

At the age of eleven I had been 'socialised' to a certain level by, firstly, my family and then by the village community of which it was a part. Now I was to be 'socialised' into the strange, cold place outside my small warm world. Hence in order to be accepted I was required to learn a new set of rules.

"If she doesn't get a scholarship she'll have to stay where she is money spent on educating girls is money wasted", my father had said before I'd been offered a place at the local grammar school. It was about the only time up till then that I remembered any distinction being made in the sexes in our family. Girls were expected to do no cooking or homework apart from bed making and shoe cleaning.

We had great freedom and spent most of our time out of doors. We learned to swim, fish, climb trees, dam streams, make dens and hammer in nails, alongside my brother. I had little interest in clothes, due to the fact that was very little money to spare for other than essentials, and any way my mother had plain tastes. On entering a large, all girls school I found that there was a lot to learn about being feminine and for the two years that I spent as a weekly boarder in the town, I led a kind of double existence, reverting every Friday evening when I went home and thus conforming to both codes. Clothes seemed very important to my school friends and caused me a great deal of concern. Not only was I ignorant about what to wear and when. I usually hadn't got it anyway.

This caused me some embarrassing moments, but the most painful part of my socialisation was, that without a doubt, that of mastering a new language. At my village school my friends, the children of farmers and land workers spoke with a broad Worcestershire accent. So did I. At home I had to speak grammatically but outside if I sounded my h's or said "Mummy and Daddy" instead of "Mum and Dad", I was considered "posh". Now in this new situation, even the way in which we conversed at home would not do. I even had to forget some of the words I knew as they weren't suitable for this society and I hadn't to use others as they didn't understand them. I must learn not to roll my r's and to watch my broad 'a' sound. I tried to imitate the speech of those around me but probably made slow progress and remember vividly being taken to task by a well meaning English teacher in front of the whole class and the shame I felt. So now I was learning language at a third level. To my village friends I could say "Ur doubted the fire with waater", at home I could say. "she doubted the fire with water", but to my school mates say something like "She extinguished the fiah with watha". As well as having to take care with the way I spoke, I also found that I had to mind what I said. There were not only words but subjects that were not openly discussed in company.

As I became friendly with girls in my new school and visited their homes, I learned new ways of behaving. Mealtimes sometimes presented problems. At home we'd had the bare essentials, now there might be a bewildering array of cutlery and I had to use different things for different things. Once again I remember feeling

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embarrassed on being offered a jam spoon after taking jam from a dish with a knife! In these homes men behaved in ways that would be described as "sissy" by my family. They stood up when women came into the room, and opened doors for women who were quite capable of doing it themselves. My parents had been very strict about good manners but I had no preparation for all these social niceties.

In these homes too people had energy to spare for their leisure time. They got pleasure from listening to music, looking at paintings and reading things other than newspapers. They went to Stratford to see Shakespeare, and sent their children for ballet lessons. In our home we were loved by our parents, well fed and clothed, but there was little culture in our lives and understandably so. My father had his own small business – he was a blacksmith – and times were hard before the war- and all his energy went to making a living for the family.

This was just one the differences I found in the way these other families lived and it is impossible here to enumerate all the others. They all added up to a wider knowledge of how people lived in the world around me and how I and my family fitted into the pattern.

Now many of the things I have mentioned seem trivial, though they were of tantamount importance at the time they happened. I suppose that each time we make vital??? change in our lives or move to a new place, we go through a type of re socialisation and each time it happens we are a little more experienced at it and it is just the outside factors that are new.

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about her childhood in Stanford Bridge + her move
to High School in Kildermunster during early 1930s
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