

Childhood Memories   grew up in Nottingham from the age of 2

Aged 2, riding my metal pedal car. The yard was too short so kept having to turn. Not enough room. Restricted and frustrated.

Hot days and water turning soil into mud streaking the paving bricks. Playing rivers. Boats made of newspaper to float on my tiny river.

Aged 4. just before Easter, still some rationing, going on 3 buses with my mother to get to Melton Mowbray to visit an acquaintance of my mother's. She had a small holding and kept hens and with our prized 2 dz eggs on a flat egg tray, we carefully went home. Those eggs had cost us dearly in transport and payment. Eggs were scarce. They were a true prize and Easter was coming. Coloured, painted eggs. Eggy cakes- Polish recipes – cakes that melt in your mouth. But a foot shot out, as we got up to leave the last bus, and my mother tripped on it, the bus erupted with 'agghs' and we had scrambled egg for supper and cried into our plates.

Walks in the arboretum on a Sunday afternoon. Icecream. The band playing, deckchairs swamped with people. Watching an old crow reach the age of 90something, year by year, and then the cage was bare. Ducks in the pond. Daffodils in spring, tulips in May, bedding plants turned into clocks or pretty patterns on tilted soil. Cool large trees giving us shade and respite from the heat. Stopping off at the swings on the way home if there was time. Going out was free. Money was scarce.

Aged 5, walking to the dentist one day, my mother and I met a gypsy. We tried to avoid her, but she crossed the road and confronted us. My mother apologised and said she had no money to give her. The gypsy understood, took her hand and told her that my father had just started a new job- it would be hard work, but we would cope. (He had started work that day at £5 per week) She told my mother that her daughter was very far away- my mother looked at me- but the gypsy said 'no, you have another daughter and that she would soon hear from her' (my mother heard that week that her daughter, by her first marriage, was alive and well and in an orphanage in Russia. She never did hear her voice on the phone, nor see her. Only photographs and letters- most were cut into single words after they had been censored and fell out of the envelopes like confetti, which she tried to make sense of.) Out of my mother's purse came her one coin- a half crown and she pressed it into the gypsy's hand, but the gypsy handed in back and told her she had greater need of it, but never to avoid a gypsy again.

Going to Polish school on a Saturday morning. Learning about its history, geography, written language and religion. Such a tedious bus journey there and back.

Saturday night pictures. Visits to the sweetshop on the next corner as we walked the half mile there to the Apollo cinema. Sweet rationing was lifted when I was about 5. Cowboy films were the favourite- little speech to follow and make sense of (for Polish immigrants, in post war Britain), plenty of horses to fill my father's eyes (he had been in the Polish Cavalry, and the only horses we saw regularly were the Shire horses pulling the flat trucks with beer barrels for Shipstones Ales Brewery, a mile or so away from our front door, or the horse and cart of the Rag and Bone man.) (My mother would run out with a shovel to gather the horse droppings for her meagre patch of garden.)

Occasionally perhaps, a small bag of chips to share on the way home from the cinema. we rarely were hungry as my mother insisted on bringing sandwiches and fruit – a throwback to leaving her house in wartime Poland, now Russia, and never returning. She always had something to eat in her bag- even if it was a bar of chocolate later on. (It's a family joke now that when my children leave to go to their homes, they are packed off with bisonburgers.)

If there was a special new film, we might have to go into the centre of Nottingham to the ABC or Gaumont or Odeon where as a teenager I saw The Beatles, Roy Orbison, Shirley Bassey, Gene Pitney, etc. Heard the girls starting to shout and got cross that I couldn't hear the music properly, so stopped going to live shows on the stage, with the gold lame curtains and the silent organ that did not rise from the side of the stage as drums and guitars had taken its place.

Aged 8, having long hair- long enough to sit on. Plaited daily and pulled daily at school, because I was a good pupil, sitting next to Lynda, my Scottish friend, surrounded by naughty boys, picking their noses, being vulgar and noisy and disrespectful.

Going to Yorkshire to stay with my father's wartime Colonel and his wife. They had 3 boys. He was bursar for Ampleforth College and they housed up to 15 boys in their large stone farmhouse. She was terrified of how to look after a girl and her long hair for a month. So I was taken to the photographer to record how I looked in my Holy Communion dress and clean tresses, then to the hairdresser who gave me a terrible haircut after slicing off 2 thick plaits and maniacally dangling them in front of his clientele of aged ladies with wispy short hair. I loved the holiday. My mother had an operation while I was away and had to recuperate. A choice of 15 beds to sleep in. The wood pigeon cooing- I thought it was an owl hooting. The succulent green peas growing to be eaten straight from the pod. Those sweet raspberries just waiting to be picked. The orangery housing giant trees in the warmth of the house. The back garden, just a hillside with brambles, bushes and trees. Going to someone's birthday party- my first English birthday party with hats, jelly and icecream, games and prizes. Feeling rather lost.

Going to pick mushrooms once my parents arrived to take me back. 2 giant frying pans full of delicious russet mushrooms in cream.

The large playing field off Gregory Boulevard at the bottom of our road, housed the largest fair in England in the first weekend of October (Thursday midday to Saturday midnight). We never missed going, maybe several times per year. Looking at the Romany caravans with their pristine coachwork, mirrored walls and glass lamps glittering with pride. The swarthy inhabitants who made the carousels spin and the oily motors fill our ears with shuddering noise while the music blared from loudspeakers and the candy floss stuck to our faces. Shooting guns- father always had to show he was best. That's why I took up rifle shooting at University and won a silver spoon as best shot, shooting a record number of polo mints at 50 yards in 1 min. The Big Wheel- loving every moment. Persuading my best scaredy cat friend to go on it at the age of 13- as we sat tucked into either corner (that was much safer, I said), her long pony tail got sucked around the greased horizontal supporting bar on which hung the swinging seat. After I screamed for them to stop and yet the ride went on and on, and her head pulled backwards ready to rip off her scalp, they stopped the ride and suspended us 10 ft above the slanted ramp; they had to take off the seat with us 2 on

it, lower it down to the ramp so that I could jump off, and Judith was taken down. We walked home and my mother tried to wash her hair over and over again to try and remove the black thick grease. Then Judith had to get home on the bus. We really weren't such good friends after that.

Going to a girls' school from the age of 11 – 17 across the road from the fair, and having Thursday afternoon off for the privilege. A wonderful Grammar School, practically on my doorstep, which turned into a 6<sup>th</sup> form college a couple of years after I left. It was C of E and I was a Roman Catholic, so I wasn't allowed to join the Girl Guides. Catholics and Jews had to be in separate rooms during assembly, and then to join the rest of the school each day for notices. Such segregation. The school like the others in Nottingham, were allowed to take pupils to the Playhouse to see a Shakespearean production three times a year. Such bliss and privilege. Sir Peter Hall was the director, actors from Geilgud to Judi Dench, a mere novice on stage. I was also given free passes to go to weekly concerts as I was studying music 'O' level. Then I was sent to Art College on a Friday evening to study 'life' as my only preparation for Art 'O' and 'A' level, in the 6<sup>th</sup> form, the only girl in the school to study 4 'A' levels. But I could draw bare bodies so well that I got offered an unconditional place at Slade Art School. My mother would not allow me to go to the metropolis in the late 60's full of alcohol and drugs- far too dangerous. So I studied Physics in Manchester instead. My mother copied her mother, my grandmother -who didn't allow her to study voice at the Paris Conservatoire- a city where grandmother spent 6 months of each year socialising..