

Memories of my childhood by Gladys Peck (née Clifford)

(These notes were written by Gladys and used for a talk which she gave to a meeting of the Pettaugh Ladies Group sometime during the 1980s)

I was born in a little cottage opposite the mill in Church Road, Pettaugh, on the 22nd August 1925, one of five children, Gwen, Ethel, me, John and Elsie. The cottage was one of the cottages to rent in the village that was not tied to a farm or the mill. My father and mother met in a London hospital during the 1914-18 war. Dad came home from France after being injured out there. Mother was friends with father's cousin Jennie; they worked together in London at the 'Army and Navy Stores'. Mother was born in Defoe Road, Tooting, London, and came to live in Suffolk after marrying in 1920. Father was born in Suffolk around the Lindsey area. He later lived in the Old Police House on the Norwich Road in Ipswich with his mother and father when he married, eventually coming to live in Pettaugh in May 1922.

Dad was invalided out of the Army and remained an invalid to a certain degree until his death in January 1961. Mother claimed that if she spent one year in Pettaugh after London that would be enough for her, but she stayed in the same house until her death in January 1975. Dad, being a pensioner and single at the time of his disability, never got an allowance for his wife and family so we were poor in those days. Mother used to keep house on 27s 8d a week. Out of that she had to pay a rent of 2s 6d a week paid annually. There was no electricity in those days and we only had a cooking range in the living room using either coal or wood. Lighting was an oil lamp which didn't give much light, only at the table where it was placed. Other than the living-room we only had a backhouse where we had our daily wash and where the weekly wash was done on a Monday. We had a copper in there and a back stack fire which was only lit on occasions in the summer when we didn't have a fire in the living-room. All burnable rubbish was put in the copper hole to heat the water together with sticks of wood we used to pick up by the roadside whenever we went for a walk.

We also kept our drinking water in two galvanised pails in the back house. We fetched water from the village pump when we could but during very dry weather in the summer we sometimes had to resort to fetching water from a pond in Birches Meadow. This pond was given to the village by the then owner for our use. The only other room downstairs was the pantry. This housed all the crockery, food, wine, and potatoes for the whole season. The pantry was also used to store the shoe repairing equipment and, at one time, our school bicycles and our everyday overcoats. Old newspapers which, among other uses, were required to light the fire in the mornings were also kept in the pantry.

Upstairs were two rooms in which there were two double beds and a cot. The cot was in mum and dad's room was the cot and my brother who was next to me in age slept in there until he was 12 years old. Our baby sister died when she was only thirteen months old. This happened on Boxing Day, so after that mum never liked Christmas. My older sisters and I slept in the other room all in the double bed. We went to bed in stages; me first, then Ethel and lastly Gwen. We used a candle to see with in the winter months. Our

lavatory was outside in the corner of the yard. I was too scared to go in the dark on my own so I used to get my brother John to come with me. Mother would light the lantern for us and out we would go. Quite often our next door neighbour's granddaughter, Daphne Wells, would be in her nana's lavatory at the same time and we would have a conversation through the brick wall. When I was small we had what we called a 'bumby' in the lavatory which was a big hole in the ground with a wooden seat over the top while in later years we had a bucket with a wooden seat over the top. This bucket was emptied by Dad on Saturdays. It was taken down to his allotment patch and a hole dug in the ground in which to dispose of the bucket's contents.

Bath night was Saturday. Mother would put her large saucepan full of soft rain water taken from the water butt outside on the cooking stove and after dad had gone to the Bull Inn mother would fetch the tin bath from outside and bring it in by the fire. One week it would be me first and the next week it would be my brother John. There was extra water added for the second one to heat the bath up. Afterwards mother would put my hair in hodmedods, which was rolling up my hair in strips of rag and tying them up. In the morning mother would brush and comb my hair into long curls ready to go to Sunday School and church.

After church we had our Sunday dinner at 1 p.m. which was Yorkshire pudding made in a meat tin and shared out between all of us. This was served with gravy made from the juices out of the meat with flour added to thicken it. Second course was potatoes with a slice of the meat either breast of pork or rib of beef and whatever vegetables were in season. After dinner at 2.30 pm we went to the Mission Room in the village for just about an hour's religious service. After this it was a walk to the Kerridge's farm up Stonham Lane to fetch the milk. Back home it would be tea-time for 5 p.m. On a Sunday mum might make jelly and blancmange with a piece of bread and margarine and possibly a bun and a rusk. After tea it would be church at 6.30 p.m. and after church home for bed. I remember when I was in the church choir, the vicar gave out the number of the last hymn and the organist Miss Winnie Cutting started to play but no sound came out. My brother was the organ blower and during the sermon had fallen asleep. So the lady had to get off her stool and wake him up in order to be able to play.

School days were very much enjoyed. We got up around 7 a.m. to light the fire. If we made a noise father would get out of bed to come into our room to give us a hiding. We would hurry downstairs and dress in the living-room, as we didn't want many of his smacks. We would make porridge for breakfast or have toast made by the fire if we were lucky. We went to the village school and went home for dinner most days, except if mum and dad were going to Ipswich by the carrier and then we would take our sandwiches of bread and margarine and sugar to eat at Mrs Creasey's house near the school.

(Editorial note: Gladys married Gordon Peck in 1951 and lived in Gosbeck, later moving to Pettaugh. Gordon passed away in March 2004 and Gladys in August 2013. Both were buried in St Catherine's churchyard.)