

I remember starting infant's school while living in Walker ... wasn't there long though, probably less than a year, the first day of horror etched indelibly in my memory ... dragged, screaming by my mam all the way and left sitting cross legged, on a bare wooden floor, with a bunch of strange kids ... still screaming. That must have been September 1955. I was 5 in May of that year so would've been eligible to start school in the autumn.

The only other substantial memory I have of school in Walker is sitting in a field with the teacher and class on a bright, sunny day eating cherries, a light warm breeze, butterflies fluttering, ladybirds ... well it was one cherry actually. The teacher had brought a punnet which she shared out amongst the kids. I'd never tasted cherry before, it was wonderful, marvellous; even heavenly. Some kids, (probably teacher's pets) got two cherries; not me though. The only time I ever got two cherries was as the booby prize on a one armed bandit. Other kids would ask 'can I have another one miss', I was too shy, but I really, really wanted another. If I just sat there looking really good she might give me one I thought... but she didn't

I don't remember friends, I just remember playing with my younger sister or hanging around pestering my mam. My older sister, Catherine never seemed to be around much, either at school or playing with friends, she always had friends ... leaving me and Eleanor to play our (mainly girlie) games with dolls and tea sets; well when I say dolls and tea sets, I mean one doll and two plastic cups. That's all we had. I didn't fancy the rough and tumble of the streets much ... loud shouting, fighting and throwing things ... wild games played by wild boys ... didn't play football or cricket either, all that running round pushing and shoving, shouting and falling over, scraped knees, gashed elbows, it seemed exiting but I was far too timid, at that time to join in. I grew up with a mother and two sisters. My father, a glum, remote figure generally only ever spoke before dishing out what he referred to as 'a good hiding'; I just kept quiet when he was around and tried to keep my head down as much as possible. 'A good hiding' ... what the hell is that anyway. I can categorically state that there was nothing good about the hidings ... I thought the expression was stupid then and, well I suppose I still do ... like I say, what's good about it and anyway if you were hiding, then you wouldn't get one would you. Another common expression I couldn't get my head round was 'you'll be laughing on the other side of your face in a minute' ... my mam used to say it a lot. My sister and I tried it for years, keeping one side of our face serious and laughing with the other ... we'd end up with all kinds of daft facial contortions and end up laughing with both sides, unless the old man was around of course then sides of faces laughed not at all.

In general, I just liked to read or play quite gentle, pretend games or plonk on the piano (only if the old man was out of course as this would have been a hiding offence). My little sister and I would make a house with a bed-sheet and a couple of chairs and cut up old magazines into rectangles, pretending we had wads of money ... I used to make origami wallets or purses to put the pretend money in and we would then play at being rich ... Stomping into the bed-sheet house wearing my dad's wellies and using my gruffest attempt at a posh voice I would

say 'Have yooer gort my tea orn yert ... Eeelenoor' ... 'Oh yers I hurve' she would reply in her pretend posh voice and then we would drink pretend tea out of toy plastic cups and have daft pretend conversations that we thought 'the posh people' would have ... we had a baby of course... it was called 'Bohbah' ... 'Bohbah Johnson' this was what we thought posh people would call their babies

'I saay Eeelenoor whar is the Bohbah'

'Ohh the Bohbah is in the barth'