

## Childhood Memories

### Belfast, Northern Ireland

Wading through the stream bubbling through the Belfast ancestral gardens. The glistening cobbles. Building dams.

The magic of the sunlight and the splashing against the slippery stones.

The hole in the ground near the back road which led to an underground cave where people used to hide if threatened.

The clanging of metal in the forge on the heated iron. The heat of the furnace.

The pony driven trap on the drive. The privilege of sitting up high or dangling my legs over the tail gate.

Irish potato cakes, scones, lavished with butter.

Looking out of my bedroom window at the stand of trees.

Croquet on the lawn played by a Great Aunt and my parents.

Sitting on a horse-drawn cart going back from the main house to the saw-mill to pick up more logs.

Smell of woodsmoke from the kitchen, wet decaying leaves in the woods

(smell is the most evocative of the senses for me but has to be exactly the same, then I can almost remember the whole scene

Clearing out an overgrown 50 ft diameter lily pond, water in my wellies

Doing all this from when I was a tiny child to the age of 17 when on holiday.

### Hong Kong : aged about 7

Climbing the hills behind the 3 storey blocks of flats. The hills no higher than the flats, made of stones and compacted clay; maybe dug out of the area, to flatten the ground for another building. Odd tufts of grass. Gangs of children playing at climbing their mountains.

Going to the army swimming pool to relieve the oppressive sultry heat.

Eating chips with tomato ketchup by the pool.

Flying bamboo & tissue paper kites - as the sun was starting to set after a day of failure finally the kite started to fly properly but I was supposed to be going back home so in a state of mental tension.

A servant feeding my baby brother, another carrying him on her back all day.

Visiting our servant's family in a refugee hut amongst thousands in the hills – immaculately clean, given an orange which I dropped and saw rolling away down the hill.

### Germany : aged about 10

The railway line near our house. A siding and line used for freight. Steam engines. Trucks left in the siding with a platform at the back to climb on. No fences; no one to stop you playing on the tracks.

Chickens in the back garden; fresh eggs; meat. How stupid are all those squabbling chickens that chase one grain and ignore hundreds of others.

A large house near a factory. Germans told by the army that it was being taken over by them- for our family.

A race around the factory on scooters – won a china owl or something like that.

Uganda : aged about 13

Large garden, fenced with an open gate- not like other European lived in houses, because we had Sheba, our Labrador, who guarded it so well each 24 hours. The front door was open to let the breezes in, but the dog kept thieves out, as it lay on the threshold.

Father had to pay off the blacks when they had their trousers torn by a zealous watch-hound, as they bicycled past the house or car.

Waiting outside the pub for father to finish his drinks.

Going to school in Kenya. Sleeping in dormitories that had been visited by lions in the night- seeing their footprints on the floor. Going for long treks with the school out in the bush and navigating our way home.

Shopping for fruit at the market stalls with the servants. Eating papaya.

Garden boy sweeping the dusty ground. Red soil that dirtied the skin and then the white towels which were white no longer.