

## **Being Left-handed got her into Trouble**

### **Annie Bateman was born in 1921 and interviewed in 2008**

On the whole I wasn't very bright at school but I think I had a pretty sound education. My aunt was our teacher and she was very strict. I got into trouble a lot because I would persist in using my left hand when she said I should use my right hand. She did, eventually, get me to half and half, I used my right hand for some things and my left for others. My best thing was sport. I like anything to do with sport. In particular there was hockey and rounders which was rather like American Baseball.

My saving grace was that I could read. In fact I taught myself to read. I could read before I went to school. I used to look at the picture books like "The Cat Sat On The Mat." I was mad on cats and dogs and any animals and I could see that a cat sat on the mat and I sort of worked it out. A cat had kittens, so I knew that kitten was different to a cat with a "k." So when I was suffering with my left-handedness my reading was my saviour. I was too fond of training around with dogs and horses to settle myself down and doing sewing or similar.

Up to school leaving time working with animals was men's work. In fact they rather didn't want a woman interfering. There were lots of things I'd have loved to do but, oh no, women would do domestic work! But then, you see, when war broke out it was a different kettle of fish all together. Women really came into their own. I don't think there's been enough recognition given to women who were already on the farms. The wives and the daughters, unlike the Land Girls, who were recognised as a sort of government body, had to do everything. They'd turned on the land 'cos there was a shortage of man power and then they'd do the domestic work, all the cooking for all the farm hands, cleaning, looking after the children and the difficulties of wartime shortages.

There were frequent buses to Kendal. Mind you I had to walk to the bottom of Slack Lane to catch a bus. Kendal was the main shopping centre and our groceries were delivered once a month from Darwen Leighton's or Kendal. They came to Lowgill Station and then someone called Miley Airey used to deliver them by cart to our house, so we really got our basic supplies – a hundredweight of flour and lard in a bucket. Now it is all in a packet.

We grew our own oats and they went to Davy Bank Mill to be ground up into meal and into oats for our porridge. Some farmhouses had what they called a "Bakestone" to make oatcakes. The last Bakestone I saw would be at Bull farm, Burton-in-Lonsdale. You lit a fire underneath it rather like lighting a fire under a wash boiler. You put the oatcakes which were literally just flour water and a bit of lard rolled out and baked on it. Of course everyone baked their own bread.

If you really think hard about it, the people who had to cook in those days were pretty skilful because they didn't have all the wonderful gadgets we have now. We used a box iron for pressing our clothes. It was metal and had a wooden handle and the heater that went inside was a bit smaller than the base of the iron. It had a hole in it and you put a good red hot fire to heat it and because it had a hole in the base you used your poker to put it in the iron and you ironed on a table and on an old blanket. It rattled as you were ironing.

My father was always first up and as I got older I had to make sure the kindling was right for him. It was laid on the top of the coal. I had to break the coal, it came in big slabs, then he wanted a small piece of coal at the top of the bucket to light quickly. We also had to make sure that the lamps were filled with paraffin and the lamp glasses were clean.

Our farm had been my father's and my grandfather's before him. Then my brother, George, took over, now it is my nephew that is on the same place. Most of the farms were handed

down but things are changing now you see. If there was a crisis you relied on the support of your family and neighbours. Now I hardly know the place at all.

The 1930s were lean years and hard times for farming. If you had a bad hay time you would have some not very good hay, and sheep really need a bit of good hay if you're having to bring down your stock to feed. I can remember 1938 which had a bad summer and my brother, Joe and I, I was just a young lass, getting in the last bit of hay that we had in a pike, and it was pretty black stuff. It was nearly harvest festival time at the church and Joe remarked rather ironically "All is safely gathered in." We also brought the sheep down from the fell if it came a bad threatening snow. Then you went out to gather what you could find of your flock to bring them lower down.

We grew potatoes for ourselves, they were very valuable, also turnips and cabbages and peas. We had buckets of peas to eat. Turnips were also valuable. Sheep ate turnips, cows ate turnips and we ate turnips. Then as the war started it was beetroot 'cos you could pickle beetroot and red cabbage and sugarbeet. There wasn't a lot of fruit grown. It wasn't the right climate. Rhubarb, blackcurrants and gooseberries and then we would go and pick rosehips to make into rosehip syrup for the Vitamin C.

We had ducks and geese and made feather eiderdowns and pillows. You had to sort of cure goose feathers to reduce the ends. My mother used to put them into a hot oven. Then to make sure the goose feathers were clean they had to be brought into the house to store them for a while. My mother used to put them on a rack to dry off and she would closely check them to make sure there were no mites in.

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