

Grandad's Memories

Hello Theo and Winnie, and Sam and Nikka if you are around. I've written these memories for you so that you can read about some of the places and things that happened to me as I was growing up. Remembering things can sometimes be difficult. You can never be sure that some of your memories are made up from things that never happened. But, in the end, it doesn't really matter because they are all memories even if some of them never took place.

Snow

The first thing I can remember is snow, and lots of it. I am sitting on a sledge being pulled by uncle Geoff. We are going very fast and it wasn't long before I rolled off into the deep snow. I remember laughing each time I jumped into the places where the snow was deepest. I was born in 1944 and I must have been about 3 years old when the snow arrived. It was one of the coldest winters there had ever been. Everything was frozen and covered in snow for weeks. I learned later that it had been so cold some of the trees had burst open. It was, of course, the first snow I had ever seen. To me it seemed to be a never-ending time of snowmen snowballs and rides on the sledge. Every year after this I waited for the snow to arrive again but it never did. For years my sledge hung on the garage wall waiting for the snow but there was never ever enough for it to slide, even going downhill.

We lived close to the cemetery where great grandad and great grandma are buried, along with many others of your family. There were two houses close by. *Greengates*, where my grandparents lived and further down the road was a house named *Dunsailin* where I lived with Mum and Dad. It was built so that they would have a house when Dad left the navy, but as you will see we must have left the house soon after we moved in. The only memory I have of the house is of the Walt Disney characters that Dad painted on the bathroom wall.

If you were 3, or 4 years old, it was a great place to live. The two houses were surrounded by farmland. I have two happy summer memories of the farm. The farmer who owned, and worked, the land was a friend with us all. One day there was a knock on the door. It was the farmer who asked Mum whether I was allowed to go off with farm workers to bring in the corn? I was, and I had a wonderful time. The sun shone all day. I rode on the tractor and jumped on the piles of corn.

Best of all was lunchtime when I was allowed to share in the food the workers had brought with them. I was never sure what happened that day but I was never allowed to go off with the harvesters again. Maybe I had stuck my finger in the machine that cut the corn, but I would have remembered something like that.

The other memory I have of the farm happened when the corn was almost gathered in. What was left was a thin strip of corn standing in the middle of the field. Spaced around the edge of the field were a lot of men with shotguns. As the harvester came closer and closer to finish cutting the corn the rabbits that had been hiding bolted out into the open. The shotguns banged away at the rabbits and not many made it to the long grass at the edge of the cornfield. I was allowed to watch the rabbits being killed from the upstairs window of my grandmother's house. Looking back on the rabbit shoot this was a sensible thing to do. They were probably worried that I might be mistaken for a rabbit.

Pigs and Trains

There were other memories from this time and they come from when I visited my other grandparents (Great Grandma's Mum and Dad) who lived in a different part of Nottingham. I always had a good time when I went to stay with them.

Granddad kept pigs- no more than two at a time- at the bottom of his garden. Of course, he wasn't keeping them as pets. There would always come a time when he would kill them and turn them into meat that he could sell. I never saw them being killed-thank goodness- but the meat from the dead animals could be seen hanging above the stairs to dry out. As I went upstairs to bed the hanging meat almost touched my head and I would speed up to get clear of the meat dangling from the ceiling. At breakfast, lunch and dinner my Grandfather seemed to eat nothing but the meat from the pigs that he had killed. Ham, pork, and bacon. It 's not surprising that he died of a heart attack when he was quite young.

As well as keeping pigs, Granddad was a signaller on the railways, which meant that he worked in a signal box at the nearby station. My favourite thing was to go with him to the box. When we arrived at the box we first had to climb some stairs before reaching the part of the box where Granddad worked. This was where all the bells and levers were kept and it was also where we

could look down on everything that was happening in the nearby station. There was a coal fire that was kept burning by bringing buckets of coal from a pile at the bottom of the outside stairs. This meant that the inside of the box was always warm. Bells rang when trains were about to go past the box and this meant that levers had to be pulled so that the signals were set to stop or go. The short time when the train was passing the box was easily the most exciting part of the day. Often, the box would disappear in a cloud of steam. The floor would shake and some times I could see the driver and the fireman as the train slowed down to stop at the station.

This was the first house I can remember waking up on Christmas morning and finding a pillowcase at the end of my bed full of presents. That bedroom was always my favourite room whenever I visited my grandparents when I was older.

I don't remember when we moved away from this magical time and place. All I can tell you is that the next house we lived in was a house beside the sea.

Sea

Portsmouth and the Navy

I can remember nothing about the next move we made but I know why we made it and that was because Dad (Your Great-Grandad) was still in the navy. The navy meant ships and ships meant Portsmouth harbour, the biggest naval base there was.

My first memory of the new place where we were living was of the sea. I can remember standing on a small beach looking out across the water to the Isle of Wight. (Try Googling where Portsmouth Harbour is and you will see where I was standing.) Behind me is a huge sea wall and for some reason I knew that our house was on the other side of this wall.

I must have been about four years old because I wasn't going to school yet. This meant that I could wander about on my own and visit some of my favourite spots. The beach I've already told you about. Nobody else seemed to know about it and so I was always on my own when I went there to play. My other favourite spot was right at the top of our house. It was four storeys high

and very narrow. It often felt as if you were living on a ladder. I would climb to the very top of the house and from there I could look down the street to the naval ships that were tied up where the street ended. My only other clear memory I have of this time was being at the top of the house and watching a flood that had washed up very close to our front door. (It was after a terrible storm.) I could see rowing boats floating down the street. The water came close but never quite reached our house thank goodness.

Mum never seemed to be worried that I wandered around the area on my own. (In those days there were hardly any cars, so she didn't have to worry about me getting run over.) Just a couple of stories will be enough tell you what I found as I explored our street and the sea. As you have probably guessed our house was very close to the sea and at night the waves could be heard breaking on the beach where I used to play. After really stormy nights you would wake to see sand and pebbles scattered across the street in front of our house. My favourite spot could only be reached house by going through a tunnel in the sea wall. Then I had to climb a ladder and finally I would come out on a ledge that allowed me to see all the navy ships and the ferries coming and going into the harbour. Nobody else seemed to know about this viewpoint so I had it all to myself. I'm sure that if you were to go through the entrance to the harbour today you would still be able to see the platform where I used to sit.

Looking back I think this was one of the happiest times of my life. All my memories are to do with the places where I played- always on my own. But things were going to change and one day we left our house by the sea and moved to a new house on the other side of the harbour in a small village called Gosport. (Google again)

Living in Gosport

I must have been about 4 years old when we moved to Gosport, which was on the other side of the harbour. It was not that far from our old house by the sea but the problem was that the harbour was between the two places so we had to get ferries if we wanted to cross from side of the harbour to the other. (As you'll see in a moment this could be very frightening.)

The biggest change in my life was that I started going to school in a very old-fashioned building. The school had no electricity, instead the teacher had to climb on a desk to light the gas lamps when our classrooms became dark. She had to balance on the desk at the same time trying to light the gas lamps with a box of matches. She must have been a pretty good climber because I can't ever remember her falling down. After two years- when I was six or seven- I went to another school. I have very few memories of this school and could have been there for only a few months. One thing I can remember was that the Headmaster hit me on the back of my head but I've forgotten what it was that I had done wrong.

After we had begun to settle into our new house, for the first time, I started to make friends, or rather a friend. My best friend was a boy called Colin. He lived in a house opposite to ours and we stayed friends until we were about 18. While we were young we did everything together. After we left school we drifted apart. Later I learned that he had become a well-known film director living in Sweden.

Our house was close to the sea (again) and it only took a short walk for us to reach the beach. Sitting there, looking out to sea was always exciting. There were the huge passenger liners that were always arriving and departing from Southampton. Once you got to know them you could tell where they were going, or where they had come from, by the colours they were painted in. The one that stood out was a ship of the P&O line. It was painted a lilac colour and went to and from South Africa. The biggest ships were the ones that were going to America. They were also the fastest and used to race one another across the Atlantic Ocean. (Remember all of this shipping was before people could easily fly to where they wanted to go, and cheap airfares only came much later.) Part of all this activity was the arrival and departure of huge flying boats. They landed and took off on the water and which meant that they had to have miles of clear water before they could get airborne. At the top of our street was a landing place for the naval helicopters that flew over our street all day and every day. We loved it but I don't think Mum and Dad did. With the ships and the helicopters there was always something interesting happening and I would go to the beach or the airstrip as often as I could.

Here are some memories of a few things that happened while we were living in Anthony Grove (The name of our street.)

Remember, that Dad was still in the navy and worked on the other side of the harbour. This meant that we often had to use the ferry if we went to meet him from work. One night, Mum and I, were caught in a very nasty storm on the harbour. Everyone on the ferry was terrified. We were all made to sit downstairs so we didn't get washed off the boat. We sat in two rows facing one another. We could tell how rough the sea was because the row of people opposite would swing up so they were higher than us. Of course, soon after it was our turn to look down on the row of people opposite us. The real problem was how we were to get off. The boat was going up and down so much that we all had to jump on to the jetty where the ferry would normally be tied up. I was too scared so one of the ferrymen picked me up and jumped over the gap between the ferry and the dock. I can still picture us flying through the air before we crashed onto the dock. I don't know how Mum got off. Each time the ferryman shouted jump four or five people would come flying through the air. Mum must have jumped. Everyone was wet from the spray of the waves crashing against the boat. This is easily the most frightening thing that has ever happened to me. Some time later we found out that the ferry should never have tried to cross the harbour but the captain of the boat never got the message.

My next memory is of a time before supermarkets and cars to get to them to do your shopping. In their place were 'shops-on-wheels', usually vans that visited the street at the same time each week. Grocers, soft drinks sellers, butchers, and onion sellers from France would all call. The most old-fashioned of these mobile shops was a greengrocer who travelled around on a horse and cart. The horse would stop when someone wanted to buy vegetables. (Neither the horse nor the greengrocer were young anymore) One day the greengrocer and his horse stopped opposite our house. The business of buying and selling his vegetables must have taken longer than usual. The poor old horse, who must have been busting, began to pee. No one was worried until the horse didn't stop. On and on he went. A lake of his pee stretched one side of the road to the other. Steam was rising from this huge puddle of pee. Word about what was happening got around and people started to come out of their houses to see this amazing horse and his pee. Eventually the horse was finished and the pair of them plodded off down the street. I have a feeling that this was the last time the horse and the greengrocer visited our street. Looking back on it we may have seen the last pee that the horse ever took.

Because we lived surrounded by naval bases and military aircraft there was one thing that needed to be carried around and that was ammunition. Ships and planes needed regular supplies of things that go bang. The naval ships especially needed ammunition that was very, very big. None of us took any notice of the dangers that might come with carting ammunition about. We had been told that we were too far away for any damage to be done if it were to blow up. One of the routes for ammunition to be carried to the ships was by a small diesel train. For most of its journey the train ran along the bottom of people's gardens and you could clearly see it if you sat on the top deck of a bus. One day the train was travelling towards the ships in the harbour when it blew up. There was a huge white cloud and plenty of houses near the explosion were badly damaged.

I was sitting in the bath when the explosion happened. The bathroom windows were blown in and covered me with pieces of broken glass. Our front door fell in and Mum was blown into the bath on top of me. When I got dressed I went along the street to see what had happened to the other houses in our street. Almost all the doors and windows of the houses had been damaged. I have to admit that I found the explosion, the flying glass and damaged doors more exciting, than frightening.

This happy time of my life came to an end when Dad retired from the navy and decided to train as a photographer. Another change was about to happen.

Back to Nottingham

After 25 years, Dad finally left the navy and we all headed north, back to Nottingham, to the people and places we knew. As you can probably guess Mum and I were sad to leave behind the sea and the ships that had been so close to where we lived. I left behind my closest friend, Colin, but we managed to see one another regularly for a few years. Dad became a student for three years. He was training to be a photographer so that he could get a good job.

The next few years were filled with changes where we lived. I went to three schools until I finally settled down in a Grammar School. (A High School) But more of that later.

With so many changes of school it meant that for three to four years I had no close friends and so I spent a lot of my time on my own. This never bothered me because it was about this time that I discovered books, libraries and, of course, reading. I seemed to always have a book to read and this made up for not having all that many friends. Reading is still very important to me.

There was one place I loved to play in and that was the sand quarry next to my grandparent's house. The ground at Ravenshead is all sand and the quarry was the place where huge lorries came to take the sand away to have something else done to it in another pit. The quarry was very large. One side of it was very high wall (a boy had fallen over the edge and killed himself.) I almost always played on my own. It wasn't until later that I learnt that all the other children in the area who I might have played with had been forbidden to go into the quarry. This was the best place to play that I ever had by miles. I stayed near the house but could play for hours digging tunnels in the heaps of sand. There were much smaller cliffs of sand and I would pretend that I was up a high mountain as I climbed along the side of the quarry. The drop below was only a couple of meters so I wouldn't have hurt myself even if I had fallen.

There was a time when, instead of taking the sand away, lorries would arrive to dump unwanted sand. For a few days the driver of the lorry would let me travel with him to the much larger sand pit where he was picking up the sand. Of course, this was very exciting- not that different to the day out with the farmers. But it didn't last. Someone must have told him to stop giving me a ride in the lorry. For a few days the sand pit was the only place for me to be. They were gradually filling the quarry in and eventually it disappeared altogether. Nowadays houses are built on the ground where it had once been.

There were a few other things that happened to me during this time, things that have stayed with me all my life. Lets start with some thing horrible.

In those days (I was about 7) schoolchildren were given a hot meal around midday. For most of the time the food we were given was OK. Well it wasn't great but by lunchtime we were very hungry and would eat anything that was given to us. Then one day they served us mashed potato. I took one mouthful and straight away I knew that I was never going to swallow it. Sure enough,

out it came all over the boy sitting opposite me. After this, I tried never to put mashed potato in my mouth again. To this day, even thinking about it makes me feel that something dreadful will happen if mashed potato is nearby.

Another thing that I remember from this time was learning how to swim. When I began to learn I had no one who could help me. I knew something about the different strokes you could choose from. I chose to learn the breaststroke and this is the one I have stuck with all my life. Weeks went by and I was getting nowhere. Probably, like everyone else who is learning to swim, I was afraid of sinking under water. Then one day I was in my usual position by the side of the pool. (At the shallow end, of course.) Suddenly I slipped. Instead of going under the water, I pushed myself away from the edge of pool that I was hanging onto. Although I was flapping my arms about, there was no doubt that, at last, I was swimming. Within a couple of weeks, I was able to swim widths of the pool using my version of the breaststroke. Ask Dad and he will tell you that you don't learn to swim, it's something that suddenly comes over you.

I know it may be difficult to understand but there was a time before television arrived and I can just remember what it was like. I was 6 years old when it became part of my life. I had seen television working in other people's houses but it seemed to always get switched off when we paid a visit so I saw only a few minutes at a time. It wasn't until my grandfather decided to rent one that we could watch it in our own home. Like thousands of other families we rented a television so that we could watch the coronation. (1953) This was a huge ceremony that took place in London and lasted all day. It was the first time that it had been possible for the whole country to watch the goings-on of the royal family. When the big day arrived a great deal of preparation of food and drink had been done by Grandma, Mum and Great Grandma Staniland. (She was my Great Grandma.) We were going to watch television all day and so we all crowded into the room where the TV was kept. We were in there for hours and sandwiches and cups of tea were brought in regularly. Things finished at about six o'clock. In those days the pictures on the screen were grey so we had to watch it with the curtains drawn.

The TV never went back. It became a permanent member of the family and I started to get to know the other programmes. My favourite was called War in the Air. It was about the war but the reason I loved it was because of the pictures at the beginning. In the distance you could just see five or six planes taking off. As the opening music played they got closer and closer and the scene

finished with them seeming to roar over the house. Loved it. But not everyone had a television and there would be a gap of a few years before Mum, Dad and I would have a TV in another new home.

My Final Memories

Dad finally got a job as a photographer on a newspaper in a town called Luton, which is about thirty miles north of London. We all moved to our new house and almost straight away I began my time at the local High School. (Grammar School.) I always enjoyed my time at the Grammar School. For the first time in my life I didn't change schools until I left for the University in London in 1963. This meant that I was able to make friendships that lasted until we all left school seven years later.

Here are a few snapshots of what I got up to.

The first thing I can remember was that one-day I had trouble reading what was on the blackboard. (I was 11 years old) Because of my name (Carter) I had to sit at the back of the classroom. I was taken off to an eye specialist. I had to have glasses and I have worn them ever since.

At first, wearing glasses was not something I liked very much. I thought they made me look stupid. And they changed what sort of sport I could play. Cricket was out. Almost the first game I played the ball smashed into my face and shattered my glasses. Instead I played rugby (for the school) although sometimes I wasn't sure that I had passed the ball to someone on my side or somebody who was playing for the opposition. In the summer I ran and jumped in the athletics team. My favourite was the pole vault.

When I was sixteen my grandmother gave me the money to buy a motor scooter. (Lambretta) It was great to ride and I kept it for five or six years until I went to London. The longest journey I made on it was to the south of France. With me was Colin (remember) from Gosport. That was the last time we spent any time together.

When I reached sixteen Mum and Dad started to let me go out in the evenings with my school friends. We did all the things that we thought were grown up. We visited pubs when we were

eighteen. Because Luton was close to London we could go to concerts of our favourite music and get home in time before our parents began to worry. I started to go to plays and art galleries. Of course, I had a girlfriend from the local girl's Grammar School. Believe it or not her name was Jenni.

The awful day arrived when we began the important exams. I've forgotten what it was like because I hated it so much. But it was also the end of my days at school. When Colin and I arrived back from our adventure on the scooter I phoned Mum and Dad for my exam results. They told me I was to go to London University. I had no idea how much going to University would change my life.

I can remember saying goodbye to Mum and Dad. We had all met at the station where I could catch the train that would take me to London. All I had was a small suitcase and some sandwiches. Once I had settled in my seat I went to the window to say goodbye. The train was beginning to move away leaving Mum and Dad at the far end of the platform. After a few waves they disappeared and I was heading off for a new part of my life.