

# My Life and Memories

## Extract from Angela's story

I was conceived in early 1950 in the Royal Mail Cottage, Millbrook, Southampton where my dad had been born, the last of nine children, in 1918.

Our three bedroomed cottage was attached to the pub and it had absolutely no mod cons. In our 13 years of living there the rent never went up from twelve shillings and sixpence per week (about 62 pence in 'new' money).



The big kitchen also served as the bathroom, complete with tin bath, and there was a spooky unlit coal house within it which we called "the larder". We used to all have a bath on Sundays at about 5.00 pm and numbers one to five in the family all used the same water.



If you were last in then you often came out dirtier than when you went in. We had cold running water in the house and hot water had to be boiled in a large copper.

The toilet was of course outside the house and was across the yard; that was the very same yard that all the drunks from the pub had to cut across to go home at night. So, I learned to cross my legs and hold it all in at a very early age.

On the subject of the toilet, I recall that it was a wooden bench with a round hole in the middle and we used newspaper for wiping our bottoms - we didn't cut it up into fancy squares either – I'd use the whole front page of the Evening Echo for the job.

The Royal Mail Cottage was the warmest of houses in terms of atmosphere but the very coldest in winter; the ice on the inside of the windows was often quite thick. It also had a resident ghost called "Biter" and unfortunately he chose to hang out in my bedroom cupboard.

Years later I found out that several of my uncles and also both my grandparents had died in that bedroom. I'm sure it was my grandad Charlie who used to be standing at the end of my bed when I woke in the nights.

The things I remember most from my childhood are: the rag and bone man who had a horse drawn cart and would shout "rag and b-o-o-o-o-w-n" at the top of his voice, the baker who would bring fresh bread to the door each day in a giant wicker basket, the card schools which my mum and dad had each Sunday evening, and my Auntie Gwen who lived next door and took me to Sunday school.

I also remember the pigs and chicken we kept in our large back garden and how they used to "go on holiday" and never come back. My most vivid memory is of when I was five and dad telling me that granny had died. He said "Granny went to the angels last night and she's just a shell now". For years I had visions of my dear granny being a giant sea shell.

My mum was a Londoner and had come down to the New Forest during the war to serve as a Land Girl. "The best days of my life" she said. Dad had been a Sergeant aircraft mechanic in the RAF and was both handsome and charming, if a little lacking in tact. I asked him once about when he had first met my mum and he said: "I walked into the pub in Burley and across the room I saw the most beautiful girl in the world..... and next to her was your mum". That was dad, always well meaning but he just couldn't help putting his foot in it. I suspect that I take after him in that respect. I loved him so much, but not perhaps quite as much as my wonderful mum. Mum truly did have a heart of gold and her first selfless action as a married woman was to move in with her ailing and incontinent mother in law whom she looked after for seven years. So, when my brother David and I were babies, mum was washing two lots of nappies by hand every day as well as granny's messy sheets and knickers. Not easy with the old copper and a washing line about half a mile up the garden....