**Games and Past-times**

*These are Miss Lily Head’s own words (1905-1997) transcribed from a Dictaphone by Susan Monson. They give an insight into life in the early 1900’s.*

We didn’t usually have bicycles until we were about fourteen. The boys had wheelbarrows made at the carpenter’s for Christmas, and a doll’s cot *(for the girls)* and things like that. You see all these carpenters has odd bits of wood and things and then you could get them to make it or dad would make it up. It wasn’t perfect but it was all usable. We made dolls’ clothes because we had rag dolls and dressed them in little bonnets, all this sort of thing. There was always plenty to do.

We always played Snap with cards, we had dominoes because my dad liked playing dominoes with us and Beat-your-neighbour-out-of-doors – all those, oh yes. Then there was the other one with the dice, you got a six and you started, you had a bord – Ludo, Snakes and ladders, everybody liked that. Everybody liked this Snap business because of making a noise.

There wasn't a lot in games then. Skipping, ball, throwing it to and fro at the wall, dapping them up and down, seeing who could do the most without dropping them. Spin tops, hoops, nothing mechanical. We all played conkers and marbles. We had some rather fascinating games with marbles, different ways we played with them. How many got so many in certain holes. Someone hold the rope and you skip over it as well as skipping together and all that, saying all sorts of different things to the tune, chasing games. The farmer's in his den - that's a real old one.

In the school playground we had skipping, half-a-pound of tupenny rice, her we come gathering nuts in May, spinning tops and hoops, skipping rope – wasn’t much else you could do in those days. We used to make a hole in the ground and see who could throw marbles into the holes and see those that won and those that couldn’t throw straight. But that was more or less the chief things that we played. Where there was a family most of the children played in their own gardens, fairly big gardens – even the poorer people.

We could skate on the pond. It was all fields there and we could go across a stile and go to school that way. Before the real river near Werg the water came over and made quite a pond. We used to skate on that. The weather was a bit different. It settled frosty and cold for several months. We were sliding on ice, we didn’t have skates.

I used to like rounders a bit, in those days that was nearly all we played was rounders, there wasn’t all this football business. The boys only kicked a football around, there were no real matches or anything, that came later.

Books was the chief thing they bought us. We always had lovely books at Christmas, Annuals so we could all join in with them. We had Nursery Rhyme books for the tiny ones and then on up about cats and dogs, all the little things. Bricks were a big thing in those days, building bricks, spinning tops ‘cause you could do that indoors in the winter. The little ones loved that, you’d spin them round you see.

We had an old gramophone in the end, with a big horn. Christmas time they’d buy us some new records, new tunes which had come out, anything they’d heard us trying to sing. We could play it and learn it properly. But that was a great treat to have a gramophone going, in those days there was nothing for music unless *(you had a piano).*  My people were nothing with the piano, we didn’t even have one, they weren’t musical in that way. I think you have to have that in you to be any good. And then another thing, I don’t think many could afford a piano unless you could get a second-hand one. Usually if there was one piano in the village to take to the old hut that was about as much as we had. Of course there was one at the school but that was about all. Mr Soames had one but I don’t think they were a family that were terribly musical.

The boys used to play cricket with everyone, even the College boys and Ramsbury. Geoff Young’s brother was one with Minal; Robert – a big sportsman with Minal. They used to go and win all the matches. They brought the cup back for Minal for football. In those days there was only one lad had a motor bike, no other transport at all.

They sometimes had Morris dancing in Marlborough. Den Pocock and my elder sister danced together. It was jolly good fun, in the High Street outdoors.