

Growing up in Whitwell: Part 1 - the 1930s

Audrey Chiverton (nee Morris) was born in Whitwell in 1924, and in these two articles she recalls growing up there. The picture here shows the Old Church House in Whitwell, in about 1930.



My childhood was a happy one, spent first of all at Ludbrook, quite a tiny cottage. Father worked on a farm and earned twenty nine shillings a week, out of which the rent was three shillings. We only had oil lamps and candles as there was no electricity at this time. To get water there were standpipes in the village in the shape of Lions, given by Mr Spindler from Old Park, St Lawrence. We had a well in the garden, and a pump inside the gate. The water was always very cold and crystal clear. Auntie Maud lived next door and had the little farm across the road. I remember her with a yoke over her shoulder so that it was easier to carry two buckets of milk at a time across to her dairy. The cream was taken off and put into a barrel, where she kept turning the handle until it became butter. Then she would use butter pats to shape it into blocks. It was always very cold in there.

Audrey has fond memories of the food she ate when she was growing up, often meals that came straight from the family garden. *On Sundays, we always had tea in the front room. The best china came out and we used to have celery from the garden - crisp and white, or cheese and piccalilli, which Mother used to make every year with vegetables from the garden, full of flavour. On Sunday evenings we used to go out for a walk, and when we got back always had some of the cold roast meat for supper - my favourite was cold lamb & mint sauce made from mint grown in the garden. This photo shows Audrey with her sister and parents on a Sunday walk.*



Social life was based around the family, and always involved food! *There was a field at the top of the garden where we used to have big picnics with friends and family. We sat under the Elm trees and had tables and chairs. At the end of August just before we went back to school the whole family - all our aunts and cousins - used to have a day on Sandown Beach. We went into MacFisheries and all got fish and chips, and a big bag of buns in Masters shop. Then on to the beach where we ate them out of the paper - fish and chips have never tasted the same since. One year Auntie Bertha produced some cardboard plates, which was a source of wonder as we had never seen anything like that before. We also used to go to Steephill Cove and Mother always took a huge jam tart in the dish and cut it up when we were on the beach and we enjoyed it regardless of flies and wasps. . . She also used to take an empty bottle, which she filled with sea water to put her feet in when she got home. When parents were busy, the children would amuse themselves - they were less supervised in the 1930s, and Audrey recalls that there was still hardly any traffic around, so we children all used to meet up in the evenings to go tracking - putting signs on the road, and sometimes walking through the railway tunnel between Whitwell & St Lawrence.*

The high points of the year were the church festivals: Easter, when Dick Dyer used to come round with bags of hot cross buns (really hot) on Good Fridays, and throw them up to the bedroom window as it was early in the morning, so we ate them sitting on the bed. In summer there was a Sunday School outing to Portsmouth, and, of course, there was Christmas, when Grandmother always got the family together, which was quite easy then because we all lived in the village. *We always had a wonderful tea, and then went into her front room where there was a big log fire. Grandfather sat by it cracking walnuts with his teeth! We played charades and dressing up and guessing games. When it was time to go, Grandma always asked us to sing the hymn 'God be with you till we meet again', and when she died we sang it at her funeral.* Next week: Audrey recalls the 1940s - leaving school and finding a job.