



Our Special Day

By John Rutter

One of my earliest childhood memories, was a day trip to Hayling Island. The outing was organised by the Sunday School. It was in the summer of 1938, I was about four or five years old, but I can still see it now.

It seemed as if half the population of Petersfield had descended on the railway station, where a small tank engine with two coaches was standing in a siding. People were all milling around on the loop platform, meeting and greeting friends and family.

Once on board, every child was given a currant bun to eat on the journey. This was exciting, I don't think I had ever been on a train before.

Soon the train went through a long dark, tunnel and smoke started coming in the windows, which had to be quickly closed, then back into the bright sunshine. We passed a couple of other station but we didn't stop.

It became even more exciting, when the train rattled its way across a rickety bridge over the sea. Eventually we arrived at the end of the line, it was Hayling Island station. The crowds poured out of the coaches and swarmed across the road, hurrying down the avenue opposite, which led to the beach. I could tell Hayling Island was a special place, when I noticed all the lamp posts were painted silver, back home they were all painted a dull green.

Near the beach was a shop, outside was a model of a giant ice cream, it was taller than me. It was an amazing place, not only did it sell ice cream and rock with writing right through the middle, but there were beach balls, kites, windmills on long sticks, and buckets and spades. The spades were metal with wooden handles, just like grown up ones, not plastic replicas that the kids have today, mine was red. The buckets were brightly coloured and made of tin, I chose one with a picture of Mickey Mouse on it.

When we reached the beach, there was smooth white sand stretching in both directions as far as I could see, I didn't know where to start. I was fascinated to find if I dug a hole deep enough it automatically filled with water. Digging is hard work, and by midday I was ready for the picnic my Mum had brought us.

After dinner my big sister Dorothy and I went for a ride on Shetland ponies, our little sister Maureen was too small to come with us, so she stayed with Mum and played. We had great fun, the ponies seemed to run so fast. Later when the tide started to come in we all walked along the beach to the fun fair where we tried to win things on the hoopla stalls.

I don't remember much about our return journey, I must have fallen asleep. But what a day!