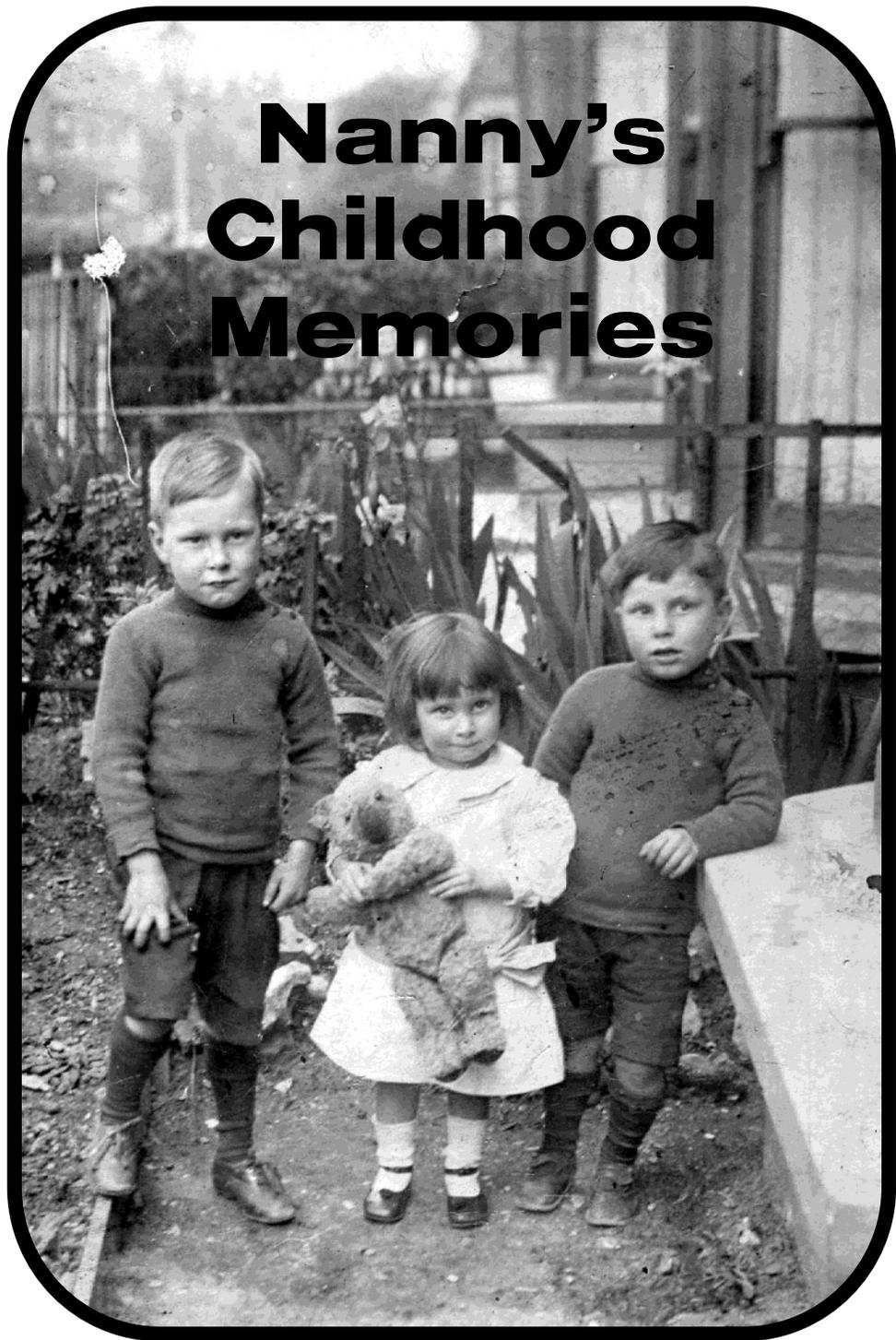


# Nanny's Childhood Memories



## Part 1 - Memories of Bernard.

I have the impressive family tree in front of me and I'll start with William Palmer, my grandfather. I didn't get to know him. He was a sailor as much as I know, travelling from the continent at times because he brought in things from other countries, my impression is from somewhere in Europe, I don't know. My grandmother, whose name I understand was Polly, I don't know her second name and I only knew her as a very old lady, I didn't know my grandfather at all, that's on my father's side.

If you go along then, you have Arthur Humphrey who married Caroline Peek. Now... I heard from my mother that Caroline Peek was of Irish extraction. I don't know the Irish Kings, we all had Irish Kings in our ancestry. Arthur Pumphrey was an illegitimate child, his father's name was Spurgeon and they came from somewhere in the East of England, I would imagine not far from the coast. It was a big family and his mother was a maid in the house and she had a child by him. I remember the name Spurgeon because one of their children, Elsie, Aunt Elsie, married a man named Spurgeon, nothing to do with them at all and the family were very much against him, purely because of the name. Nothing at all do I know about Frederick Collins marrying Jack or the Sudbury's. I know nothing of them at all except Mrs Sudbury was your mother's mother. You may have known her, I didn't know her, maybe you remember, I didn't know her at all.

Now back again, Frederick Charles married my mother, Priscilla. Arthur was born in 1908, we've got Bernard at 1910 and I was born in 1912. Lesley was born either 1914 or 1915 because he died, he was about 18 months older than I was, I would imagine his birthday was around Christmas time. Wilfred was born in 1916 and Winifred in 1920. Now beyond that, you've got it all.

My early reflections, the earliest that I have of the family at all are whilst when I was about 18 months old, standing at my mother's knee, when she had a baby on her knee and that would have been Lesley who died about 6 months after that. I happen to know about this because I asked my mother and she remembered where we were sitting, I think it was in her mother's home and she would have had Lesley on her knee. Now I remember odd things about myself when very young but not so much about Bernard but I'm afraid there's a gap, I can't remember very much when we were very young. You already have the time at Burnham-on-Crouch which really was a very important time. I remembered so much of that, other things I don't remember except perhaps occasions that would be of no interest to you like when we were going to a party and I was going with Arthur and Bernard and we had to walk a little way down a road and turn a corner and there was a big workshop and garage there and of course I was in my finery and the door was open and I crossed the road a little bit behind the boys; I think I would probably have been about 3 or 4 and a motorcycle came out and ran into me. It didn't hurt me but left oil all over my pretty dress and I had to go home and have it changed.

I would go to school with my brothers and come home with Bernard mostly because Arthur would have come home at a slightly later time as he was that much older and in a higher form and they worked later.

Bernard was very interested in mechanical things. I remember he had a umm... what do you call it.. you measure mileage, anyhow you measure mileage on a bicycle and he wanted to bring it back to nought, so we made a bus from chairs and for 3 or 4 nights we travelled with our imagination in this bus and he made a contraption with his Mecano and turned the wheel and turned this meter back again and eventually got it back to nought. I don't know what he

did with it but he was a great one for building things in Meccano; he had very good imagination and he was quite clever with his fingers.

My father was a sheet metal worker. He was also something of a metalagist though we didn't call it that in those days and he went to the London Borough College when he was young to learn about metals and to learn to work with metals. He was always very keen to learn things. He learned to paint, he was a very good painter and could draw well, real likenesses. He was very keen on music and we all had to learn an instrument, we went to a Professor Peters. Arthur the oldest one learned the violin, Bernard learned to play the violin and I was learning to play the violin but I'm afraid, like a number of other people, I got fed up with the practising, half an hour every day, and I gave it up. Bernard kept on longer but then he was working, hoping to get a scholarship and the work was quite hard and he had to do a lot of studying which of course was my undoing, I couldn't face the studying but he did, so he gave up learning violin and he won a scholarship to Acton Counties School.

Now, my father was a very good workman and a very much sought after man in his work but he was his own worst enemy and he downed tools at the slightest thing that upset him therefore there were many times when we were very short of money and of course in the 20s there was a recession and things were difficult. We didn't have very much money for anything and getting clothes for Bernard, he wore a blazer suit, navy blue trousers and navy blue jacket with brass buttons was quite a struggle for my mother to get these.

My father was also very keen that we should learn about music, all kinds of music and we had a wind-up gramophone and we had very good quality music but we also had modern music because he felt it didn't matter what the music was so long as we were enjoying it; we should have this feeling for music.

He also took us to museums and we went to the Geffrye museum, one or two of the art galleries, I can't remember the names of them, again to encourage us to enjoy art. I'm trying to think of... there's a children's museum, we went to the children's museum and a British museum, Victoria and Albert. He would take us up on the trams and we would learn, really quite a lot because he was very knowledgeable, he'd done all this himself, he was a Londoner and he'd done all this himself before and it was a great pleasure for him to take us around.

There were a number of other things he did to help us to decide and to help other people. He belonged to the Independent Labour Party and he was a very strong member. One time they tried to persuade him to sit for Member of Parliament but he felt that he had too great, not a burden, I wouldn't say that because he didn't look upon us as a burden at all but he had responsibilities so great and the money was not very much then and the payment for Members of Parliament was not so much then and of course, one could always be 'out' if you understand what I mean and there would be no money coming in. This was of course before we had unemployment claims or anything like that.

There were periods when we were very short and my mother would let a room in the house; we had 4 bedrooms I think in the house. The boys would share a bedroom and I would then share.. no, there must have been 3 bedrooms and I would share possibly with my parents who had a very very big bedroom, just to bring in money which was very much needed but, then things would straighten up again and we'd have the house to ourselves again. We had a very small garden at the back, well, it was a yard and my father grew flowers and things like that and he had an allotment and grew all our own vegetables and we would go up to the allotment and help him, not dig of course, but weeding, putting the things in and carrying the stuff back again. We liked to do that. We had a small, not exactly a summer house in the garden,

but over one corner there was a wooden roof and a bench round underneath and we would sit out there, we were allowed to have our tea out there sometimes if the weather was nice.

Whether any of this is of interest to you or not, I don't know but I'm just saying it as I see it. For instance, I just remembered the cat, we had a lovely tabby cat named Jerry and Jerry disappeared for three weeks and we'd given him up. We'd made all enquires around and nobody knew anything and then my mother saw him come over the fence and he would sit and looked so gaunt and when he got in the garden he fell down and couldn't walk any more so she brought him in and gave him milk, fed him and he slept for three days, just waking to eat and then he went out and caught a rat.

We kept rats when we were children, tame rats, white with a black line down the back and we took them to Sunday school with us and passed them along, sat in the back row of course. It did rather disturb Sunday School. We all had to go to the Socialist Sunday School, it was part of the make-up of the Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party and also the Women's section to which my mother belonged. We had flag days and mother would sell flags. I can remember standing with her, it was very hot and I think my brother had turns as well probably to go with her, it was company.

I'd better stop for a moment because I'm trying to think ..... I'm back on again now!

Arthur, the oldest of the family was a very good violinist and at 14 he was the leading violinist in the Bedford Park Orchestra which was quite a big orchestra. My father, as I have said before, was very keen on music and as well as playing the cello in this orchestra, he also ran a choir of his own to which my mother belonged. She was a very good contralto. When she was young she sang at the Central Hall Westminster. She had a very good voice, a very good strong contralto voice and was able to keep very much in tune and other people in the choir, I remember saying, they liked it when she was there. There were times when she couldn't go because she kept them all on the right note.

Bernard did, I think, very well at school. He always seemed to have very good reports. I went with him to open days and he seemed popular with the other boys and in fact I married one of the boys I met at the school. He was taking two sections – commercial and, I forget what you call it, my memory is not as good as it was, taking matriculation and he could take the commercial exam, well now it seemed that he would have to take the commercial line because there wasn't a lot of money, in fact there wasn't any money to pay for further education beyond his time at the school which was 16. One left school then at 14 unless one went on to training school of some kind or won a scholarship to one of the county schools or the grammar schools. Well Bernard left at 16 and he went to the library and there was an opening in the library; we were great readers by the way. My parents belonged to the library and when we were very young, it was a regular trip to the library and we younger ones got our books and our parents got there's. We all read a lot. We had all the books of the children's authors, the children's encyclopaedia and a whole lot of books on history; all kinds of books on history, there were a number of books ..... they were the alphabetical order in which the books were arranged and the history in that came from the very earliest times right up to after the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. Bernard of course read a lot and he got on very well at the library, they seemed pleased with him, he had his various exams to pass and he had to have one or two goes at one of them and it was disappointing when he didn't get them, but he would work hard and get on with them again.

He had one or two penfriends, Madeleine Constantine, I think from the east of England somewhere and they corresponded for quite a long time. He also had friends abroad, one of

them was a lad in Germany and his name was Hans Teachan and Bernard went over and stayed with him and his family in Hamburg and he was over there for about a week and then Hans Teachan came back later and stayed with us, a very nice young man. The father was a school master. This would have been in the 30's, Hans married a German Jewish girl and of course began to have the problems, difficult times the two of them. Hans Teachan and his wife went to America. They came back to see us, to see Bernard and I remember, I think it was shortly after the war, that he came back but Bernard served in the RAF during the War and he was in South Africa for a time and then he went to India. I think India was possibly one of his most enjoyable times. He made many tapes of things that happened there when he would be speaking to other people, not exactly interviewing but talking to them and he had very lovely pictures and I can remember we sat up on the landing, it was the most easiest place to sit and on the door at the end of the landing in their house was a screen on the door and I think we sat there for about 2½ hours, my husband and myself with Bernard and Ruth looking at these. He was always very keen on his work and the library to him was everything. It was the kind of life that he would have liked if he had been able to map it out as a child and he was lucky enough to take part in this and to like the position he did.

Bernard was about 18 months older than myself and therefore we tended to do things together. We had the same sort of interests being very much a similar age, more than being and doing anything with Arthur who was two years older than Bernard. One thing we often did, we were rather keen on theatre and both of us were a bit extrovert and liked to show off and so on and we made ourselves a theatre by putting the kitchen table up on four chairs and scrounging from my mother either curtains or sheets, I don't know which it was to make curtains. We made a little dressing room at the side. Now, we would only have one audience, my young brother Wilfred and perhaps Winifred would come along but she was really too young. Maybe we'd have one other person but frequently it was Wilfred. We would make little plays, I suppose we would make them up as we went along; I don't remember writing them down but obviously we had rehearsed them because they seemed quite successful and we often did this, quite an interesting thing to do.

As I have said, Bernard was very handy with his fingers and one thing he often made, we all helped, but it was actually Bernard who made them, being the oldest, and the male I suppose, now he made a cinema. Now to do this, you had an oblong cardboard box, one side of it open. I would imagine the closed side or the base would be perhaps about 8" x 12" and the flat side down and it would be about 6-7" in depth. Now we would cut out little pieces of cardboard and fold them tucking one end under, straight up the front and that made the little chairs and we would stick these chairs in the floor of the box which was, of course, the cinema. We spent ages cutting them about and folding them and gluing them; there always seemed to be plenty of glue, scissors and pencils of course, and we would make all these seats and, we didn't have anybody to occupy them but that didn't matter. Now on the narrow end, if you can imagine an oblong box, that was about 8" high, something like that, open on the top high up on the end, the chairs would all face that end, Bernard would cut two slots in the half of the end. We then had long strips of paper on which, now this is where we all helped, on which we would draw different pictures of people doing things and so on and we'd stick them together so that they made a very long strip, thread it in one slot with the pictures facing in to the theatre, not the theatre, the cinema, and we would take it out the next one and we would slowly pull it through. We spent hours on this, perhaps a whole afternoon we would be making this and it was really very interesting to us. I suppose we both liked making things and to have something that worked at the end of it was really rather something.

We did a similar thing with a shoe box. We would make a scene. Take the lid off the shoe

box and place it with the solid side down and the open side up and draw a path narrowing, starting one end down the centre and narrowing to the other end. We would then draw and paint and then cut out trees and bushes some with flowers and so on and put those in the, with a flap on the bottom, they were made from stout paper and you folded the flap underneath and you glued the flap and you glued these in the box all facing one way and you didn't bother to put them on the path, the path was left free. You painted the wall at the end as scenery, with a sky and the sides also with green, rough bushes and trees and things and a sky again. Now, the wide end of the path, you cut a hole in the wall of the box and the lid of the shoe box, you'd cut a big oblong hole and you'd cover that, we could always scrounge a type of cellophane, I don't know what it was quite, we saved all these things because they were always useful, it was frequently blue or green or red, sometimes even yellow and we'd stick that over this long oblong hole and that allowed the light in and so you looked through the little hole and it would make quite an interesting scene. It looked quite real, I suppose once again the satisfaction was in making it but what we did with them in the end, I don't know but we made loads of these things.

Another thing that we did and Bernard was obviously the leading light in this, my young brother was 4 years younger than myself and we were frequently looking after him or he would play with us probably because there wasn't anybody else for him to play with, and we would organise things for him, I'll give you an example, we did several of these but this is one example of what we did.

It was getting towards Christmas time and we were going to take him to see Father Christmas land, now we made in the kitchen with some of the chairs and table and some of my mother's sheets and things, we made a long tunnel that went right across the room and came out into a small square up in one end of the corner and we put odd pictures that we could find on the walls and we put sheets and things that we found on the walls to cover them up so that they wouldn't be recognised, a little boy wouldn't really look much above the sheets and then we covered the tables and chairs and we bought toys, some of his toys, some of our toys and we cut out toys as well. We made all kinds of things. We spent ages on these and we arranged these on the chairs and any little tables we could find around the place. Sitting in the corner of the room would be Bernard but it wouldn't be the Bernard that my brother knew, we would dress him up in working clothes with this thing round his neck and we put a big apron on him. My father used to repair our shoes, repair the heels and so he had what he called a foot last and of course, there were always hammers about, we found a pair of glasses for Bernard and he sat on the chair and he looked like a little old gnome, he was supposed to be the gnome, and he was hammering a toy that he held on this last; he was supposed to be making them. Now, we would take Wilfred through, he had some little flat box like toys, with four little wheels, one in each corner, quite small wheels, I suppose they were about 3" across and the box was about 2x1, something like that but big enough for him to sit in and so I would push him along the ground through this tunnel, out the other end and of course there he was in Father Christmas land. It really was most interesting, it's amazing how children accept these things but again, Wilfred did.

Now hold on a minute, I've got my notes I made here. Oh yes! He was very good like that but he also did some very naughty things and this would have been shortly after the 1<sup>st</sup> World War so Wilfred would probably have been 5 and Bernard 11ish. Now the gas masks that the soldiers wore were ghastly, they were great things that went over your head and they hung down, you've probably seen them, they were ghastly, and my parents would go to meetings perhaps once a week and when they'd gone out Bernard would put on this gas mask and peer round the door and Wilfred was terrified. He knew he was going to be frightened but, well, it was one of those things. He knew he wasn't supposed to put it on but he did it, not a very

kind thing but then children aren't good all the time.

A rather interesting point, when he was about 17 I think, I had a friend in Pinner and I was going to meet her and we were going to have a cup of tea together, there was a rather nice tearoom there, whether it was just a pot of tea or if we were going to have anything to eat, I don't know, but Bernard cycled over to see me on that day to see me and we met him and we said we were going to have tea and do you know, he couldn't bring himself to come in and have tea, he hadn't enough confidence to do this, entirely different from the person he became later. At that time, he was going through a stage where he couldn't bring himself to come into the tearoom. Whether we went in or not, I don't know but if I'd known I was going to be asked these things when I was young, I would have made notes about it but unfortunately I didn't, or maybe fortunately.

When Wilfred finished at the **South.....** school he went on to a trade school to learn engineering. Now this had to be paid for, Bernard was interested in education and he wanted the family, or everybody to do as much as they could and so he paid for Wilfred's schooling while he was at this trade school; this just gives you an idea of the sort of things he did.

There was one more thing that cropped up to do with Wilfred; Wendy brought this up for me and though I do remember it, I wasn't there of course when it happened and I have a different picture of it from Wendy's. I only can think that Wendy must have spoken to grandma and got the story from her. They were camping somewhere, I think my parents were camping somewhere and Wilfred went swimming in the local river and he got caught by some weeds and he was pulled down, or couldn't come up or something and was having difficulty and he shouted for help and I thought it was scouts who came to his rescue but Wendy thought it was Bernard, she brought this up herself and of course it could have been, she could have got it from mother. I might be mixing it up with scouts when about 15 years ago I had an accident in my ex garden where I fell down a manhole and cut my leg badly and I was, how can I put it, not unconscious but well I couldn't move, I was transfixed. I called for help for a little while but there was nothing, nobody near enough and I was beginning to get quite concerned because I couldn't get up (I subsequently had 9 stitches and it didn't look very pretty, a rotten cut) but eventually some scouts in a field that I could see, did come to my rescue so I could be mixing up the two things. Anyhow, that's interesting.

There's one other little thing that's rather amusing about Bernard, back onto music again but in a slightly different way. As I said earlier, we did learn quite a lot about good music and Bernard when he was about 20ish had a girlfriend in Swindon, I think he only saw her a few times because of course we didn't have a car, you might know somebody who had a car in those days but we didn't have cars and there weren't many about, not anything like there are now and so the only way for him to get down there was for him to cycle, it was a long way to cycle or go down by train so instead, they used to write to each other. Well, on one occasion, Bernard had gone into the sitting room to write to this girl, I can't remember her name and he put on the gramophone, I think it was Schakowsky's, I think it was Romance In C and we thought it was hilariously funny. He was sentimental, yes, and maybe it helped but it's an interesting point.

I think really that's almost all I can think of, I've gone through things. You see, you're coming up now to the time now when he would go about with your mother, when he met your mother and they spent so much of their time cycling, they were very keen on cycling, they had a tandem and they had a little dog, Sally, Bernard bought her before he was married and they used to take her about with them but I really can't think of anything more. Things had happened, I think probably anything more you would probably get from your mother.

We used to have evenings when we would sit and talk, the four of us and I remember in 1939 when things were really rather tricky, you know with trouble in Germany and so on and I remember Bernard saying the first country that gets it's airforce into the air will win the war. Of course, it wasn't so but this was rather how we looked at things, we couldn't see then that it would be possible to produce the amount of stuff and train the people and have the will to beat the enemy as they were; they weren't our enemy at that time because this was before the war started but this would have been around that time.

## **Part 2 - Burnham-on-Crouch**

First house, just on the outskirts of London and during the 1st World War, my parents took a cottage in Burnham-on-Crouch, not exactly in Burnham-on-Crouch, about a mile out at a place called Ostend. We had one cottage, the third cottage of four that were built on the road through Burnham-on-Crouch to Althorn and at the end of the garden belonging to the last cottage the Creeksea Lane ran down to the Creeksea ferry. We used to pack up our things my parents, my two brothers and myself, we used to pack up our things at the beginning of the school holidays and move down to Burnham-on-Crouch and spend the whole of our holidays down there. I think we went from Victoria but I wouldn't be sure, it wasn't Waterloo, I think it was Victoria and it was very smoky, noisy, but terribly exciting and when we arrived at, I think we went straight to Burnham-on-Crouch, I don't think we changed I don't remember now, I was very young about 4 or 5 and we had all of our luggage with us, there were no buses to take us along the road which as I said before, was about a mile and so we used to leave the cases and baggage at the station and a carter would come along and later he would deliver to us. Sometimes he would arrive before we did and our things would be waiting at the door when we got there.

As I say, the cottage was one of four and it was right on the road, there was no front garden, we each had a garden at the side of the road, the end cottage had one on the corner of Creeksea Lane and the other three cottages had gardens the other side stretched out in a line along the road so that you went through each garden to get to your own, ours was the very end one, up a gravelled area, no indoor toilet, we had a toilet at the end of this, we called it a garden but it wasn't a garden and daddy used to empty the bin, he always emptied it at night, I don't know why, or at least I think he did but he always said that he was burying Sir John Moore at the dead of night and I had visions of several soldiers coming out and helping burying, where they came from I didn't think. We had no electricity in the cottage or gas, we had an oil lamp in the living room, we went straight from the road into the living room and there was an open fire there with two hobs, no oven so everything was stewed, I don't know what else we had but we had a lot of stews though mother did manage to make pies because we used to get blackberries and sometimes apples so she made blackberry and apple pie, I don't know how she made it. The staircase to the bedrooms upstairs wound up and round the fireplace and straight into a room and then you went from one room into the other and the second room had a long sloping window. We had mattresses on the floor and obviously sheets and blankets and things. All the females slept in one room and all the males in the other. Water was laid on but only for 2 hours a day and there was no sink but there was a little drain on the floor beneath the tap so that water wouldn't go all over the floor. There was a water tower near and it had an arm with a ball on it and when the ball was down, you used to watch this then there was water and so you used to fill everything with water, all the saucepans, buckets, the kettle the copper, everything had to be filled with water so that it would last us through until it came on the next day and then when the water went off the arm would go up and the ball would be sticking up in the air. There was a ladder up to the tank up there and my brothers used to climb up this and on one occasion they persuaded me to climb up and I got half-way up and I had no head for heights, I didn't realise that then, and I was scared, after all I was

only about 4 or 5, possibly 5 and one of my brother was sitting on the top and the other one had to come up and walk down behind me so I could get down, I was so frightened.

I don't think we took any toys down with us, I don't remember having any toys there, probably a teddy or something to go to bed with but we made so much of our days. There was a little green lane opposite and it led down to a little wood called Foxes Wood and mother would pack us up sandwiches and we would go down to this wood, it was only a short lane, green Lane, there were lots of interesting things to see on the way down so it took quite a while for us to get there and there was a little stream in the wood, I think and we made dams and things like this. There were lots of things to watch, it was very wild, rabbits and lots of birds, it was very nice there and we were very happy there. Sometimes we went down to the Creeksea ferry but only with my parents and, I presume my brothers had a bathing costume, I had a bathing costume and we, well we thought it was the beach, it was very shallow at the side so we spent a lot of time in the water and it was sandy. I don't know quite what it was for but there was a notice on the side that said "Beware. Dangerous" and we didn't ever query what it was, possibly currents in the river, I don't know but people passed on one occasion, it was very unusual to meet anybody down there and there were two adults and a little girl and the little girl looked at this sign, they were bit red letters and she said "Aww.. mummy.. beware Dangers". Well we didn't realise what dangers were, we wondered what they were and thought of them as being some animal.

Along near the river there were farms and again, we would have lunch down there. We were allowed to wander along the path and we found a farm where they had swedes and swedes when they are big and fresh are nice and sweet and I do know that sometime later there was a pumpkin here and we dug up a swede each, we had a penknife, peeled the swede and I couldn't eat it now but we ate it then and it was marvellous.

Just a little way along from the cottage was a little general shop. It was the only shop in the village, it was hardly a village, just a sort of little hamlet and daddy used to take us along there to buy barley sugar for us with our pocket money and that was twisted barley sugar. It tasted absolutely wonderful. Somehow or other we did have some money because we used to buy scented cashews there and on the other side of the road there was a lane and we walked up this lane and there was another lane and we turned left and there was a pig farm. It may not have been a farm but there were certainly pigs there and a lot of little piglets. There weren't many people about and we found it very interesting to watch them and we fed them on some of our scented cashews and these pigs loved it so after that, they got to know us, I mean they only had one or two but it didn't stop them running up to ask for them.

Just a little way across the road from us was a farm and they had lovely red apples. When you cut through the apple the apple was pink inside and we used to buy 3 ha'pence worth of apples and we'd get about 10 or a dozen apples and share them between us. There was a little pub near, I can't remember what it was called but I think it was owned by some people called **Pamp.....** and we could buy honey cakes. We used to pay a ha'penny each for the round flat honey cakes and we thought they were delicious.

It was our job in the morning to go along to the farm near where they had been milking the cows and we had to wait for the milk to come through the cooler and we had a can and a jug and we would buy the milk and take it home, it was only a few yards along the road and mother used to let it stand and after an hour there was a nice thick head of cream on this and we would have blackberry and apple pie or just stewed apple and this lovely thick cream.

I always felt that it was rather wrong that we should be right on the road, there was no

pavement it was just a lane, after all we had a front garden in London so I found stones and made a little garden in front of the house no more than about a foot wide, I didn't have any earth, I just put stones round it, a little path up to the front door, and of course there were loads of wild flowers about and I picked wild flowers and put them in this. I thought it was marvellous but of course, all the flowers died and somebody cleared all the stones away.

It was very quiet along there, there were no cars coming along, just occasionally the carter would come along, of course he had a horse and the milk float would go by and he had a horse and you'd get a lift sometimes down into Burnham-on-Crouch itself in this carters van. My grandparents lived a little further along at a little village called **Althorne** and my grandfather was the lay preacher at the Methodist church there and he would sometimes come and pick us up, he had a pony and trap. He also rode a tricycle but when he was picking us up he'd come along in the pony and trap and we thought that was great, it wasn't very fast but it seemed very fast to us. Sometimes we walked there with mother round to grandma's. Grandma was very stern. We didn't dislike her but I can't say we were very fond of her, she was very stern and it seemed to us that she didn't smile, I suppose she must have done. I stayed with her on one occasion and Sunday was a very holy day. We were only allowed to read the bible, we weren't even allowed to knit or sew. I did feel that was wrong on a Sunday because after all, that was productive, but grandma wouldn't have it.

We didn't have things like coke or things like that to drink. You could buy big bottles of lemonade with a round glass stopper in the top and a hook on the side that pressed down and we used to buy, no not buy pick from the dishes, there were the dishes near and of course the dishes weren't polluted as they are now. There were no cars going along making smoke, it was all nice and clean and there was wild mint growing there and we used to pick wild mint and put it in these bottles with sugar and hot water and give it a good old shake, leave it for a little while and then we had the most marvellous drink. We thought it was wonderful.

On one occasion we went down to Burnham-on-Crouch early because War broke out, I don't know why we did this but my parents made arrangements for us to attend the local village school, that was in Burnham-on-Crouch itself and I thought they were very stern there, I don't suppose they were anymore than they were in my own school but I stood in the middle of a puddle in the playground and refused to come out and so they left me there and of course eventually I came out and went into school and had the ruler across my hand. I was most indignant.

The senior children in the school, at blackberry time, would be taken by the teacher to pick the blackberries and they all went somewhere or other, I don't know where to be made into jam. They took the afternoon off and went blackberrying. On one occasion my brothers and I took French leave so to speak. We reckoned we were going blackberrying, we didn't ask permission, we wouldn't have been granted it. You had to go in a party but we went to a sandpit near and we found a lizard. It was a very lucky lizard. We made a castle for him, I don't know whether he appreciated it or not but we made a castle for him with little holes; he went in and out of the hole but he didn't have much choice. Of course, we were in trouble when we got back.

I remember coming back from school one day. We had a wretched thunderstorm and I had a navy blue ..... dress with a white collar for school and we did get a lift home part way along the lane by the carter but we were absolutely soaked because the cart was open anyhow and when I got home, mother had the fire going and she undressed me and all my underclothes which were white were a bluey mauve and all my skin was a bluey mauve as well. She wrapped us up in towels and we sat round by the fire and we had hot cocoa, you

didn't have chocolate in those days which tasted wonderful.

We had no bathroom and when it came to bath night mother used to light the copper which was an old fashioned one with a fire underneath and put the water in it. She didn't let it get too hot of course, and then she raked the fire out and then we each had a bath, the same water I'm afraid, first one then the other, topped up for the last one with a kettle full of water from the fire in the other room. I suppose we were reasonably clean, we thought we were clean, hair was washed in warm rain water. It was a fun old time for children. We had no things to entertain us, there was no radio in those days, or television there was no piano to have songs at the piano. We played draughts and things like that in the evening on the table, we had the lamp but we spent most of our time in the open air and there was so much there to see and we never tired of going into the fields and down the Creeksea Lane.

Down Creeksea Lane there is a big Elizabethan house and a Captain Jackson lived there while we were there and one time while we were down there in Burnham-on-Crouch he held a garden party for all the people of the village all the way round and of course we were staying in the house there and we had an invitation and this was the most wonderful garden party. It was a lovely place. I can remember the house now, it was red brick and I think it was in the shape of a ..... but I wouldn't be sure and there were white posts and fences and there were all sorts of things going on, competitions of all kinds. My brother won a treacle bun competition. There was a line stretched out and a string hanging from it and there was a bun dipped in treacle on the end and he had his hands tied behind him and he had to eat this bun, the first one to eat the bun won the prize and he ate his first.

We could get ..... I don't know what it was, lemonade I suppose. We didn't have to pay for any of it. Everything we wanted there was free. It seemed like heaven, sandwiches, cakes all kinds of things, buns, everything free. I can see that house now. What's happened to him, I suppose Captain Jackson must be dead by now, after all, he wouldn't have been a young man then.

We heard all kinds of tales about the place people told us, I don't know how many of them were true of course and out of Crouch there is what looked like an island and there seemed to be a building on it and the rumour was that from Captain Jackson's garden somewhere, of course there were many doors there but there was a door and it was probably a door to an ice house or something but the story was that this was a passageway that led right under the river Crouch over to the island. Goodness knows why it went over to the island, I don't know but we didn't explore of course but we found it all terribly exciting. Such simple little things were exciting in those days, I suppose they always are when you're very young.

There was a regatta in Burnham-on-Crouch itself and we went down with my parents to the regatta. We didn't go into restaurants, it was always a picnic that mother took with us in a basket and the people hired boats to go out for a row. I remember my brother who was a little older than myself being on the side of the boat on his elbows and pushed but he pushed a bit too hard, overbalanced and went in and the people who were rowing out with my brother hanging on by his elbows, sort of hanging over the edge of the boat and so they had to bring him back again and we hauled him out. He was very wet

Out over the water there was a slippery pole and people put things on the end of the pole, it was raised of course and they sat on the pole and they had to work their way along and if they worked their way along without falling in the water underneath, well, I think there was a ham or something like that on the end, but very few people seemed to get along to the end, they'd get a little way and then in they'd go. It was all terribly exciting. We spent the whole day

down there, just watching boats and there were races and there was a big crane park behind and the boats would be reeled up and into this crane park and those that didn't get in there were all lined up along the side. There were various Inns along there. Altogether a very exciting time but I suppose when you're young, it is exciting. This is about 70 years ago, just over 70 years ago.

We always went to grandpas chapel on a Sunday and heard grandpa preach to us and go along to grandmas to tea and I can remember being at grandmas late and she had what seemed a big kitchen and the kitchen table was very hot. It was a lovely summer's evening and it was getting dusk I suppose and the table was pulled up to the back door and the door was open and we all sat round this table and we had cups of cocoa and slices of bread. There seemed to be a never ending supply in those days of wonderful dripping with gravy at the bottom. I suppose we had more **choice** than we have now but there seemed to be so much of this lovely dripping, and it tasted wonderful, with a little pepper and salt on it and I don't think I've ever had meals that tasted so wonderful as that. It wasn't just once but it was always so good.

We didn't have the cottage much longer after I was about 6 or 7. My mother had a brother living near and he got married and he hadn't got anywhere. I think he was a riding master, I don't know where, but he lived in this cottage, they let him have the cottage for a time and then they had a family and then I suppose we went to other places for holidays, I don't know, I don't remember but I always remember the wonderful days, I suppose it did rain down there but it didn't seem that it ever rain down there. They seemed to be eternally long hot sunny days and I can see the field at the back with all the blackberries around.

The cottages have gone now. You'd never think if you walked by that there had ever been four cottages along there, there's not a sign of them. I can't remember whether the pub is there or not.



Recorded by Dorothy Elizabeth Warren  
("Nanny", "Dolly") in 1992.

Transcribed by Sue O'Sullivan.

Slightly edited by Kirk Anderson.

**Red** text represents words we're not sure about.