

***The Cotswold Boy: From The Coronation To 'A Hard Day's Night': A Childhood In The 50s And 60s*, by Martin White. Published by APS Books Yorkshire, 2024, 194pp including 10pp of b&w illustrations. Paperback, £10.99 (Amazon)**

The author himself, in the first few pages, refers to his purposes in writing this book. That is to say:

*"A simple attempt to portray life for a young child in that alien world [of the 50s /60s] which was post-war, but pre-permissive society; where old attitudes and superstitions persisted", and to "record those I loved.... for soon no-one will be left who recalls them at all."*

The narrative in the book brings us from the author's birth in 1953 to his leaving primary school in 1964. It therefore fits exactly with the timeline in the title – from the Coronation to 'A Hard Day's Night'.

This is a well-written book and exhibits a prodigious memory of place. When Mr White describes his family home in Rodborough and the surroundings, his descriptions help to take you there. Therefore, an essential acquisition for Rodborough historians, I would say.

Other than that, if you are a *'baby boomer'* then there is much nostalgia to be found in this book. We all remember the *'dreaded'* school-dinners, but comments like *"salad of lettuce leaves with lumpy mashed potato and a slice of luncheon meat"* and *"rock hard biscuit, a lump of blancmange and what I was convinced was a pickled onion"* really do bring them home.

Most of us, I am sure, also remember the *'Corona Man'* who sold *'pop'* in the streets, but, especially with the recent pandemic, anyone born later than baby boomers might struggle to understand what this means! The description of the early NHS when Mr White had his tonsils out, is also completely as I remember it.

I would sincerely hope that the younger generation would also enjoy this book. There is much in its content which is interesting, engaging and thought provoking. I especially feel that the differences in how people lived then and now would make this an interesting read for our children and grandchildren.

Differences abound. What would our 2024 Environmental Health Department think of the school canteen's drains, *"caked with the detritus of school dinners"* and with its *"sickening smell"*? Or the mushrooms growing in the cellar of Rock Cottages?

What would society today think about a potential purchaser of Rock Cottages being sent packing because she was Italian and *"we owe it to the neighbours"*?

What would happen today to a boy who found a dead snake, chucked it at his sister, and when it unexpectedly came back alive, caused her to scream and run?

There are many such contrasts portrayed in this book, and I would recommend it as an engaging and interesting read.

My only criticism is that I am not convinced that there is a need for the author to change the names of any characters described. I understand the reasoning behind this – that he has not been able to get the permission of the people involved to mention them in the book. However, there is nothing, I feel, in the entire narrative that could be of damage to anyone, and my personal preference in this case would be to keep the stories but name no names rather than change them.

Martyn Beaufort

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