

Sunday School Picnic - Cup Day

I went to a Sunday School picnic with my mother and my four sisters; it was a long time ago. I remember waiting on the Newport Station for the train, which was to take us to Werribee. Could it have been a steam train? I'm sure it was. The excitement was intense as we waited in anticipation. My socks were grey – held up with garters. The older girls wore grey stockings, and we all wore summer dresses and runners. The runners (or sand shoes) were for the races of course.

Some of the kids had drinking mugs on a string around their necks, and one or two even had their handkerchief pinned to the frocks and shirts. I thin mother must have had our cups or mugs in her basket.

Mother wore a straw hat with a veil and her dress was a summer floral which almost covered her black shoes, and her gloves were white.

Arriving at Werribee we headed for the park with a dire warning from our seniors not to go near the river. By the time we arrived the huge tent had been erected and wicker baskets about the size of a pantry had been carried in. There were trestle tables in the tent with cups set out – thick china cups with a design inside them on the bottom. Inside the baskets were tons (or so it seemed) of sandwiches – mostly corned beef or ham) – which had been cut the day before by our Sunday School teachers and some other willing helpers.

If I try very hard, I can see their faces. First there was Miss watt or Watts, (I could never remember). No picnic would have been complete with out her, and her blak apron and a huge black tray on which she placed cups and saucers, which she washed. Miss Phillips and Miss Old were always there too – I never knew one from the other. And of course, Miss Haslam in sober clothes (and dare I say an unusual singing voice). Mrs Ramsey, Mrs Claringbould, Mrs Balckburn were there too.

The men were there for they were helped by the older boys to erect the tent. But it is only Mr salt I really remember, handing our bags of boiled lollies. Mr Salt always had pockets full of boiled lollies, and I fancy he was always sucking one, I don't remember in what condition his teeth were.

Can you imagine gallons and gallons of raspberry vinegar being consumed and the rather (by then) dry sandwiches and dozens and dozens of jam rock cakes from Bates? We sat in a circle at morning tea-time to eat the cakes; at lunch time we would listen for the gong and then rush to sit in a circle again. But before we ate, the minister, still wearing his back to front collar (even t a Sunday School picnic) would begin the singing – 'Praise God from whom all blessing flow, or was it "Be Present at our table Lord?' I'm not sure, for all I can remember is the glorious sound of a hundred or so adult voices singing as they meant God to har them.

After lunch there were the 'races' – the kindergarten children first and then in ages right up to the adults. There were sack races and Siamese and skipping races and

everyone joined in. During the afternoon the seniors would drift off toward the river in groups and come back later in two's and threes.

And then the homeward journey – the signing, talking and laughter. Plenty of sunburned noses, scraped knees and dirty clothes, and so many memories.

Memories of Dorothy Richards (Hicks) who attended Electra St Methodist Sunday School (commencing 1916)