

# TALES FROM MEMORY LANE IN PALMERSTOWN



*Patricia Fogarty*

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IN  
PALMERSTOWN**

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# *Foreword*

Ireland as a country has undergone great change in so many respects within the last hundred years - ranging from political independence to a shift from long being primarily an agricultural country to being one with a far greater degree of urbanisation. From the 1930's onwards to the present day mechanisation and indeed, a policy of centralisation have been two of the contributing factors to Ireland's shift to urbanisation. There has been and there is still a continuing internal migration to the larger towns and cities of the Country. The 'pull' factor being that of employment in those places. Many people were drawn to Dublin as a place of employment and as a consequence of that housing programmes were required. Over the years, the State has invested large amounts of money in the provision of both corporation and council dwellings. In addition to state funded housing schemes, private building companies too have constructed a considerably large amount of homes in the greater Dublin area.

Up to the 1950s Palmerstown was little more than a small village in the county of Dublin, with a population of less than 600. From the 1950s onwards to the present day there's has been various housing developments constructed in the area. The most recent study under-taken by E. Nolan and published in the November 2010 Palmerstown News returned a figure of 3,318 houses in Palmerstown.

Palmerstown of the 1960s and indeed up to the early 1980s was still a very rustic place, nestled between Lucan to the west of it, Clondalkin to the south and Chapelizod to the east. Up to that time Palmerstown was more or less surrounded by farmland as the major development of West Dublin had as yet not taken place. However, from the late 1980s that was all to change. Probably the greatest shock to the landscape of the area was the construction of the N4 through the core of the community of Palmerstown, thus causing a carve-up of the area.

In this collection of short stories, I've attempted to paint various pen-pictures of Palmerstown as it was in my childhood throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.

**Patricia Fogarty**

**June 2015**

*This book is dedicated to my family,  
Ray, Maud and Séamas*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The writer grew-up in Palmerstown and still lives there

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## ***The Silver Bridge***

For many Palmerstownians Mill Lane and the Silver Bridge are places filled with memories of childhood and youthful nostalgia. It is probably one of the few places left untouched by the massive housing development which was undertaken in West Dublin from the early 1980s onwards. There's an air about the place, it's as if time stood still and one could be forgiven for thinking that you were transported back to another time. It is a rustic place where adventure abounds with its Blackberry Bushes, Old Graveyard with some of

the headstones dating back to the 17th Century. The ruins of the old church where it is rumoured that Tristan and Isolde those star-crossed lovers exchanged vows. The imposing stone buildings which once were home to the thriving linen mills. The Bamboo Forest which conjures up images of far-flung places and Palmerstown House once the home of Right Honourable John Hely-Hutchinson which later became Stewarts Hospital. Of course one could fail to mention that mythical-like Silver Bridge over the river Liffey.

For the teenager Mill-Lane and the Silver Bridge weren't viewed as a place for going to for a sedate walk, rather it was seen as a place for adventure which may very well have included a swim in the river Liffey. I don't recollect too much talk in those days about the dangers of Weil's disease. Prior to the re-location of Kings Hospital to Palmerstown in the early 1970s, Palmerstown, in common with many other places in Ireland did not possess a swimming-pool. Either having or not having a pool in the area didn't deter the youth of Palmerstown at the time as the Liffey was at hand.

On a hot summer's day Mill Lane came alive. It was a common sight to see youngsters walking down the lane with a towel tucked under his/ her arm and a few dogs running about in close proximity to them. They were of course heading down to the banks of the Liffey to go for a swim. I would go as far as to say that there were plenty of young Palmerstownians that learned 'the doggie paddle' and 'the front crawl' in the waters of the Liffey.

All sorts of colourful characters took advantage of this oasis and one such person was 'The Red-Indian lady'. She had an



air of mystery to her. She was a very solitary individual coupled with the fact that she was always accompanied by her big, black dog. Today, we no longer refer to Native Americans as Red-Indians but, back then it was common parlance, particularly in the comics of the time. She kept very much to herself, wore dark glasses and dressed in strange clothes. In addition to this, she swam in the nude in a more private part of the river, with the dog swimming by her side. Swimming in the 'pelt' was virtually unheard of at that time. She caused a stir or should I have said a splash!

Anyway, between her naked swimming and the wearing of dark glasses it resulted in her almost developing a mythical status. According to one young lad, who was not a very reliable source, as he maintained that she had been rescued by the Cow-boys and shipped over the sea to Ireland.

Another girl had an 'inside scoop' as it were, and she was certain that the mystery woman with the big, black dog had escaped from her captors and had swam across the Atlantic accompanied by her big black dog. Throughout the summer months the river became a hive of activity as swimmers swam, and anglers fished in this great natural resource here in Palmerstown.

Naturally enough, not everyone went down Mill lane with the intention of going for a swim, there were a myriad of other reasons for going there. For some it was a lovers-lane, and for others it presented itself as a place where the adventurous teenage could have his or her first taste of alcohol out of parental sigh. Blackberry bushes grew in abundance in this magical place and come Autumn; people of various ages went Blackberry picking there.

As Mill Lane was an adventure in itself, it became even more exciting when one was to climb over the gate in the field and cross the river via the Silver Bridge. Having got to the far side of the river one could climb a steep enough incline which led almost to the front door of Lord Iveagh Guinness's residence. Many's a youngster found himself/ herself unwittingly trespassing on this estate.

The adventure now complete, it was now time to return home. However, adventure brings hunger and all that remained to be done was to stop- by at Fassnidges' Shop and purchase some slices of their delicious cooked ham. Fassnidges' shop was located on Clarkeville Terrace on the Old Lucan road. The shop door was very much like a standard hall door and as you opened the door to enter the shop a clangy bell rang. It served the purpose of alerting the proprietors, Mrs and Mr Fassnidge that a customer had arrived in the shop. Nothing could beat their delicious hand-cut ham slices and there was no better way to end a day's outing than to sit by fire at home with a hot cup of tea and a ham sandwich.

Oh! And by the way, the mystery lady didn't swim across the Atlantic she hailed from Cork city.

# *I'm the Greatest!*

Childrens' Sodality and Confession took place on the first Saturday morning of the month, in our Parish of St. Philomena's, Palmerstown. Both events were well-attended, by the young people of the area. As well as off-loading our sins in the Confessional, it also provided us with a great opportunity to hear the news of the up-coming events in the parish. This particular Saturday, youngsters were more chatty and fidgety than usual. Sins were rattled off at twice the normal rapidity as the door of the Confessional banged open and shut like a Greyhound out of a race-trap. Once out of the church, young lads were charging along the Lucan Road, in the direction of the Corner Shop. Demand for boxing gloves had reached unprecedented proportions in Palmerstown and that demand was to continue in the weeks that followed. The owners of the Corner Shop, no matter how they tried and tried they did, could not meet the demand for these much coveted items.

You see, it had been announced on the previous day, by the then Matron of Stewarts Hospital, Miss Eva Wall, that Muhammad Ali, the world's greatest boxer, was to attend Stewarts Hospital's annual garden fête, that Summer. Much organisation had been made by Miss Wall, Dr Mulcahy (Medical Superintendent) and members of Stewarts Committee of Management. Mr Pat O'Hara, a Community Nurse had been highly involved in securing the visit through Michael Sugrue, promoter of the Muhammad Ali v Al Lewis

fight which was scheduled to take place in Croke Park, in Dublin on the 19th of July, 1972.

Once the news was out, conversations among all ages, male and female, in the Parish were peppered with references to the up-coming big event; such as 'Are you going?', 'Have you got your boxing gloves yet?', 'I've heard they're putting a boxing ring in the middle of the Front Field.', 'Who does your man think he is?', 'Ali won't fight a sissy like him.', 'I'm going to get his autograph.' and so on. Without doubt that was the tenor of conversation in the preceding days, leading up to the Big Day, July 15th, 1972.

On the morning of the 15th of July, traffic was chaotic in Palmerstown, as people were walking, cycling and arriving by car from every direction to attend Stewarts Hospital Garden Fête. It would be fairly safe to say, that almost every young person in the area was intent on being there, plus a very large percent of the adult population of Palmerstown and its environs.

In addition, people from all over Ireland, who had a keen interest in the sport of boxing itself, were making the journey to the Stewarts Garden Fête. There were others too, who hadn't a great interest in boxing, however they admired Ali greatly for his stance on American civil rights and my mother being one such person.

As usual with this annual event there were lots of other activities such as 'Guess how many stones are in the Jar?', 'The Bonny Baby Competition' and many more besides. However, 'Fish the Goldfish' was always a favourite. As far

as I was concerned, the prospect of winning a Goldfish far outweighed any 'silly oul' boxing match. There were plenty of us with the same mentality, as it was nigh impossible to get a turn to pay and play in the hope of catching a Goldfish. The 15th of July had to have been the hottest day of the year and it was not helped by the fact that there were throngs of people making their way to the Front Field in the hope of getting a glimpse of Ali, and by the minute, the crowd was getting bigger. Be that as it may, I had other business to attend to, as I was on a 'mission' to win a Goldfish!

By three o' clock, the commotion was at an all-time high, as a fleet of large black cars arrived in Stewarts Hospital grounds. Cries and cheers could be heard for miles, in the still heat of that July day. After a time, Ali stood in the boxing ring and the massive crowd shouted and roared with excitement. He made a speech, signed autographs and challenged some of Palmerstown's budding young boxers to step into the ring.

Here was my chance, 'all eyes' were on The World Champion; it was an opportune moment to try my luck at catching one of many Goldfish at the 'Fish the Goldfish' stall. I paid my 6d to the man serving there and lo and behold - I caught a Goldfish!

For many, the day was memorable as The World's Greatest Boxer had graced Palmerstown with his presence; for me it had to have been the winning of Ali, the Goldfish.

Ali was to swim undeterred in his little fish tank on our dining room mantle-piece, for almost four years hence.

# *Mr Stewart of Stewarts Hospital*

Almost all of the 'Big Houses' dotted throughout this island, were furnished with a Walled Garden. Stewarts Hospital was no exception. Well into the 1960s the produce from this enclosed area was utilised by the hospital kitchen for feeding many of the clients who lived within the hospital walls.

The Walled garden itself was located directly behind the stables which are no more, as they have been converted into The Coach House restaurant. In order to access this enclosed area, one entered it through a rather small door which was part of an enormous green wooden gate, itself. All sorts of vegetables, fruit trees, fruit bushes and flowers were planted and grew there. They were all planted in neat rows and 'beds' and between these rows there were pathways. Green-houses and sheds were situated all along the sunny-side of this enclosed garden. The last shed looked a little different as it had a glass window and looked as much like an office, as a shed. This was Mr Stewart's office.

Mr Stewart was a lean and wiry man. He had a handle-bar moustache and always wore a trilby-like brown hat. Of course Mr Stewart wasn't his name at all, but to children it made perfect sense that the man in charge of 'growing the vegetables' owned them. Thus he became known as Mr Stewart. In fact his name was Mr Best and he was The Head-Gardener for Stewarts Hospital.

At this point you may well ask how did we get to know and why did we 'get to know' Mr Best. Well on Saturday mornings, mainly in the summer months the surplus vegetables and fruits were offered for sale. More often than not a long queue formed which mainly comprised of women shopping for the weekly supply of household fruit and vegetables.

In a child's mind the queue always seemed to be very, very long but it was worth it because Mr Stewart had the most unusual weighing scales. It was a dull brown contraption and he'd put the items to be weighted on one side and on the other side of the scales he'd place round things with numbers on them and then declare 'that's a lb. of carrots which will cost 9d please'. It was absolutely fascinating how Mr Best reached this conclusion. It never ceased to amaze me! A child's introduction to economics.

# ***Bobby***

Supermarkets were few and far between in the Ireland of the 1960s and people did their grocery shopping very much on a daily basis, at the local shops. My parents in common with everybody else, had their preferences, for us, it was literally the Corner Shop. The Corner Shop was located at the junction between the Lucan road (the main route to Galway) and Kennelsfort road. In common with many other grocery shops of the time, it sold almost everything, as the saying goes 'from a needle to an anchor'. As the owners, The Rushe Family, lived over The Corner Shop it was not unusual for them to be disturbed by an eager child on Christmas day, who having had received a toy from Santa, discovered to his or her horror, that the batteries weren't included. A huge oversight on Santa's part! The obliging proprietors would come to their hall-door and vend the much needed batteries in order for the newly acquired toy to work.

As shopping was done on a frequent basis, relationships formed between the customer and the proprietor. I can recall, it was not an unusual sight to see the shop pretty crowded, and the wife of the shop-owner deeply engaged in conversation about the events of the day; such as the looming 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland. The burning question was 'should Jack Lynch the then Taoiseach, go into the Six counties'. The year was 1969. This and other major events of the time were trashed out over the counter of Palmerstown's Corner shop.



All human life was to be found there or correct me, should I say all life was to be found at the Corner Shop, as the owners had their family pet perched up high, keeping an ever watchful eye ‘on the comings and goings’ on the premises. This lad wasn’t the most polite character and was often known to shout in his ear-piercing way –ah! Shut up! The locals were accustomed to his rude mannerisms.

However, one Saturday afternoon a smartly dressed man en route to the West of Ireland, dropped into the shop to buy some goods and as he called out his list he was interrupted by a voice screeching at him, ‘ah! Shut-up’. The unfortunate stranger didn’t know what kind of an establishment he had found himself in, and in his bewilderment he never thought to look up. Had he averted his gaze upwards, he’d have seen Bobby perched high in his cage preening his feathers as he intermittently screeched abuse at the passer-by. Bobby was Palmerstown’s Mina Bird.



## ***Broken Biscuits***

One of my earliest memories as a child was that of Mastersons' cows being herded up Kennelsfort road in the evening, for milking. Their farm was located at the top of Kennelsfort road just where the entrance to Woodfarm is, today. In addition to the farmhouse and out-houses there was a little grocery shop called Woodfarm Stores. Woodfarm Stores was 'run' by a Mr Kelly.

Mr Kelly sold many of the daily essentials such as milk, tea and sugar plus a large variety of biscuits which were displayed on a stand in very big tin boxes with clear glass fronts. These boxes contained various types of Jacobs' biscuits and not only did Mr Kelly sell Kimberly, USA

assortment, Ginger and Marietta biscuits, he sold broken biscuits, too. The broken biscuits were a dream as they consisted of a mixture of all types of Jacobs' biscuits. All the biscuits were sold loosely by the lb. or half-lb. and upon purchase, the biscuits were put into a thin white paper bag which had an advertisement for Lyons Tea on the front of it.

In those days there was no such thing as an expiry date on foodstuffs so the onus was on the customer to come to that conclusion regarding the food's freshness herself. There was never a question of the biscuits being 'gone off' as a bag of biscuits never survived very long in any household for such a thing like that to happen!

In the late 1960s Mastersons' sold their farm and subsequently houses were built on this land, in the early 1970s. This housing development was named Woodfarm Acres. The shop too, closed for business around that time. By the mid-1980s almost all the evidence of what was once a farmhouse with out-houses and the adjacent Woodfarm Stores were obliterated from the landscape. All that remained was the big blue hay barn which had become a land-mark to anyone in the area. However, it too met its demise in the late 1990s.

Broken biscuits had become nothing more than a memory of a bygone time.

# *Toy Soldiers!*

Following Stanley's Education Act of 1831 a national school building programme began throughout Ireland. A small building in Mill Lane functioned as the school up to the late 19th century, however it was in poor repair and overcrowded. A new school was required to meet the needs of the young school-going children of the area. The school was erected at the junction of Kennelsfort road and the Lucan road and it was to serve as the National School until 1961. However, by the early 1960s the population of Palmerstown had increased greatly as a large number of houses had been constructed there both during that decade and the previous one. Once again, a larger primary school was required. St. Bridget's primary school on Turret road was built and was officially opened in 1961.

The now disused old National School had a new purpose, as it was to function as a Parish hall for the area. One of the first groups to avail of this facility was the amateur drama group in Palmerstown at the time, and known as St. Philomena's Drama Group.

The Parish Hall was a 'busy' building, as various voluntary groups and evening classes took place there. It was the venue too, for the annual sale of work and for a time in the 1970s a room in it functioned as the Co. Council library for Palmerstown. During the late 1960s ballet classes were held there on a Saturday.

The ballet classes were a great social outlet as we imagined

ourselves as possible swans in a production of Swan Lake. Week in, week out all went well. However, things were to change, as the ballet teacher divided us into two groups; - the toy dolls and the toy soldiers. The smaller members of the group were to dance the doll part whilst the taller members were to dance the soldier piece. After a while of being 'boys', unrest set in and there was near mutiny! To the tremendous relief of half the class, the ballet teacher turned us all back into toy dolls and we danced on, safe in the knowledge that we wouldn't be 'embarrassed' like that again.

As we got older, interest in ballet waned for many of us in the class, and younger budding ballerinas' stepped into our dancing pumps.

Visits to the parish hall didn't cease completely as other events of note which were of great interest such as the Annual Christmas sale of work and indeed, the terrific plays which were performed there, by St. Philomena's Drama Group.

In the early 1980s the Parish Hall underwent a major structural transformation and rooms with various facilities were added. It was officially opened in 1981 as the Parish Centre. The Annual Parish Sale of work still takes place there and the money raised from it, helps greatly with the running costs of The Day Care centre which is located there. The Parish Centre functions as a pivotal point for many of the senior members of our community by providing both a social outlet and a practical venue, through the provision of meals on a daily basis. It is also home to the active retired group in the parish.

Plus the centre provides a venue for Palmerstown's budding young Boxing Club.

Palmerstown National School opened its doors in 1892 and, still to this date, is an important place for many people of various ages, in this area.

# *Natural Disasters*

The Assembly Hall at the Oval in Palmerstown, underwent a massive transformation for a couple of days every summer. Ordinarily, it was as its name implied, an assembly hall, where meetings were held. However, when it had its annual transformation it became a wonderland of colour, sight and smell. It was a feast for the senses as it was used as the venue for The Palmerstown Annual Horticultural Show. The hall was filled with exhibition tables and there were various categories' such as the hand-crafts, fruit, vegetables and a baking competition. The children weren't forgotten at this event as they had a category of their own, too. To my childhood recollection it was a popular section for the young entrant as he or she was required to design a 'miniature Children's Garden'. The Miniature garden had to be placed on cardboard and had dimensions of approximately 1'x1'.

Like many other children in the area I too, was going to create my Miniature garden. I had a brain-wave: I would cut out a path for my garden using sandpaper that was fine. Having a garden is one thing, but it doesn't become real until there are plants growing in it. So the dilemma was, how, with such small measurements could one possibly have anything growing in it. More brain-waves! - I'd put believe it or not, a miniature pond in it and that I did, plus I glued little daisies, roots, clay and all on to the cardboard. To create the 'ultimate' garden', for good measure I put water in the tiny pond. The task was now complete and all that remained to be done was to carry it from my home to The Assembly Hall.

Upon arrival at the Assembly Hall, I unpacked my miniature garden and I was all set to exhibit my 'creation' but to my horror the miniature pond which was full of water had spilled- out during transit to the hall. The spillage has caused havoc and the miniature garden looked similar to a disaster area after a flood. The pond was no-more! As the water from it had drowned the daises and the clay had turned to muck and worse again, the muddy water was running all over the exhibit! It was a sad looking sight, and my hopes of a prize were dashed. I looked at my forlorn, water-soaked exhibit and I wanted so much to throw it away and at the same time run- away from it myself!

The judges must have been a kindly lot and they must have seen how my 'creation' had metamorphosed into a mini disaster area, as they awarded me with a card which read 'Has Potential'. I never found out what that card actually meant and I certainly never asked.

Sad to say that The Palmerstown Annual Horticultural Show had its demise in the late 1980s as Palmerstown in common with so many other areas around Dublin gave way to 'progress'.





## ***Ned's Bus***

Palmerstown for as long as I can remember and up to the 1970s was the sporadic home for a fairly large encampment of Travellers. Why I say sporadic home was simply because Travellers in those days, by and large were a highly nomadic group. Their settlement patterns varied according the seasons, however during the frosty winter months it was usual to see a camp-fire blazing as their homes were at the side of the road. Directly behind them, lay fields where barley and wheat was planted by the local farmers during spring. This was the southerly boundary of Palmerstown and their encampment stretched from Woodfarm Cottages passed Cherry Orchard Hospital and almost into Ballyfermot.

Their accommodation was varied and I can vividly recall seeing tents or as the Travellers themselves called them 'benders'. These tents were a home-made construction consisting of tarpaulin draped over bent rods from an Ash tree. Others had horse-drawn wagons and modern caravans of the time, and an out-of service green CIE bus. Their encampment was of a colourful and motley nature as it included too horses, dogs and sometimes a couple of goats. These lads were usually tethered close to a trailer (a term used by Travellers when referring to a caravan). No doubt this was done to deter the goats from eating the clothes that hung on the various make-shift clothes lines, close by them. Two milk churns occupied a prominent position outside one of the caravans. These containers were of vital importance to this group as they contained their fresh-water supply. On a daily basis one or two members of this little community pushed a child's pram up and down the full length of Kennelsfort road to the public pump at the bottom of the road just beside Colcanon's Pub (now called Palmerstown House), to get their fresh supply. They didn't have electricity either so it's possible that not only did the camp-fire serve as their heating and cooking facility it served too, as their lighting on dark winter nights.

Like all things in life; there's nothing odd about what is a familiar sight, however a total stranger to the area could well have been mystified at the sight of an old green out of service double-decker bus permanently parked at the Traveller site and wondered what purpose it served. Well! It served a very useful purpose, as it was home to Ned and his family.

# *The Circus Comes To Town*

Story books almost without exception paint a most colourful picture of the arrival of the circus in town. In great detail we were told of the circus parade with the Ringmaster to the forefront leading an elephant and a glamorously clad lady perched high upon the elephant's back. They were then followed by a troupe of dancing horses accompanied by their trainer. The next float contained the caged animals, lions, tigers, zebras and so on. Following close behind, and seated upon on a brightly coloured float was the dog-lady and her performing dogs. Walking at the rear of the parade were a whole host of colourful characters ranging from an outrageously dressed clown to a troupe of scantily, dressed male and female artistes, most probably the high-wire performers. Of course, there would have been much cheering from the crowds of people who would have lined the street from early in the morning in the hope of seeing this wondrous spectacle.

No such spectacle was ever apparent regarding the arrival of the circus in Palmerstown, during the 1960s and 1970s. It would be pretty safe to say that it appeared very much like a mushroom; over-night at The Oval. (The Oval is a large green area directly in front of St. Lorcan's Boys school). To the passer-by, the sight of the Big-Top erected in the centre of the field on a Saturday morning heralded its presence. At the same time, it wasn't an unusual sight to see Bo-Bo the Clown half-way up a lamp post in Palmerstown Village, putting up

posters which advertised the times and details of the various performances.

The Saturday afternoon performance seemed to be particularly popular with queues of youngsters lining up to see the show. Every so often, a young lad who had tried to 'bunk-in' would exit rapidly from inside the tent accompanied by one of the circus people. His attempt to attend a 'free performance' thwarted.

Excitedly, we sat on the wooden seats, chatting and giggling until the show began. We were wonder-struck by the places of origin of these performers such as the Juggler who hailed all the way from Outer Mongolia and the Lion-tamer who defied 'The Iron Curtain' and arrived with his lions from Siberia! Each act conjured-up images of far-flung exotic places.

At the interval, raffle tickets were sold. The 1st prize if I remember correctly, were two free passes to the next evening's performance. Bags of sweets and various minerals were sold, too.

Each act brought with it loud cheers of excitement and foot-stamping on the wooden seats. The ring-master had a charismatic effect on the audience as we listened in an enthralled manner as he announced each act. Having said that he would have to ask us to stay quiet and remain in our seats, as every so often the excitement go too much for us children and we would stand up for fear of missing out on an act.

Frequently, Bo-Bo appeared blowing his bugle and carrying his bucket and I can tell you this was no ordinary bucket, as it contained sweets which he threw to the awe-struck crowd.

The show drew to a close with a Grand Finale and needless to say, it brought with it endless excitement and cheering. Audience participation was vital here; as a large pony was led into the ring by a colourfully clad man. He must have been Bo-Bo's assistant. Well, that's what we thought. A safety halter was attached to a rope and it was lowered from high-up in the dome of the Big Top. The ring master asked for a male volunteer from the audience to assist as this was no ordinary feat. It was the chance for an audience member to demonstrate his skill as a horse-man. Nearly every young lad in the tent had his hand up in the hope of having the opportunity to ride the dapple pony around the ring. The crowd shouted and cheered as the first volunteer came forward. The lad was put onto the pony's back which was attached to a harness. The rope was pulled and with that the lad in question went 'flying' around and up into the air, laughing and waving down at us, the audience. After a few minutes, and with a little help from Bo-Bo's assistant he was sitting aloft on the pony's back and trotting proudly around the ring. His performance brought a terrific applause from the crowd. The audience was in an uproar with excitement. Everybody wanted a 'turn'.

It was now the girls' opportunity and a very insistent big, fat girl was chosen. She was safely strapped into the harness. The rope was pulled by Bo-Bo's assistant and with that she went 'flying' up and around inside the big-top. Shrieks of laughter erupted from the crowd. There she was zooming

around the tent and her old-fashioned bloomers on display for all at large to see. Wolf-whistles and screeches of laughter came from the crowd. Almost all of Palmerstown had seen the poor girl's underwear. After such embarrassment for her, she was lowered on to the pony's back and she began to trot the pony around the ring and as she did, she pulled off a mask and a wig to reveal herself. Low and behold, the wearer of the bloomers was a big hairy man!

# *Wanderly Wagon*

In common with many other Dublin suburbs of the time, - street games were an important part of our after-school entertainment. The roads of Palmerstown were filled with young girls and boys engrossed in the various games be it skipping, hop-scotch, football or jacs. However, there were exceptions, and one such occasion was that time on a Saturday evening at approximately five thirty when many youngsters repaired indoors to watch the television. For many of us, 'Wanderly Wagon', was one of the highlights of the week's television. It was a unique event as we stared at the television screen. Godmother, Rory and O'Brien invited us inside their magical home and it was filled with all sorts of wonders plus such characters such as Mr Crow and Foxy-Loxy. To cap it all, there was the occasional appearance of Forty-coats and his magical flying sweet-shop who was on his way to Tír na nÓg. Of course, we were all knew that it was all 'let-on'. 'Letting on' as it may have been, it did not detract from our enjoyment of it. Wanderly Wagon was the dream of many children.

The dream of Wanderly Wagon became a reality for us here in Palmerstown, as one fine Sunday Summer's morning the priest announced the line-up of events for the Palmerstown Fair, which was to take place the following week. The following Saturday was Grand finale of the fair. There were lots of events taking place, but the one that was to capture

the attention of so many of us was the arrival of Wanderly Wagon and its cast. At around half-two in the afternoon the fairy-tale wagon arrived at the Oval field in Palmerstown. We all now had a chance to meet the Stars who were all dressed in full costume and in addition to this, they were going to sign autographs.

‘God-mother’ in her full regalia positioned herself on the steps at the entrance to that magical barrel-topped caravan. Both Rory and O’Brien were in the vicinity and they were already signing autographs and chatting to the queues of youngsters who were excitedly waiting their turn to talk to them and have a signed autograph. The queue for ‘God-mother’ mainly consisted of girls, all anxiously waiting their turn to talk to her and have her signed autograph. In truth, many in God-mother’s queue were more anxious to see the inside of that famous barrel-topped wagon than anything else. Autographs were one thing, but the inside of this wondrous vehicle conjured up fantastic images, images that we had seen on the ‘telly’, Saturday after Saturday. Now we had our chance to see the inside of this Wonder.

As I’ve said, God-mother was positioned on the steps of this magical home and it was impossible to get inside of it without passing her. No matter what us youngsters said to her and no matter how we tried to cajole her we weren’t being let up the entrance steps, into this magical world that existed inside the caravan. To make matters worse, a couple of young lads joined us and reliably informed us, as they heard it from Rory himself, that there was nothing inside



that magical wagon. We all knew that those lads were 'making-that up' and there was a magical world inside that magical, barrel-topped wagon.

Alas! And as difficult as it was, we would have to contain ourselves and wait in anticipation for the following Saturday's episode of Wanderly Wagon at five thirty on RTE when we would be re-assured that the wonderful world of imagination and 'make-believe' inside that wagon truly did exist.



## ***The Back Road***

The back road is no more, as it succumbed to a massive housing development towards the end of the 1970s and early 80s. Prior to this time the Coldcut Road diverged into two roads- the former which is still there, and leads directly to Clondalkin Village, whilst the latter wound its way in a southerly direction towards the 12th Lock of the Grand Canal. This country road, had little traffic and was a popular route for the walker and cyclists, alike. Cottages and the occasional farm-house were dotted here and there. As far as

the eye could see; fields coloured the landscape, fields of corn, tillage and those used for grazing cattle. It was the ideal route for an afternoon's bicycle 'spin' and followed with a picnic by the banks of The Grand Canal. It was an adventure, contrasting sharply with the tedium of homework.

The Back Road was a regular haunt for my friend and myself. I can clearly remember a particular late August afternoon as it was hot and the air was heavy. It was the type of day that lended itself to the sound of the occasional rumble of thunder in the distance. Not to worry, it didn't deter us. We were determined to have our spin. As always we enjoyed our picnic which more often than not, consisted of packets of crisps, a couple of bars of chocolate which were all consumed by the side of the canal.

Needless to say, we were oblivious to the dark clouds which were gathering whilst we were chatting and stuffing ourselves with our goodies. It still wasn't raining as we began our homeward journey and just as well, as neither of us had any form of rain-wear with us.

We peddled along, cycling over the railway bridge and came to a pretty desolate spot of the journey and why I say this is because there wasn't a house or building to be seen for a couple of miles ahead of us. The sky had become considerably darker and there was that eerie stillness that often precedes 'the calm before the storm'. Neither of us would admit that we were becoming scared and scared we were. The 'heavens opened' and enormous drops of rain

accompanied by the crash of thunder and scary flashes of lightning pelted down from the skies above. To make matters worse, we had just passed an enormous old oak tree that stood bare and almost black, and we knew that sometime in the past it had been struck by lightning and a whole mythology had grown-up around it. It was often said that tree had been 'a hanging-tree' during the 1798 rising. Knowing this, it didn't help matters, with the pair of us. We peddled furiously along; barely able to see ahead of us due to the deluge of rain. Needless to say, we were absolutely soaking wet. We kept going. We were coming towards the 'long house' which was situated on the left-hand side of the road, ahead of us. From our spins on this road, we had devised various nick-names for the landmarks that we passed on our journey. The 'long house' was most unusual, in that there were little or no windows facing the road-side of the building. Of course we didn't know at the time, that in the past there was what was known as a 'window tax' and it had to be paid by the property owner/ tenant to the British Administration here in Ireland, at the time.

As we neared the 'long house' we could see through the driving rain the figure of a lean and tall individual bending down close to the roadside. Whoever it was, looked scary. As we got closer, we could see the figure was that of an elderly woman. She seemed to be preoccupied as she un-tethered a large white goat from a chain. We were terrified. Bad enough that we were stuck out in a thunderstorm, but now we were faced with the prospect of having to both greet and

pass this odd looking individual and her goat. We looked at each other and giggled nervously and as we said 'Hello', she almost pounced on us as if we were long-lost family members returning home. 'Come in, come in', she said. Before we had time to decline her offer, we found ourselves being ushered around to the side of the house and through a large high gate which led into a courtyard. There we were 'frozen in our tracks'; the whole situation seemed unreal. We were both curious and frightened. We could have ran or should I say, peddled away from this strange place. We didn't, rather we followed her as she beckoned us into the house and along a hallway that led into a dark living-room. Again, this living room seemed peculiar, peculiar like the rest of the day that was in it. The ceiling was particularly low and various wild animal heads adorned the walls whilst the floor was draped with tiger and other wild African animal pelts. As the room was in semi-darkness it was difficult to discern exactly what else it contained. This strange woman invited us to sit-down while she disappeared into another room to get us some dry clothes to wear. Again, as if under a spell of some sort – we did what we were told and sat-down on the edge of the arm-chair seats, whispering to each other. I don't know about my friend, but at this stage my imagination was totally running away with me and I could see The Evening Press headline: - 'Young Teenagers disappear on The Back road'. A second later, the two of us nearly jumped out of our seats as a deep voice in a pitch dark corner of the room asked us were we okay. 'What or who is that!' exclaimed my friend.

With that, a man in a wheelchair came towards us and introduced himself as Nigel and said that his sister's name was Judith. Like the long lean goat-lady, Judith, he too shared her appearance, although he was confined to a wheelchair it was clear that he was long and lean. 'Oh forgive my sister', he said 'she thinks it is futile to switch on the electric light because I'm blind' he said. Both my friend and I at the same moment exclaimed, 'are you'! Almost in the same time the door opened and small fat lady with round smiling face arrived in to the room. She was carrying a most ornate tray and it was filled with goodies for afternoon tea. She introduced herself and said her name was Anne and that she lived in Clondalkin. She seemed like a very ordinary individual in contrast to the 'long pair' who lived in this odd house and believe me I was glad of that, as my imagination had been running away with me, never mind what my friend may have been thinking. Suffice to say I knew by the look on her face that she was no better than myself. As if Anne sensed our uncomfortable state she began chatting to us and at the same time nodded across in the direction of Nigel and told us that she has been working for Nigel and his sister, Judith, for the last thirty years.

Judith the 'goat lady' arrived back into the living room and on her arm she was carrying some clothes 'go change into these', she said, as she ushered down the hallway to the bathroom. We did what we were told and the two of us began to giggle non-stop as the clothes which were too big for us and apart from that they were the most old-fashioned yokes

we'd ever seen. When we finally stopped whispering and giggling, we went back into the living room just as Anne was pouring tea into five most delicate china tea cups. 'Have some sandwiches and biscuits', said Anne, in a kindly voice. The tea must have relaxed my friend and me, as we started chatting and we told them all about our school and our families.

After what appeared like a pretty short time the room began to brighten-up. Looking out the window, I could see it had stopped raining. It was time to go, we thanked them profusely saying that we would return with the borrowed clothes, tomorrow. Once we were on our bikes and out of ear-shot on our homeward journey we began talking non-stop about our odd experience- what were they doing in Africa? Why was Nigel blind? Who shot all those poor animals?-we concluded that it couldn't have been Nigel who shot them. After all, he was blind.

# *Bus To School*

Many of the girls and boys from Palmerstown attended school in Lucan, some making their daily journey there from the age of four or five, whilst others joined them at a later stage in their school career to attend secondary school there. A special CIE bus was sometimes laid-on to accommodate the large volume of youngsters from the Palmerstown area who made the daily round trip to Lucan for their formal education. From an early age, many of us developed to 'art' of jostling our way on to the bus as inevitably it was crowded and there seemed to be a perpetual fear among us that some of us might 'not be let on'. If you happened to be unfortunate enough 'to be left behind' the dread of being late for school conjured up images of the Principal giving you 'a piece of her mind'. A piece of her mind was one thing, but after-school detention for being late was another matter altogether! More often than not, the kindly principal of the secondary girls' school found herself smiling and indeed amused at the range of daft excuses that were given to her. The most common one being 'the bus was late' and one or more of us weren't 'let on to it'. It never seemed to have occurred to any of us that if we had got up earlier and got an earlier bus to school the problem would not have arisen. The extra ten minutes in bed was all too inviting and the consequence of that extra few minutes could well end up in you having a longer school day than you bargained for!



If you were lucky enough to get on the bus, and get an inside seat you had made a good start to the day. Once seated and the journey begun, you were effectively on a short bus trip into the countryside. What's now The Old Lucan road was then the main road to Galway and in spite of its status as a main road: it meandered through a rustic landscape on either side of it. From the area of Kings Hospital and the Deadman's Inn there was little or nothing to impede the view of the landscape as on both sides of the road, fields of grazing cattle and fields of corn were to be seen. This pastoral landscape continued almost unabated as far as Ballydowd in Lucan. It was only occasionally interrupted by the grounds of St. Loman's on your left, and the Hermitage Golf Club on the right, neither of which altered the landscape to any great extent. A little further on, St. Edmundsbury Hospital on the right-hand side of the road nestled between trees and tilled fields, whilst at the other side of this main Galway road one could a farmer herding cattle into a cow-shed for milking.

What seemed like a minute or two later, the bus arrived at the brow of the hill in Lucan, the journey had ended and the school day stretched ahead and brought with it the highs and lows of daily school life.

# *Before Peep Holes*

It was very rare that a person wouldn't answer a door-bell ringing or knock on the hall-door. For the very simple reason, lots of transactions occurred at the door-step. A motley collection of vendors appeared at the hall door on a regular basis, ranging from the Milkman to the exotic Indian Silkman, all of them selling their goods of one type or another. Needless to say they all had names, however, some of them had alternate names too, names that were placed upon them by the owner of the house, to which the seller was calling.

A couple of bakeries, apart from supplying shops had men employed to sell their bread directly to the house-holds. O'Rourke's Bakery delivered bread and cake to my parents' home twice to three times per week. The Bread-man himself, was a jolly soul and wore a brown dust-coat. What fascinated me most about him, was his ability to stick a pencil between the top his ear and his head. With ease he used to remove the pencil and scribble on a note-book and as soon as he had finished scribbling, the pencil was dutifully returned there. He had to have been some type of magician, because as much as I tried to copy him, my attempts were in vain. Inevitably the pencil fell off the side of my head. One day, I picked up the courage and ran after him to the front gate where I waylaid him and asked him was he a magician. He started to laugh, I'm sure he must have though what an odd question. I

explained to him my predicament as best as a four year old could and with that he took that 'magicians pencil' which was firmly placed resting on the top of his ear and handed it to me. It was a butty little bit of a pencil and offered to me to try doing. Low and behold! I had the magic pencil stuck above my ear.

Every Saturday, around noon the Milkman arrived at the hall door to collect the money due from the milk delivery to our home that previous week. The milk supplier was both producer and vendor, as the family in question had their own Jersey farm in Leixlip. What was so significant about this milk was its richness and as milk wasn't homogenised in those days the creamier part was to be found at the top quarter of the bottle. This extra creamy milk was more often than not, used as a topping on a fruit dessert. Many Palmerstownians in those days had fruit trees and bushes in their gardens and the 'top of the bottle' acted as the topping for a delicious raspberry or strawberry dessert.

Clip-clop, clip-clop, was the sound to be heard on Kennelsfort road as the horse and cart drew near. There were no set days for his arrival but, it was mostly on a Summer's evening he was heard, in the area. In addition, to the 'clip-clop of his pony, we were alerted to his presence, as every so often, he would shout 'any scrap for the rag and bone' man. There always appeared to be loads of mattresses, old clothes and an assortment of pretty battered electric heaters and other broken items piled high on his cart. He sat to the front of this heap and steered his horse along the road. It would be

a huge oversight if I didn't mention the large gold-fish bowl, as it was filled with various sizes of Goldfish plus the Lucky-dip bags which were kept beside him at the front of cart. The goldfish acted as a great lure as the Rag and Bone man was in no hurry to part with any of the fish, for anything less than a mattress. The bargain generally was - a mattress for a fish, lesser items were bartered for a Lucky bag. Unfortunately in my case I hadn't a hope of obtaining a fish as I was informed by my mother that she had no intention of giving a perfectly good mattress away in return for a fish.

News travels! Apparently a chap who lived further up the road had procured not one but, four Goldfish as he had taken it upon himself to dispose of the mattresses from the beds in the family home in return for the fish. We later heard that there was 'war' when his parents arrived home that evening and found out what had happened. What the outcome was, no one ever knew!-Suffice to say' he is alive and well and living in Australia.

The 'Egg man' hailed from of all places, Kilcock. He called regularly on a Wednesday evening, to our hall door. My late parents always kept a few bantams but we couldn't depend them alone, for our boiled egg, as more often than not, they laid them somewhere in the hedge or some other obscure nook in the garden. He seemed to spend ages at the door talking about all the horror in the world and the perils of communism and every so often during his monologue he's say 'bless us and save us from the communistic scourge.' Doom and gloom seemed to his speciality. It appeared that

he was at his chattiest and 'happiest' when some tragedy had occurred somewhere in the world that previous week. Due to his dark outlook on life he became known in our household as 'Sunny'

Every so often a member of the Traveller community called to the hall-door, selling all sorts of needles and thread which she carried in a wicker basket on her arm. More often than not, my mother would bring the woman in and give her a cup of tea and after she'd have drunk it, she would regale us with stories of her life on the road, a life-style that stood in sharp contrast to that of most Irish people.

The notion of buying 'on-line' from any part of the globe was as yet, a wild idea in some inventor's head, the concept of the internet was as remote as Mars. If a relation brought back a 'costume doll' from some foreign country the doll was placed on a shelf and her colourful and unusual garb was a source of admiration. Foreign, regalia, was looked upon in awe, as it was a rare sight.

Now and again, a colourful Indian man with a turban on his head, called to the hall-door. Like his unusual turban his skin too, was an unusual brown shade contrasting sharply with that of the pale and ruddy Irish complexion. He went from door-to door carrying a large brown leather suitcase. This was no ordinary suitcase as it was neatly packed and filed with all sorts of exotic silk scarves and woven tablecloths of all shapes and sizes. When he arrived at the door, he would ever so politely request the opportunity to open his suit case

on the ground. When he did, a whole world of colour, pattern and design was to be seen. Items that could not be purchased in Dublin, and much less in Palmerstown. He would state the price of one of his rare tablecloths and announce it was a bargain. But bargains can be bargained for and this was so and as a result a number of houses in area all possessed a 'rare' and exotic tablecloth! In addition to this, a profuse amount of women in Palmerstown donned headscarves that depicted the Indian elephant or tiger for some time after.

Those were the days before the advent of 'Peep Holes' much less, the arrival of the Celtic Tiger.

# *Vanishing Cabbage*

There were a couple areas within the boundaries of Palmerstown that were used as allotments on a small scale, some of them were a little more than the continuation of residents' back gardens and Eamonn's was one such one. These little plots were lovingly tended to in many cases. The owners of these little patches grew various vegetables, however, it was cabbage and onions that were mainly to be seen growing there.

Eamonn wore his shirt-sleeves rolled-up and perched on his head was a white cotton hanker-chief which he had made into a 'make-do' sunhat. The man in question was a lean, tall angular man who seemed to be more than content to care for his allotment and let the world go by. All was to change! The following evening he went as usual to his plot only to discover four of his thirty-two cabbage plants were missing. He was so keen on his plants that he was just short of giving each plant a personal name. He was upset over the four missing heads of cabbage, and he tried to forget about the previous night's theft and continue on tending to the remaining twenty-eight. Over the years his cabbage had won for him major awards at various horticultural shows, up and down the country. He had every right to be upset, after all four heads of cabbage had vanished, roots, stalks and all! The situation deteriorated, as the following evening when he returned to his plot, to his horror an additional five heads of

cabbage had vanished this time. Something had to be done, the situation was now out of hand. If this thieving was to continue, there wouldn't be a single cabbage plant left by the end of the month.

After much deliberation Eamonn thought it best that he consult with his friend who happened to be a retired Garda, named John. John envisaged that the best course of action was that the pair of them should 'lie in wait all night'; therefore, the robber or robbers would be caught in the act – red handed. The following night John and Eamonn positioned themselves at the side of the plot for the night. The side where the nine heads of cabbage had disappeared from. There made themselves as comfortable as possible on the deck-chairs they had brought with them for this 'stake-out'. The hours passed slowly – not a soul passed their way, except a limping dog. No cabbage had vanished on their watch. Eamonn was very relieved about this as he still had twenty- three of his beloved cabbage plants intact. John and himself thought it best that they do a 'stake out' the following night to be on the safe side.

Again the night hours passed slowly – and not a soul passed their way.

After two nights' watch and all twenty three heads of cabbage were intact; they felt safe in the knowledge that 'the coast was clear' and night vigils would no longer be required. This was a huge relief for both of them. Eamonn still had enough cabbage plants to enable him to select the best head to enter it in the up-coming horticultural show in Co. Offaly,



at the end of the month, which, by the way, was little more than a week away. The following night, the two men slept in their own homes and felt secure in the knowledge that the crisis had passed and there would be no more intrusions to the allotment.

Early the following morning, Eamonn went out the back to his allotment to inspect his potential prize winning cabbage. To his utter horror, cabbage had yet again vanished. This time the situation was worse than ever before, twelve beautiful heads of cabbage had vanished! Eamonn was distraught –what was he going to do! To make matters worse, the thief had stolen the best ones. He was now down to eleven heads of cabbage. The best ones had disappeared. The horticultural show was less than a week away. Year after year, Eamonn had been awarded a Gold Medal for his cabbage at the Offaly Horticultural show and here he was now with only eleven heads and from them, he had to select the best one for entry in the upcoming show. John was his loyal friend and suggested to him that the only course of action was that the two of them resume the all- night vigils, from then ‘till the show.

For the following four nights, the pair of them pitched up their deck-chairs at the side of the allotment. They were becoming ‘stake-out’ experts , as they not only had their deck-chairs, but they were armed too, with torches, rugs, sandwiches, flasks of hot tea, a Scrabble game and a radio. Oh! And they also brought umbrellas in case it would rain. There they perched themselves from dusk to dawn for the

remaining nights and the eleven heads remained safe and untouched.

On the morning of the horticultural event, Eamonn got up extra early, decided on the best head of cabbage to enter in the show, packed his lunch and began his journey by car to the venue. Two thoughts pre-occupied him, who or what had stolen his cabbage? Would he win the gold medal again, this year?

And yes, to Eamonn's amazement, yet again, he was the gold medal winner in the Best Head of Cabbage category. As great an achievement as it was, a shadow hung over him. Who or what had taken his eleven heads of cabbage. And why did they not just take them in one fell swoop. Instead, the individual or individuals seemed to make nightly return visits and there was never 'sight or light' of him or her on the nights John and himself had done their 'stake-outs'. A thought entered his head, could his friend John have been the culprit –nah, that was impossible after all neither John or his wife even liked cabbage. These thoughts nagged at Eamonn, despite his gold medal win earlier that day. He went to sleep that night thinking about the mystery of the missing cabbage.

News travels fast. The following day Eamonn did as he always did, and that was to buy the newspaper in the Corner shop. He was both shocked and surprised when he met some of his neighbours on the way to the shop as they had all sorts of theories and explanations to offer regarding the vanishing cabbage. The theories ranged from an expectant mother who

had developed a massive hankering for heads of cabbage, to the robbery of the heads of cabbage by another competitor for the gold medal award for the best head of cabbage at the Offaly Horticultural Show.

As news travels, it more often than not, re-invents itself. So much so, that less than a week later, Eamonn was greeted after Mass by a young lad, who was no more than nine or ten years old. He had heard of Eamonn's loss and with the greatest of sympathy he offered his condolences to Eamonn 'on the loss of his 'vanishing garbage'!

The mystery of the vanishing cabbage was never resolved and was talked about among the gardening enthusiasts of the area for what in a child's mind seemed to be a very long time.



## ***A Much Needed Music Bag***

There was nothing unusual about a young boy or girl learning to play a musical instrument, in fact the vast majority of the virtuoso players around today, began learning a musical instrument or two at a young age.

For some children it was a pursuit of sheer enjoyment, whilst other children viewed it as nothing more than pure drudgery. I fell with alacrity into the latter group. A music class was nothing more than a major imposition, which took place once a week thus curtailing time spent at play. That half-hour session was something that had to be endured on a Tuesday afternoon. Endured and accompanied by furtive glances at the clock, a clock that seemed to be stuck forever at four-forty five. A sadistic clock that seemed to derive pleasure in moving so, so slowly. Home-work usually consisted of scale practise coupled with some bars from a Brahms or Beethoven. There were quite a few scales to learn, which seemed daft to my mind, I was more than happy knowing the scale of C and that was enough thank you very much. The scales on a pinkeen or a minnow fish were of far greater interest to me, than any scales on a piano!

To my young mind I couldn't see much rationality behind the concept of mindlessly repeating scales on the piano for hours on end, that was bad enough but, things hit an all-time low when I had to practice a few bars of some symphony, after all what twelve year old child needed to be familiar with their great works. To my mind geezers like Beethoven and his ilk were a long time dead and best left to RIP. To make matters worse, my suffering music teacher pointed to small marble statue which she had positioned in pride of place in room, where she taught. That is none other than a bust of Mozart, she exclaimed with pride to me. Oh! Said I is he dead too. My question was greeted with a look of contempt

and as a 'reward' my class ended earlier than usual that particular day.

I had a brain-wave, if my parents were to purchase a music-bag for me I too, would become a musical virtuoso after all any of my peers that had one seemed to be progressing very well. The solution was simple; the acquisition of one of these bags. My suggestion was met by my mother with a questioning look and her reply was apt 'does the bag play the piano?'

Music classes were one thing, but I had far more pressing matters on my mind and this issue was of ultimate importance to me: would there be enough day-light hours left after the music class to enable me to get to 'the swamp' .( The 'Swamp' was located almost directly behind what was then Vincent L. Byrne's Hardware shop and it was accessed by a laneway that was located at the side of the shop ) Nothing for it now, but to charge home don the wellingtons, grab the essential pinkeen net, the jam-jar and the biscuit tin.

Life now began. By twenty past five I had joined all the other girls and boys who had converged there. Pinkeens, frog-spawn, tadpoles and the occasional frog fell prey to our 6d nets. All human life, dogs and the rest had gathered at this oasis. One could sense the Spring in the air, the season of birth had arrived. Cattle grazed at a safe distance from the melee. Bird-song could be heard in the bushes where the lone fox had his covert.

Nothing stays the same, and the swamp and its environs fell victim to the tar of the N4 road-way. Today, there's hardly a trace of that wonderland.

Pretty recently, and indeed, mysteriously frogs appeared in our garden pond, could they possibly be descendants of the swamp-frogs of yester year?

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