

The More Things Change . . .

Continued from page 13.

“What are we doing?”

“I’m off to play dominoes, but you and Gran are going for a walk. Get some fresh air into those city lungs of yours, young lady.”

Lorna shot him one of her looks. Did he have to say it like that? Nothing was surer to get a teenager’s back up.

But her granddaughter stood up immediately.

“Great. I hate being stuck indoors.”

Off they went, but not before they’d donned coats, hats, scarves and gloves. December in the Highlands couldn’t be more different from Highbury. Not that Holly moaned about the cold, nor did she seem to mind the distance between the house and the beach.

In fact, she took her gran’s arm and the two of them fairly marched across the links, rosy-faced, chatting about school and Holly’s friends and what films they’d seen recently. Lorna didn’t bring up the subject of boyfriends, though she kept in mind what Karen had told her.

WHEN they reached the fourteenth green overlooking the sea, they stopped to admire the view.

“Didn’t Grandpa used to be the greenkeeper here?”

To Holly it must have seemed like the dim and distant past, yet to Lorna it felt like yesterday.

“He certainly did,” she said, the softest touch of wistfulness in her voice. “I worked here, too, in the clubhouse.”

“I thought you worked at the chemist’s shop on the high street?”

“That was after we got married. When I was a student I spent my summers working as a waitress in the clubhouse.”

“So that’s how you met Grandpa! Was it love at first sight?”

Lorna hesitated. Should she let the girl believe the course of true love had run smoothly for her dottery old grandparents? Or should she tell the truth?

The curiosity she saw in Holly’s eyes spurred her on.

“I was courting someone

else.” Lorna began. “Cormack Lyle. He was the local heart-throb, actually. Tall, blond-haired, champion golfer. I thought he was wonderful. But he turned out not to be.”

“What happened?”

“Oh, life. Life happened, dear. At the end of one summer, before I went back to college, Cormack promised faithfully he’d take me to the annual golf club Hogmanay ceilidh later that year. When I got back at Christmas I discovered he was seeing another girl — Jessie Black.”

Funny how you never forgot certain names.

“What a creep!”

“I was heartbroken.”

“But then you met Grandpa?”

“Well, we knew each other already, but he was courting someone else at that time, too. Anyhow, at the Hogmanay ceilidh I’d swallowed my pride and was waitressing there, when I made a secret wish.”

“What did you wish for?”

Lorna was still shamefaced all these years later.

“I wished Jessie would fall flat on her face in the middle of the dance floor!”

“Did she?”

“No! And I was completely miserable, but then your grandpa cheered me up.”

“How?”

“He said, ‘I’m buying you a drink, Lorna McMurray.’ ‘What for?’ I asked him. ‘Because you look like you need one, and there’s no harm in a little of what you fancy!’ And that was how we got friendly.”

“What about his girlfriend?”

“She ran off with Cormack Lyle in the end!”

HOLLY burst out laughing.
“Gran, that’s a great story.”

Glad to have shared it, Lorna stroked her granddaughter’s hair.

“Expect to have your heart broken by a few frogs before you meet your prince, my darling.”

Holly nodded, taking in the words.

“So Grandpa is your prince, then, is he?”

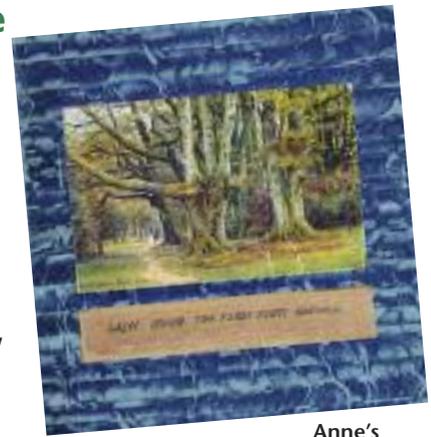
“He certainly is.” A smile spread across Lorna’s face.

“And I couldn’t have wished for better.”

The End.

Another 1945

Enjoy this extract from the diary of RAF officer’s wife Anne McEntegart as she supports the war effort by working on the land and delivering milk.



Anne’s handwritten notebook.

MILK was frozen in the pail with a vengeance. Hard frosts held on into the New Year, the most severe since 1890 the papers said. But they were really glorious days, the first week or so — bright and crisp and energising, with roads as dry as bone, so that Peter’s hooves made a lovely clipperty-clopperty noise in the still air as he trotted along with his head held high, obviously enjoying it, too. But certainly it was cold.

The milk froze all round my pail in thick chunks of ice-cream and I constantly had to thaw the tap of my churn. The milk in the bottles formed one solid block, and rose right out of the necks about an inch, pushing the

Anne on the farm’s milk float with her favourite pony Peter.



New Year —

little carton tops up, too, where they perched ridiculously, like top-knots on a vol-au-vent.

The milk round was bitterly cold in the early morning, but later, when the sun came out, it was lovely. I managed to keep warm thanks to my husband, for I had borrowed his undies. The Boss laughed when I told him. He said he'd heard of a wife wearing the breeches, but never the pants!

Then came the snow. It has been swirling all round us for days and we hoped we might escape, for it is what we dread most. The animals have to be brought in to sleep and be fed indoors, masses of straw carted to bed them down and loads of hay and roots cut every day to feed them. All this in addition to the

difficulty of getting the horses about on snow-laden ground.

When the snow did come, it came with a vengeance. I wakened to find it a good six inches deep on the roads and much deeper in the drifts. At this early hour, there had been no traffic on the roads and it was impossible to cycle, so I had to walk the three and a half miles to the farm. I didn't hurry because I knew I should need all my energies for the day ahead, taking Peter along these roads.

WE took out the ponies well "roughed", but even so they collected large ice balls in their hooves which we had continually to whack out with a hook. It was hard going for them and for us,

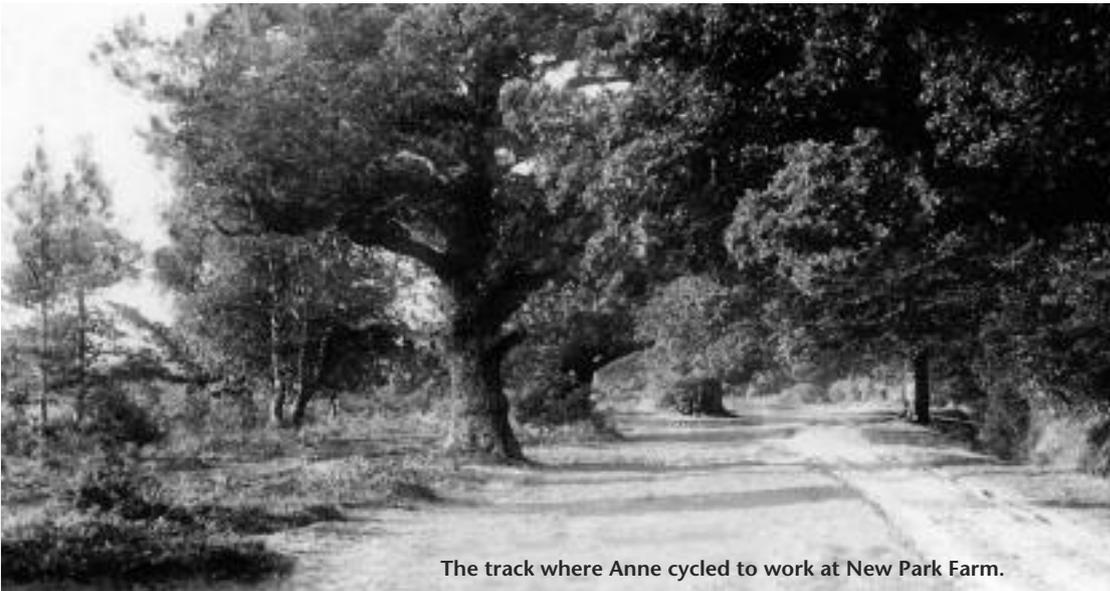
driving with a tight rein and staggering up the snowy paths with our heavy cans, and more perilous still after days of sun which thawed the snow and frost at night, which formed an icy surface again.

For miles we had to lead them where it simply was not safe to drive, where we could scarcely keep our own feet, and watched their hooves slipping each time they put them to the ground. Peter was simply gallant! He plodded on heroically and relied on my every word for his guidance. I tied a mackintosh over his back to keep the cold out and carried bits of cake to cheer him up from time to time. We also were regaled with cups of hot tea, coffee and cocoa. Most people were amazed to see

us at all and said we were real heroes and deserved medals and were so appreciative that we felt the effort was really worthwhile. But we were whacked when we got back to the farm, sometimes as much as two hours late.

Snow and frost lasted about ten days. On January 31, when the moon was at the full and directly opposite the sun, the thaw came at last. We felt the change at midday and by the next morning it had really set in. What a blessed relief! My every limb felt relaxed, my mind suddenly calm. Everywhere was the sound of drip, drip — water dropping from the trees, the roofs, the gutters, the thawing pipes. Birds in every tree twittered and sang for joy, a host of voices raising their *Te Deum*, sadly depleted, I am afraid, for I found many little bodies stretched stiff and cold in the snow.

Gradually the trees became bare again, the fields green and a welcome rain washed the roads clean and smooth. Roofs shot great avalanches of snow down on to the pathways, one right over my back as I bent over my can, dishing out the milk. My customer was just inside her doorway, so she escaped. It was heavenly to feel warm. I discarded my tweed jacket, said thank you to my husband and discarded his undies and felt a wonderful sense of freedom of movement so lightly clad. ●



The track where Anne cycled to work at New Park Farm.



Taken from the book "The Milk Lady At New Park Farm", The Wartime Diary of Anne McEntegart, June 1943 — February 1945. Available from www.amazon.com, www.themilk lady.com and all good bookstores for only £9.99.

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