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CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Medway Chronicle

'Keeping Medway's History Alive'



**Gillingham Co-op • Our East End
News from an Ex President
Walter Brisac • Sweet Memories**

CHATHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY meets at St Stephen's Church, Maidstone Road, Chatham, ME4 6JE on the second Wednesday of each month except January and August.

Doors open at 7:15pm and the meeting starts at 7:30pm.

News and information about Chatham Historical Society is available on the website:
www.chathamhistoricalsoc.btck.co.uk

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Please submit text and images in electronic form by email to
chatham.historicalsoc@gmail.com or on paper to the editor at any of the society's meetings. (The editor prefers email.)

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Front cover: The original Christchurch in Luton village circa 1860.

Another First For Gillingham

by Brian Joyce

In the Spring 2014 edition of the Medway Chronicle, I described how in 1953, Kent's first launderette opened in Arden Street, Gillingham. Four years earlier, in 1949, the town had seen the opening of the first self-service store in the Medway Towns.



People were probably familiar with what the *Chatham News* called “grocetarias” through watching Hollywood films. In October, 1949, Gillingham Co-operative Society brought this touch of glamour to 140 High Street.

Just in case the public were unfamiliar with the new American shopping technique, the *Chatham Observer* described it in easily understood terms. “Housewives enter one door, collect a wire basket, help themselves to whatever commodities they require, take them to an assistant for payment and go out through another door. ‘Keep moving’ is the essential instruction and no halts to chat with the next door neighbour or any old pals”.

There are a number of things to comment upon in this extract. First is the assumption nearly seventy years ago that it was exclusively “the

housewife” who undertook the grocery shopping.

Secondly, the term “any commodities they require” was a little disingenuous. The store opened in the middle of the period of post-war austerity and rationing. Only food in packets and tins could be purchased in the novel self- service way. Rationed goods were kept in refrigerated units, with assistants serving the produce and taking the coupons. There were to be no under the counter goods reserved for favoured customers.

Finally, the impersonal “keep moving” nature of the new shopping experience meant that one of the main benefits of the traditional and slower form of shopping was largely lost. Although the number of staff at the new Gillingham premises was unchanged, most now spent their time ticketing the goods and replenishing the shelves rather than interacting with the customers. This was the beginning of the long decline of the small-scale shop as a communal meeting place and centre of gossip. Today, with local post offices and pubs closing in large numbers, alternative focuses of community life are also disappearing.

When the new store opened in 1949, Gillinghamites reluctant to adapt to the Americanisation of shopping were catered for. For the time being, the Co-op retained a traditional over-the-counter shop with personal service next door.

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First

In the Medway Towns

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However, the *Chatham Observer* pointed out that if this first experiment proved to be successful, other shops would be bound to introduce "self service". The rest, of course, is history.

Our East End (Part 2)

by Janet M King

Varley's, although strictly speaking outside the east end area of this story, must be included as it was one of those shops that we were always using. You could buy everything there from fuse wire to light bulbs and vacuum cleaners. It was a long standing firm, set up in 1949, a year before me, and only ceased trading recently.

Before the days of the larger outlets it was *the* place to go for the latest electrical gadgets. I remember in particular their large hoarding advertising a Hoover Constellation in pink. This was advanced for its time as it hovered like a hovercraft. It was of medium size and spherical. Like something out of science fiction this was the nearest my Mother got to going into space! We mainly went to Varley's for the electrical 'bits' that you couldn't get anywhere else. They've always kept up with the times without losing that personal touch. Their web site proudly proclaimed that their third generation of the family happily traded on in the twenty first century. When I worked at Ceattas House, right at the other end of Chatham High Street, I was still sent to Varley's for fluorescent tubes and starter motors. Although I walked past the shop four times each day, I seemed to have to make a special journey whenever my manager realised that he needed a new light bulb. He was very fussy about the colour of the tubes, and Varley's always obliged.

The leather shop, Mr Clifford's, was a delight. He sold hand bags, and I think saddles at one time. He would make bags to your own design to order. Mum and Gran had their shopping bags made there, and I had a pencil case, which Dad paid for, for school. The shop seemed to have been there for ages, solid and reliable. Mr Clifford became involved with the Little Theatre in later life, and the bar there is named after him.

Mr Harris's bike shop was an Aladdin's cave of bikes and bits and pieces. It was the bits and pieces that we bought, as the bikes were quite upmarket

and therefore expensive. We went there quite often as dad rode a bike which needed maintaining.

The two cinemas, the Ritz and the Regent, were almost opposite one another, and I can honestly say that I have had tea at The Ritz, as there was a café upstairs which we sometimes went to as a family. The seats in the Ritz were plusher than those in the Regent, which was much smaller and more basic. You really felt you had had a night out at the Ritz, but didn't get the same feeling at the Regent. The Regent that I knew had been rebuilt twice. Originally the IPP, which opened in 1914, it was designed by George Bond, who also designed the Theatre Royal. Built of “red brick with Bath stone dressings” it was described by the press as “free renaissance style”. The IPP was renamed the New Regent in 1927 and was taken over by ABC two years later. At first acts performed along with the films, which by then were talkies. As the building of the Ritz began the New Regent was becoming obsolete. Its days were numbered, and it was replaced by the larger Super Regent. The Super Regent was designed by W. R. Bond. Both the Ritz and Regent were by now owned by ABC, so would not be rivals. Although the Super Regent was well decorated it was not as sumptuous as the Ritz, with its luxury fixtures and fittings. Built on the old A.X.E. Brand site and opened in 1937 the Ritz could boast a café and a dance hall. Now “just like our family” anyone could have tea at the Ritz !

The technical institute was just across the road at the bottom of the hill. It was the adult education centre of its age. The hope was to educate the ordinary working man, both in his work and his daily life. It was thought that with better education everyone would know more their rights, and that common prejudices would be overcome. The original institute, in Fair Row, moved to the “new” building in 1894. At the inaugural meeting of the original mechanics' institute, the aspirations of the institute's educational system were discussed. The basis of the system was technical knowledge in relation to the artisans in the dockyard, and associated trades. It also provided more general education including music and

English. In the rule book for the institute it stated that at the time there was a lack of places that provided this type of education. The emphasis of the institute was on the practical side of learning. The students learnt that through this practical learning they would know their subject thoroughly and could argue against any book learnt student.

The building as I remember it was used as part of the boys' technical school. At certain times of day what seemed like thousands of boys would be waiting at or around the bus stop to travel between this site and their main school in Maidstone Road.

At the back of the Technical Institute and not far from the arches at the east end of New Road was the library. Built of red brick with stone dressing it was quite a distinctive building. It held 11,000 volumes on its two floors. It opened in 1903, funded mostly by Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish millionaire philanthropist. He had a huge steel works in America, which had made him very wealthy. Altogether he founded 2,500 libraries worldwide.

I loved the library, joining at an early age. I think the first book I read was *Little Grey Rabbit* by Alison Uttley. My mother knew the children's librarian, Mrs Fletcher, which was useful as when I was about 10 she managed to get me a job as a helper. One thing that always fascinated me was the librarian's rotating section of her desk, where all the tickets lived. At that time a ticket for each book was filed away in a ticketed pocket with the borrower's name on it. The speed with which the turntable went round, together with the speed with which Mrs Fletcher found and put away the tickets was unbelievable. I don't know how she did it, but she must have been nimble fingered and quick of brain.

My style of reading soon turned to adventure books and I read about the adventures of the Cherry's, who were always somehow involved in 'happenings'. The children's library was in the basement but as soon as I was old enough I climbed the stairs to the adult library where I borrowed

romances ! My dad however was more high brow, borrowing what were termed art books, for which you had to have special tickets. Once he borrowed recordings of the complete speeches of Churchill, which he thought would be of benefit to the family. We all dutifully sat round the record player to listen, whilst dad went to sleep !

Our house was almost at the bottom of the Lines, now known as The Great Lines Heritage Park . This area is historically important as part of the defensive structures built to defend Chatham dockyard, but to me it was just a giant playground where I spent many a happy hour gathering wild flowers for school. I had in my proud possession The Observer's Book of Wild Flowers which was a bit difficult to use for identification as a lot of the pictures were in black and white. There was lamtain plantain, wild mignonette, red and white clover, scarlet pimpernel, trefoil and deadly nightshade, as well as the usual dandelions, buttercups and daisies.

There were horses left to graze on the lines. One day one of them came down our back alley as food was a bit sparse and it must have thought where there is life there is hope. It got as far as the top of the alley where the people in the nearest house attended the emergency. Mr Parsons tried to get the animal to go backwards. It would not move, even after a lot of pushing and shoving. He tried forwards, no luck. Backwards again, nothing. If you've never tried to get a horse to go backwards when it doesn't want to you've never lived. Backwards, which was the easiest option, didn't seem to enter its vocabulary. I think the Parsons must have given it food, it was staying put. It was on to a good thing. The horses on the lines weren't exactly wild, but they weren't exactly tame either. It was a brave thing that Mr Parsons did that day. Finally, proudly, he led the horse forward, right down the alley along the road and back up the hill to the lines.

The horse wasn't the only animal to visit us on the hill. On another occasion a herd of cows came down to see us. Talk about the wild west. There was a whole herd of them, brown in colour, and they looked huge to

young eyes. A lot of the people on the hill came out to watch from their fronts. The main concern was the high street. If the cows got down there, they could, and probably would cause a nasty accident. No one, not even Mr Parsons was brave enough to turn the herd. In the end I think the RSPCA were called. Who called them I don't know, as not many people were on the phone and the nearest phone box was underneath the arches. I think heads rolled, because we knew who the cows belonged to and he had been in trouble before. We lived in fear of it happening again, but as far as I recall it never did.

Leading a more peaceful existence on the lines were several goats. They were tethered to the lamp post at the top of the hill, just at the foot of the lines. The goats worried no one and no one worried the goats, but I was very nervous of them. I had read about their trip-trapping. What if one of them tripped near me? I knew they ate anything and wondered if that might include me. I never went near them. One of them could have been one of the billy goats gruff that I'd read about and I wasn't going to risk it. Apart from the odd goldfish won at the fair, one of the main pets to feature in our lives was a mouse bought from Petcraft, the pet shop at the bottom of the hill. The mouse always seemed hungry to me and my brother, so we fed it, and fed it, and fed it, until eventually it expired. This seemed odd to us so we took it back to the shop and tried to get another one. We didn't, to our surprise, get a replacement, or even a refund.

My favourite pet was a cat, well more of a kitten cat really, called Rufty. She was black and white and used to sit at the bottom of the stairs waiting for me to get up. (sometimes a long wait!) I really loved that cat. She was young and lively, much like me at the time, a growing teenager. Rex, the big brute, and leader of the pack of dogs that roamed the streets up our way, chased her and broke her back. Mrs Saunders, the local cat woman, tried to save her, but despite her best ministrations Rufty died. I will always be grateful to Mrs Saunders as she gave Rufty painkillers, which I hope eased the terrible pain she must have been in.

News From An Ex President

by Brian Joyce

As some readers will recall, I moved from Medway in late 2014 in order to be closer to my daughter and her family in Greater Manchester. I finally settled about twelve miles from the centre of the city itself in a conurbation consisting of Leigh, Atherton and Tyldesley. These towns are contiguous, so it is difficult to judge where one ends and the next begins. Does this sound familiar to Medway readers?

Because I have such an interest in the history of local communities and the process of researching them, I settled into my new environment quite quickly. I used to spend much of my spare time at Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre in Strood. My transfer to Wigan Archives and Local Studies in Leigh Town Hall has been seamless. I used to sit hunched over a microfilm reader scouring the Chatham News and Chatham Observer for interesting themes. I now do the same using the Leigh Chronicle and Leigh Journal. By the way, the Metropolitan Borough of Wigan Archives has recently relocated, but in contrast to Medway's recent move, to larger rather than smaller premises.

The themes I am currently researching via the newspapers are pretty much the same as my Medway interests; theatres, music halls and cinemas for example, and non conformist churches and chapels. I have continued to seek and find examples of the presence of black people and other ethnic minorities in the Victorian period.

The local newspapers help accentuate the socio-economic differences between south Lancashire and the Medway Towns. There is a distinct lack of military and naval stories here, reflecting the fact that this was not a garrison or dockyard area. Two of the main economic activities were the textile and coal industries. Virtually the only evidence that the latter ever existed in the area is the Astley Green Colliery, which is now a museum.

It features the only surviving pit-head gear in Lancashire. Otherwise there is nearly nothing left of a once great industry. There are a few former textile mills still standing, but most no longer perform their original function. Instead many have been transformed into retail outlets, and one in Leigh manufactures artificial turf rather than cotton cloth.

I still give talks, and have spoken at local history societies and groups for retired people such as U3A and Probus. These talks have been modified versions of those I have given in Medway, such as that on Lord Haw Haw and passengers on the Titanic. By the way, a point I have always made in my Victorian prostitution talk – that where there was plentiful paid work for young women, there was little prostitution – has been borne out by my reading of the Leigh newspapers. In the Medway Towns there were no equivalents of the spinning and weaving jobs found in the North West but week in, week out the police court columns in the local press were full of prostitution cases. In this area they are very hard to find.

Three times a year, Wigan Museum and Archives service produces a local history magazine called Past Forward. I have written several articles for this publication. My next will focus on two black families who lived in Victorian Leigh and Tyldesley.

It has pleased me to discover direct links between this area and the Medway Towns. One of the businesses in Victorian Tyldesley was that of John Grundy, which manufactured heating apparatus for large buildings such as churches. Grundy's advertising contained an endorsement from Stephen Aveling who had installed Tyldesley-made equipment in Restoration House in Rochester in 1889.

Winter Warmth and Comfort.

RE-PRINTED FROM "THE BAZAAR," NOV. 6th, 1889.

SIR,—I was glad to see in your journal the Rev. Dr. Scott's letter making known to your readers the advantages and health-giving comforts of the "Grundy" heating apparatus. Being very sensitive to the difference between pure warm air and a hot, stuffy atmosphere, I quickly recognised the importance of this new method of heating, which had been introduced into a church in this city, and I was one of the first to adapt the valuable invention to a dwelling-house.

My house is one of those rambling brick buildings which were scattered broadcast over England about the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, when ground was of no particular value. It has large, airy passages and spaces which could not be warmed by ordinary means. When leaving the warm rooms in the winter these spaces felt like ice-houses. The lead-light windows at all times admitted the air, and brought the indoor temperature to the outdoor one. Now all this is changed. Mr. John Grundy fitted his heating apparatus, and the passages and staircases are as comfortable as the drawing-room.

There are two streams of air entering the house from the garden: these are warmed on their passage, and discharge through one opening into the end of a passage. Curiously enough, this is not the warmest part of the house. The heated air passes to the greatest distance from the opening.

In the afternoon the upstairs bedroom

doors are opened and the warm air fills these rooms, and the discomfort and danger of leaving a warm drawing-room for an icy cold bedroom is avoided.

Instead of the cold air rushing through every crevice of the windows and doors (as is the case when houses are warmed by ordinary stoves, and the air which supplies them is taken from the inside of the house) there is a pressure of air outwards. The stream of warm air entering the house necessarily must have an exit, and this exit is the same crevices which would otherwise be a source of cold draughts.

The advantages of this excellent invention are: (1) A supply of pure air; (2) warmth and comfort; (3) absence of smoke, dirt, and dust, inseparable from the ordinary stove; (4) great economy of fuel for the heat given. There are now several churches and chapels in this city and neighbourhood warmed by this method, and I have heard nothing but praise and satisfaction from those who have adopted it.

Personally, I am very grateful to Mr. Grundy for adding so much to the comfort of myself and family, and I have no other object in writing to your journal than to give others an opportunity of enjoying such an inexpensive luxury.

Mr. John Grundy, 30, Duncan-terrace, City-road, London, N., is the patentee, to whom all communications should be addressed.

Rochester, 30th Oct. S. T. AVELING.

I have discovered other links too. The most notable building in modern Tyldesley is a chapel of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion which dates from 1789. From 1859 to his death in 1879, its minister was the Rev James Eastmead, who was born and spent his youth on The Brook in Chatham. In 1890, a new minister was appointed. This was the Rev William Bourne, who according to the Leigh press had served in non conformist churches in both Strood and Cliffe. The census of 1891 reveals that his 8year-old adopted son William Pearson had been born in Rochester. In fact, before becoming a clergyman, Bourne had been a pork butcher living in Maidstone Road in Rochester.

A third clergyman, the Rev William Wardle served at the Primitive Methodist church in Leigh before moving to that in Mills Terrace in Chatham and then in Nelson Road, Gillingham. The local newspapers here frequently quoted letters sent by Wardle from Chatham to his former flock in Leigh.

My move from Medway to the North West has been smooth and virtually pain-free. However, I continue to have an interest in my home town and its people. I am looking forward to seeing some of you again in the New Year.

Brian Joyce

Exploding the myth of Walter Brisac (Part 1)

by Catharina Clement

In 1893 the local newspapers reported the death of a pauper living at The Mount in Chatham. An inquest was subsequently held and revealed much about his background, which was published in the *Chatham News* and *Chatham Observer*. It would appear from these articles that the public took the death of this military ‘hero’ to heart and ensured he received a proper burial with a headstone. Purportedly a public subscription was raised for his gravestone.

Walter Brisac’s headstone



Reproduced with permission of Medway Archives Centre

Local newspaper accounts immediately following his death in December 1893 and more recent articles have all left this ‘gentleman’ shrouded in mystery. Who was the real Walter Brisac? Modern research tools have allowed us access to wider records than our predecessors could, but even these paint a picture of a confusing nature. Walter sometimes set out to mislead, but on other occasions people misinterpreted his comments or put their own spin upon them to create an illusory character.

At the time of his death in 1893 the national press reported that he was

Dickens' inspiration for Barnaby Rudge. This was immediately shot down as a myth by the journalist H.B., who correctly stated that this book was written in 1841; before Dickens could possibly have met Walter Brisac. A myth that is unfortunately still perpetuated today by some Dickensian authors!

His military records seemed the first logical port of call, as it is known with certainty he was finally discharged from the army by the authorities at Chatham in 1853. He served in the 98th Foot Regiment.

98th Foot Regiment in 1842



According to these records he was simply Walter Brisac, aged 18 ½, a labourer born in St Mary's parish at Cork in Ireland. Walter enlisted in the army at London on 31st October 1843 for a bounty of £3 17s 6d. The description of him was:-

Height: 5 foot 5 ¾ inches

Hair: light brown

Eyes: brown

Complexion: fresh

Marks: none

Walter's army career took him to Hong Kong in December 1844. S.M.

Bard describes conditions in the colony at the time Walter served there. It was an ‘unhealthy place. The hot humid climate with swampy marshy valleys contributed much to this picture. Military dispatches reporting sickness in the garrison make sad reading. In 1842 Lieutenant-General Gough wrote of the “destruction of the 98th Regiment [of Foot] by disease”, mortality among the troops due to “malignant fevers” had reached 39%. In 1844 it was described as “the melancholy return of death”, when 373 died out of the garrison of 1800, which is one death for every five men.’ This fever or disease was cholera, although the colony was also plagued with malaria and other tropical diseases.

Hong Kong in the 1840s



During late 1846 events became critical in India with threatened risings and so Walter’s regiment was transferred to that part of the world. ‘Initially the regiment was based in Calcutta (Kolkata) and Dinapore, however, in 1848 it moved to the Punjab where, although not directly engaged in the Second Anglo-Sikh War, a second battle honour — PUNJAB — was awarded. From here the regiment was one of the first British units to serve on the North West Frontier and spent between 1849–1851 in and around the Kohat Pass area.

98th Foot Regiment whilst on duty during the Second Sikh War in India,
1848



By 1851 the regiment had been abroad for a total of nine years and in that time it had suffered over 1,100 deaths, mostly from sickness, with almost 200 invalided home.’ The regiment appears to have returned to England in 1852. Walter was one of the fortunate ones, who had combated disease rather than warfare.

Having served in the army for about nine years he was invalided out on 23rd September 1852 due to ill health caused by sunstroke after serving in China and India. Brisac was of ‘exemplary character’ and awarded the Good Conduct Badge in 1848.

Good Conduct Army Medal c. 1848



On his discharge, aged 30, he was to reside at New Peckham in Surrey. Rumours had it locally that he was from a distinguished lineage and his father had disowned him. However his discharge address was that of his alleged father, Douglas Pettiward Brisac. Other information from this source of gossip does not correlate with his appearance, intellect and above connections.

It would be highly improbable that as a labourer he was linked to a landed Irish lineage, as he frequently claimed to local inhabitants. More curious is the description by many who knew him as an educated and well-read man. Charles Dickens found him an interesting character and had long conversations with him. Apparently he could speak several languages. None of this tallies with the education of a labourer nor does his very well formed signature on his army document.

A second document uncovered at the National Archives was purportedly the school records of a Walter Henry Sargent Brisac. According to this Greenwich School admission's application the father was Douglas Pettiward Brisac. On reading this application it soon became evident that this was the one and same Walter Brisac, who had joined the army. One of the stipulations of entrance was that boys had to be very literate and would be asked at random at their interview to read a chapter from the bible.

The boys were admitted aged 11-12 and were educated for three years before serving as naval apprentices, which took seven years. Walter was accepted at the school on 3rd April 1834 as a 1st class candidate. This group was reserved for children of commissioned officers. His father had to prove his naval qualifications to get a place for his son. Douglas was a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Marines, serving on HMS Bellerophon in 1813 and the 2nd battalion from 1814. It was also an expensive venture for the father as he had to provide a £50 bond, insuring his son would not go AWOL or misappropriate the equipment provided. You are asking at this point, why would a lad with a naval training have joined the army? All

will be revealed later!

This record does shed some interesting light on Walter's family background. His father had to swear affidavits to both his own marriage and son's baptism as he was unable to get hold of copies of the certificates from Ireland. Douglas Pettiward Brisac was married to Walter's mother, Eliza Stapleton, at Holy Trinity Church in Cork on 7th January 1817. The affidavit he swore before a solicitor confirms that Walter was born on 24th April 1823 at St Finbarrs, Cork. 'Ancestry' has revealed a further child born in Ireland to this marriage in 1822, Arabella Marshall, and 'family search' has identified another three children, George Douglas (1818), Susan Catherine (1820) and Elizabeth Anna (1828), all baptised at Clifton in Gloucestershire. It would appear that the father's naval career took him to Ireland for a brief spell, returning to Clifton near Bristol by 1828.

Bristol Riots 1831



By 1834 the family were living at Bladen-burgh cottage, Bexleyheath in Kent. The Bristol Riots of 1831 had forced the family to seek a safer environment to raise their children. From the above school record it is obvious Walter had only made a few subtle changes in his application for the army; date of birth out by a year, left out his middle names and distanced himself from an educated background by describing himself as a labourer. He also, however, declared he had never been apprenticed or

enlisted in any other part of the military. Not quite true!

This is when a lucky chance upon a website led to the Shropshire archives and a series of letters held in the Haslewood collection between Lieutenant D. P. Brisac of Bexleyheath and Captain Joseph Jones of Bexley, covering the period 1844-1847. A letter of 30th June 1845 from Lieutenant Brisac refers to ‘Walter Henry Largent Brisac absenting himself without leave on provocation since 26th October 1843’. The father states that he does not know where his son is, but that ‘he avail’d Himself of the Law being 21 years of age.’ By the time Walter’s father wrote this letter, the son would have been of age. But, under the terms of his admission to Greenwich School, Walter was required to stay in the naval service till he reached twenty-one. On absenting himself in 1843 he had breached his father’s bond and by lying about his particulars he enlisted in the army just a few days later. Bizarrely his father had done the same in reverse. Douglas had joined Sandhurst as a cadet aged 17 in 1810, but was discharged just a year later by a friend. Yet not long afterwards he became a Royal Marine. Walter had to dissemble on his army papers to cover his absconding from the navy, however he was intelligent enough just to tweak the details and not tell outright lies. What the ‘provocation’ was to make him leave the navy is unstated, but later evidence may shed some light on this.

Walter’s mother, Eliza, died in early 1848 at Peckham where the family had just moved to their new home at 4 Dorset Terrace. It would have been some time before Walter would have heard the news, as he was serving in India at the time. Little more is known about the soldier till his military career ended.

Sweet Memories

by Janet M King

Although I do remember Jubblies, which were indeed lubberly as Vic Chidgey suggested in an earlier Medway Chronicle, I remember other goodies with fonder affection. There was a whole range of sweet treats for childhood delectation. My favourites were Blackjacks, four for a penny, or a farthing each. You could mix and match with Fruit Salads, which were also a farthing each. They were both little chewy squares of delight, the Blackjacks liquorice, and the Fruit Salads a pink and yellow fruity concoction.

Other liquorice fancies included Smokers' Pipes with pink sprinkles on the bowl, and Shoe Laces, long strips of liquorice. As well as the liquorice laces there were red aniseed versions of the same thing, which I much preferred. There were also Aniseed Balls which were really aniseedy, but I can't remember how much they cost.

The other sweets which were ball shaped were Gob Stoppers, which were huge and a penny each. They used to change colour as you sucked away, and it was my habit to take them out of my mouth to study the differing hues.

In the chocolate line there were the 1d and 2d bars, but best of all were the chocolate tools. I can only remember buying spanners, but there was a selection of tools to choose from.

Shrimps and Bananas were some children's choice. They had a strange texture, chewy, but not as chewy as a penny chew. The bananas actually tasted of banana, but the shrimps were not shrimp flavoured ! They were sugary. You really need to taste one to get an idea of the true flavour.

Sherbet Dabs were a bit tangy. They came in yellow sealed bags. The dab

was for sucking and dabbing up the sherbet. There were also Sherbet Fountains, a yellow and red tube full of sherbet furnished with a liquorice straw sticking out of the top. These were not covered. No health and safety then. You just sucked up the sherbet through the straw, which invariably got clogged up. Talking of sherbet there were also the infamous Flying Saucers, which were sandwiches of rice paper, flying saucer shaped, with sherbet in the middle. Yummy.

We mustn't forget packets of Sweet Cigarettes, and sheets of bubble gum packed with cards to collect which made ideal swaps in the playground.

All these treats were laid out on a shelf that was child height and child friendly, to capture what pocket money we had. We were given odd pennies and ha'pennies to spend on our way to school, helping us on our way to what I regarded as impending doom.

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