

Travellers at the Furnace Pond, Slaugham

In my childhood there always seemed to be gypsies at the Furnace Pond. They were a constant pest to the village constable, as they were only allowed to stay in one place for 24 hours. This was a simple manner at the pond, as one side was in the Slaugham Parish, and the other in Lower Beeding. Therefore, if a policeman turned them off the Slaugham side, they just went over to the Lower Beeding side, staying there until they were caught, and then come back again.

They were always selling their wares in Slaugham. Mrs Boyd, the rector's wife, would visit them and nurse their babies, and if they were sick, order milk for them. On one occasion Mr Boyd christened one of their babies that had been ill, and as he was too big to get inside the caravan, he christened it outside.

Their chicken always appeared well trained for when the policeman arrived to turn the gypsies away, the chicken would all be running loose around the caravan. The gypsy men would call them and they would hop up the steps inside the caravan and seemed to know their bit.

The lurcher dogs just followed too, underneath the caravan, to the other side of the pond where the Slaugham policeman could not touch them.

However, the smell of their breakfast bacon frying at about 8.30am as I was on my way to school on a frosty morning was a smell I have never forgotten. There was also wonderful smells coming from the boiling pot when I returned at night.

I don't know what has become of them, but there never seems to be gypsies at the pond these days.

Mrs Ena Tulley (née Anscombe) (1897-1973)