

# *Ann Pitchell*

## *My life at Eastwell Lodge*



*“Be a good girl Ann”, OK I wasn’t the best behaved little girl but what had I done. These were the last words my mother said as I was taken away from her under the in need of care and protection welfare edict. I was not to see her for another 4 years. Brothers Noel & Ronald joined me at the home as soon as places were available.*

*I have lots of memories of these years; I have always called it disciplined freedom. Never having a chip on my shoulder these years in the homes don’t fill me with dread. I was well looked after, and safe. I have always*

*thought my life in the home made me the person I am today. I am aware that this will not apply to all the children that were in the home, tragedies of one sort or another will have left them with other accounts of their years in care.*



*I went to the village junior school now demolished where I met my school friend who lived in the village and who I'm still in touch with.*

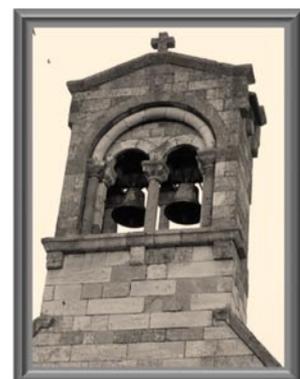


*The village church St Michael & all Angels was where we went to Sunday Mass service & afternoons to get ready for our communion. I was baptized there as were most of the children from the home and confirmed in Wakefield Cathedral.*



*Dolled up in our Sunday best we'd sing hymns with gusto, kneel and look as if we were praying and hope that we didn't get noticed & cajoled into joining the choir. As a High church incense was in abundance so our Sunday best cloths smelt of the stuff until the day came to have new.*

*In this we were very blessed, excuse the pun, as every Whitsuntide we got new cloths which didn't smell of church, at least till we got to mass. Father Mercy would sometimes catch us leaving at lunch time and have us ring the bell for the noon*



*prayers leaving us to rush back to the homes hoping someone had mentioned that we were ringing the bells and not dawdling.*

*We had a TV much earlier than most families. It was given once again by the round table and*



*kept in Matrons house. Every day the Radio Times would be sent to the homes for the aunts to read and decide who and when they could go to matrons to watch tele. We would sit on the carpet eyes glued to the tele, who was that, shouted matron, someone had passed wind. We*

*couldn't blame the dog so we were sent back to our homes and not allowed to watch tele for a week.*

*I loved my school life as it was the only time we mixed with children other than the homes kids.*

*At other times the local children joined in our special event, films and concerts etc. The Round Table showed the very latest films in the hall which was used almost weekly. Old mother Reilly, Roy Rogers etc. Doreen Senior a dance teacher came to teach us to dance.*



*Every year we had a fancy dress party, out would come boxes, crepe paper, glue, paint. I was a TV once, in big box with see through plastic, as I paraded round the hall my screen clouded over so I couldn't see through, I still laugh at this, I didn't win on that occasion. I was more successful as a cat & a powder puff. What the aunties could make out of bits and pieces came in handy for me as I have 2 girls who loved to dress up as kids. Panto's annually.*



*Who can forget the time Harry Corbet & Sooty coming one Easter, I used to impress my girls with that one. The press was in attendance and it was in the Pontefract & Castleford express the following week.*



*We were encouraged to join Girl Guides; Ackworth pack was the one we enrolled in. I loved it and reached the dizzy heights becoming the leader of White Rose patrol, parades were fun on Armistice Day when we joined the British Legion, The scouts were always ahead of us, we took great delight in knocking there berets with the tassel things that hung off my flag. It was a bit nerve racking when I had to take the flag up to the altar on my own.*

*I retained my love of camping until only recently when my husband said we're too old.*



*Holidays were spent at Skegness & Bridlington, they were good as once again we mixed with others from other homes. Meals were in a big hall, long tables with speakers blasting out songs such as I love to go a wandering, Pack up your troubles we sang our hearts out. Good days.*

*Bus trips provided by working men's clubs were*



*to be looked forward to, packed lunch & pocket money all provided. On one occasion I had been picked to go on one of these trips, but because I had torn 2 dresses jumping off the end*

*of the swing boat the day before I was not allowed to go on the trip as punishment, fair play I suppose. Other holidays were spent in Burley in Wharfedale. Some old ladies looked after us. We spent time out in the countryside, swimming in rivers, walks on the moors etc.*

*One lady taught me how to crochet which came in very handy when I had children. Only so many kids could go so I, we, all made an effort to be good.*





*Christmas was great. Pillow cases at foot of bed feeling if that tea set I wanted was there then going back to sleep. It was all very exciting. The presents were mostly what we hoped for plus extras games books etc.*

*I was always a bit of a tomboy, cricket and football in the field with the boys. I learnt to ride a bicycle at the homes, I still have a thorn from the hedge that was down the lane as I fell off, Matron tried to get it out but no luck, it still remains with me.*

*We had the chance to have a little garden at the bottom of the vegetable garden, Candytufft were the first flowers grown by me.*



*Weekends were when visitors, family etc I can always remember thinking maybe my mum would come to see us, I had an a few years to wait as she only visited once*



*while I was there. While the boys were still there I found mum and asked her to go see the boys which was quite an event as my Aunt came too.*

*I went to Northgate Senior Girls from 11 years old to leaving at 15. Joining the A classes was my only academic success so I left school not having a career.*

*Being in care your future was to some degree planned until you reached 18. A job had been lined up for me living and working at local café which had bed & breakfast facilities, 12 bedrooms. My duties*



*, waitress, cleaning, and at times cooking. Six and a half days a week, board & lodgings my wages were 10/- shillings a week with only half a day off. I used these days to go and see the boys while they were still in the home. I realise that I was, as were many others, cheap labour but my boss who I still visit was never cruel to me.*

*Some people think it must be awful to be in a*



*home, not me, we were given more than most children, and I didn't miss the love as I hadn't had it before anyway. I learnt to rely on myself. I have done a search of my family, found another half sister on dad's side. My father was killed in 1962 in a road accident not quite the way mum told me during WW2.*

*Being in the homes never held me back in life,  
now at 67 I look back and it is good to recall  
those days grateful that there was such places  
which were safe havens for children like me and  
my brothers*



*Regards to all  
former children  
from Eastwell  
Lodge*

*Ann Hirst nee  
Pitchell*