



Photo by Annie Spratt Unsplash

OUR GANG

It was 1951 in Pontypridd and there were lots of kids in our street, a post-war baby boom some people called it, although strictly speaking, I wasn't part of that particular baby boom. My father had never been called to go to war. He had an important safety job as a colliery winder at the Ty Mawr coal pit and although he wanted to join the Royal navy, he wasn't allowed to go. He used to go "fire watching" and I was very confused when I was younger and asked my mother why he would want to go out to look at a fire, when there was a perfectly good fire in our fireplace. I later discovered he was watching for German incendiary bombs.

Well, the gang of kids in our street, all ages, but all playing together, had more freedom than any of the modern-day children; especially at weekends and school holidays.

Perhaps, one day we would go up the nearby mountain, with a bottle of water and some jam sandwiches. There, we could swing out on rope swings, paddle in the cold water of the little

brook flowing down the mountainside and we girls picked flowers for our mams (not the boys, that would make them cissies!).

Another day, we went looking for sticklebacks and tadpoles in the canal. It was horrible when you waded in too far and the stinky water went into your wellies! We carried "our catch" away in jam jars, but they didn't live very long.

On a fine day, one of the kids would bring a wooden bat and we played "Rounders " at the bottom of the street, until a grumpy old neighbour shouted that he was keeping the ball next time it went over his garden.

One specific day, someone found an old tin bath and we decided to take it to the Twmp, to slide down to the bottom in it. I had my turn with the older kids. It was great. We slid right down, no mishaps. Then it was my younger sister's turn with the little ones. Unfortunately, at the last minute some of the older boys jumped in too. Halfway down, the bath flipped right over. My sister was wearing her new red blazer, which my mother said she was to keep clean. I ran as fast as I could down the slope. When I got to the bath, all I could see was a small patch of red cloth. For the next couple of seconds, I was pulling kids out of that bath, right, left and centre until I reached my sister. She was okay and smiling at me. I cleaned up her blazer with a bit of spit on my hanky and we went home for tea.

I sometimes wonder how we all survived childhood. My sons weren't allowed to do half of the things we did, but what memories we all have!

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