

Branscombe 1939 - The Reluctant Shopper.

Mr Collier, the Branscombe baker used to deliver our bread. We heard his familiar high-pitched call, " Baker if you please Ma'am" and there he was, at the backdoor of the schoolhouse, carrying his big bread basket full of freshly baked loaves. This arrangement usually worked well for us but occasionally we ran short of bread and the time came when my parents hit on what they thought was the bright idea that at the age of five or six, I was old enough to fetch it from the bakery a couple of hundred yards down the hill.

I was nervous and edgy about this suggestion - I had never done anything like this on my own AND I would have to carry a large shopping bag with big handles. Undeterred, my parents patiently set about the task of preparing me for my first solo shopping experience. This took some time. Every word, every step, was rehearsed - I quickly realised that there was no getting out of it.....

Eventually it was considered that my preparation was complete and I was sent off, resigned to the task, with the shopping bag and with a few pennies and farthings in my pocket. I went down Bridge Hill, through Mr. Collier's little gate and along the grassy path down to the open front door of the old thatched bakery, where Mr Collier in his baker's apron, was ready to serve me.

There were no queues at the bakery in those days. Standing in the doorway of what is now the National Trust tea room, I nervously uttered my prepared words, "Please Mr.Collier could I have a large white loaf of bread?" I handed him my pennies and farthings. He selected a large white loaf and placed it in my shopping bag....."Thank you, Mr.Collier ".....The transaction was over - What a relief!..... It had taken my parents quite a long time to get me that far and I still have a vivid memory of that big occasion. I had been most reluctant, but I did it! However, I still dislike shopping.

These days when I buy bread in the supermarket there are so many different varieties, sizes, shapes and origins in a world that Mr.Collier could not have imagined back in 1939. I often choose a large white!.

