

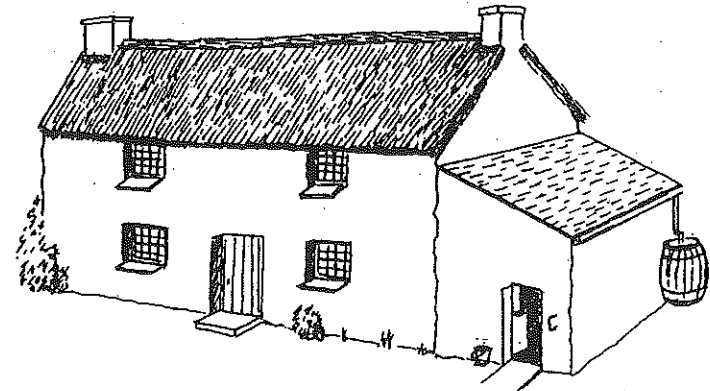
'Do you remember.' Just those three little words but what memories they conjured up of happy schooldays when we were young and carefree. I remember going to school one lovely summer day with several girls and boys, when suddenly we saw an adder leisurely wriggling its way across the road. Without a moment's hesitation a boy found a stone and dropped it, plonk, right on its ugly head. The other boys helped him fling it over a branch of a tree by a field gateway. We girls were terrified and kept well out of the way. Now, we had always been told that adders and snakes, however early in the day they were 'killed' would not die until sunset, so we would prove the truth (or otherwise) of this story. When we returned from school in the afternoon the adder still hung from the branch and when the boys prodded it with a stick, sure enough, still wriggled. The headmaster later confirmed that it was a fully grown adder and complimented the boy on his bravery. What a thrill we had another morning when along came a farmer with his horse and waggon and gave us a 'ride' to school; we would not have exchanged it for a glass coach.

I remember as a small child going with my mother to the 'shoot' for water. The pipe came through a hedge in the lane and the 'pitcher' was placed under the shoot to fill up. When the level of the water fell below the pipe we had to go and dip a bucket in the well and 'heave to'. It was worth all the trouble; the water was icy cold and sparkling, a tonic in itself. One morning mother came in with a full pitcher and while her back was turned my baby sister dropped all the dirty potatoes into it, she was 'only trying to help'.

I remember our local shopkeeper who also had a smallholding. On occasions he would kill a pig for his own use. After the lard had been rendered down, the residue, which we called 'screeds' was shared among us children. It was always a race to see who could get to the shop first and fascinating to see him take a square of paper and with a flick of his wrist produce a cone, then in would go a handful of screeds. Our day was made.

On baking days at home, the house would be filled with the aroma of freshly baked bread, brown and crusty. As we were five children, mother was kept pretty busy. She has told me how she

used to heat the cloam oven with wood inside it until the inside was white hot. Then the ashes were raked out, the bread and cake popped in, then the door put on and sealed with clay. After the appropriate time the door was opened and the contents taken out perfectly cooked. When we moved to another house we had a Cornish stove. It had to be blackleaded once a week and the ornamental brasswork on the doors and rack polished until it shone. Every few weeks the oven had to be taken out and all the accumulated soot scraped off; a job detested by everyone. It had to be fed with coal and sometimes, if the quality of the coal was not up to standard, it would get rather temperamental. I wonder how the young housewives of today would manage if confronted with one of these 'monsters'. We are living in a modern age with everything to make us happy, yet there is nothing to compare with happy childhood memories.



Cob Cottage