then the plane rose a bit to get over the next hedge and carried on until out of sight.

I ran home and told my Mother I had just waved to Amy Johnson and my Mother replied, "I wish you could dream up a wand and wave me away from this place!" and carried on pounding with a heavy sigh the dough she was about to make bread with.

Since I usually got short shrift from my Mum when she was busy I would be some times questioned later when she wasn't busy and had had time to rerun my daily babblings through her mind.

Disappointed that my news did nothing bring the usual happy smile to her face I went outside and began weeding the back garden, since I had seen my Mother do it many times and I thought it would lighten her load.

But when my Dad came home I got another hiding despite my Mother's plea of, "The lad thought they were weeds and he thought he was helping me"
'cos I had pulled up all the young lettuce plants Dad had set the week before.

I heard later when my lug 'ole had stopped ringing that one of the Pilots in the air race that was passing overhead had run out of petrol and had landed in a field, then armed with an empty tin walked to find a garage to get more petrol, and having got the petrol the Pilot returned to the plane only to find that someone had jacked up the plane onto some house bricks and stolen both wheels and so many bits from the plane as souvenirs that the pilot had to walk to Thornton Abbey L.N.E.R. Railway Station to get home by train, then send someone out to get what was left of the plane and move it by rail to where it belonged.

Indeed those were the days when the wood was alive in the summer with the sight and smell of laburnum flowers on some trees that cascaded down in the breeze like champagne from an over active bottle that has just been opened, and the wild flowers like a carpet that many have tried to copy on canvas but failed.

At night I used to hear the calls of the wild from this Wood especially the Owls at night because I slept in the little attic next to the tiles so there were no baffles.

But when it rained my dad put a bucket under a tile that was dripping water so I got lulled to sleep listening to Handle's "Water Music", since "Pennies from Heaven" had not yet been written.

To go to bed at night I had to put a small ladder up to the trapdoor in the ceiling then I would pull up the ladder and it was only then I felt safe, and I ponder sometimes today that it was my Mother's idea, so that when my Dad came home from the pub at night there was no way he could get to me if he had lost an argument or a game of darts to a bigger bloke in the pub.

My Mother and Sisters would in the living room after teatime pegging a rug.

To peg a rug or floor mat one got a Hessian potato sack and pegged it with a small wooden tool the colored strips of cloth that had been washed and saved then cut up into strips about an inch wide and three inches long, and when a bag full had been saved one had enough material to make a new floor rug or door mat.

Since I was the only boy in our family and I found rug pegging boring I would spend some time in the darkness of our back kitchen with a candle lit tin projector and some

glass slides and would focus the lens onto the back white washed wall of the back kitchen.

Trouble was though, after a while the low snow-white ceiling began to show black smudges, so Dad grabbed the projector one night and threw it in the bin then mashed all my glass slides with a hammer to the opera of his voice chiding, "Ah paints the bloody ceilin' so some daft bugger kin show pitchers on't wall awl neet!"

My Mum relented and bought me a painting book so I learned to sketch and paint my surroundings and got ten out of ten marks at the school for painting the flowers of the Laburnum trees.

The only trouble was as I struggled to get eleven out of ten after that the Teacher got a bit fed up of giving me ten out of ten until finally exasperated suggested, "Why don't you try to paint something different? or better still, if you are going to stick to that one subject may I suggest you make a rubber stamp, then perhaps when you have perfected it you can sell it to a wall paper manufacturer!"

From that day on I painted no more yellow flowers.

The sky above the Wood during the day was alive with crows and black birds.

But my sense of humor was never dampened, and one day I painted a blob of gray paint on some paper and when the Teacher asked, "What on earth is that supposed to be?"

And I replied, "It's Black bird s--t!"

"So where are the black birds?" asked the Teacher now with a puzzled look and trying to hide a grin.

"Oh! they flew away when they saw you coming"

The Teacher walked away without further comment, but her body language told me she was laughing to herself, and I got some funny looks for the rest of the lesson that day and the Teacher kept whipping out a hanky to blow her nose or hide her face as she caught my eye.

Our back garden used to be visited by the odd sparrow that would keep coming back because we children used to crumble bread and throw it on the grass for them.

One Xmas we got a visit from a Robin who left little feet marks all over our snow covered pathway and I was disappointed when he finally left or perhaps some cat had got him.

The local Farmer used to hire laborers from afar to collect and bag peas that were grown in one of his fields.

The drill was to get to the field first thing in the morning and get into the queue that was formed and once the Farmer had dished out a sack to a person he took their name and entered it into his little book.

Then when the sack was returned full of peas that were in pods that had been collected from the pea plants, they were weighed and the results were attributed to the name in the little book so that at the weekend the results could be totted up and the worker got paid for his labors.

However, some of the foreign laborers got crafty and tried to pull a fast one on the Farmer because they would collect the bag and when no one was watching they would pull up a heavy sod of grass and dump it into the bag then cover it with peas then take it to get weighed.

The only trouble with that though was, some got too greedy, and having put two grass sods in the bag then a few peas on top to hide the grass, the Farmer had to take out some of the peas because he knew that a bag full of peas could not weigh that heavy, and it was then the plot was uncovered as the grass appeared when the peas were removed.

For a couple of days this went on and some of the other foreign laborers followed suite but others thought it a sin, until the Farmer spotted what was happening then all hell broke loose, and he ordered all the foreign labor off his farm and refused to pay. But when they got ugly and those who had not sought to cheat the Farmer demanded pay for the real peas they had pulled the Farmer made a deal with them and said that since the bags could no longer be verified as theirs but did indeed have peas in them and no grass he would pay all of the foreign laborers half of what was registered in the little book because the other half of the weight in each sack was wet sods of muddied grass.

So if they were not happy with this situation he suggested they seek recompense from their fellows who had seen fit to dupe the Farmer with grass roots instead of peas.

The Farmer said, "You can take it or leave it, but either way I want you off my property by midday, or I will call out the Police and have you removed by force accompanied by my shot gun and dogs.

Having seen the Farmers two Great Dane dogs that could at first glance be mistaken for Pit Ponies with ivory daggers for teeth, the hired help decided to quit while they were still in one piece and able to do just that, and in the years that followed we never saw them again.

Someone ventured later that the next crop of peas grown in that field were bigger and taller, which led one to ponder could it be that the field got extra manure that day when the Pea Bandits spotted the Farmer's two Great Danes peering at them over the hedge top, and drooling what looked like the white of a dozen eggs mixed wi' soap suds from their noshing gear.

Ah indeed! those were the days.

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