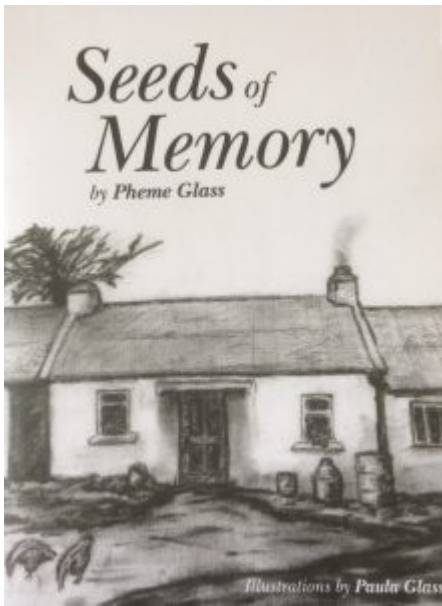


# Summer Holiday



Our Granny lived about two miles outside Plumbridge in County Tyrone and we lived in Cookstown. No distance in today's travel; but back in 1952, it was as far away as Cork if you didn't have a car. Buses stopped at every hole in the hedge and took an eternity, never mind the price of the ticket.

Our transport to the 'Plumb' came in the shape of our neighbour, Johnny Robinson. On the 16th of every month, Johnny and his sister Maggie travelled from Cookstown to Plumbridge to sell new and second-hand clothes to local farmers and villagers at the fair. Mammy made all the arrangements and a letter to Granny was dispatched to finalise the date and time of our arrival.

The day of our journey began bright and early at 7 am, with Johnny calling out *All aboard! All aboard! Next stop Plumbridge!* Winking at Mammy, he would rub his hands together and say *How much profit will I make at the fair on this cargo?* through much laughing and nervous giggling, we scrambled into the back of the van and climbed high to the top of the bundle of clothes. My brother, displaying all the cockiness of having done it before, made no attempt to help me as I struggled to the top of the pile.

We lurched out of the alley into the street and at each change of gear the van seemed to hesitate as if to challenge Johnny's ability to control its momentum. But then, as if by some preconceived arrangement, the van and driver synchronised and the hum of the motor became like a lullaby to us and we fell asleep.

The noise and the bustle of the village woke us, opening the door to another way of life. Sheep bleating, cows mooing, and all the smells that accompanied it hit our senses as we tumbled out onto the road. Rubbing the sleep from our eyes and clutching our brown parcels of clothes, we could not quite believe that we had arrived.

The little red van was parked outside the Post Office, and after much banter

and hand slapping with the postman, Johnny handed us over to be delivered to Granny's, minus the appropriate postage stamps of course!

Pulling up on the street we saw Granny, her tall frame wrapped in her black flowery pinny, attempting to conceal her amusement as the postman announced: *I have two large parcels for you today Mrs Campbell.*

As he opened the back doors we jumped out with squeals of laughter shouting *Surprise! Surprise!* to be scooped up in her arms, scattering chickens and ducks from around her feet in a flurry of excitement. The summer holiday had begun.

### **Granny**

When I think of her now she is not in the  
shadow of a cold grave  
but a loving memory.

Her tall frame, always the same  
wrapped in her pinny.  
The clog boots covered in  
orange soot from the wide hearth  
as she piled the hot coals on the  
lid that hid the golden bread.  
Head bent in the paraffin glow  
cleaning the eggs row by row  
for Doherty's egg man,  
who came in the red van.  
His moneybag rattling over  
his back as he stacked the  
boxes up on the rack.  
Those familiar boxes that made my bed  
where I laid my head.

Patching and mending  
the thimble pushing the needle through  
coarse cloth. Her thoughts her own  
in that warm home.

She sewed these seeds of memory

### **The Well**

The well is dry Granny said  
dry as a bone, not a drip or drop  
to fill the pot.  
Take the buckets and go up to Stark's  
tell them that our well is dry and  
I'll call myself bye-the-bye.  
Be sure to rinse them at  
the head of the well they should be  
clean but you never can tell.  
Don't fill them up to the very top

or you'll spill the half of what you've got.  
I'd go myself but the pains are bad and you're  
a healthy strappin' lad.

The buckets filled, he headed down the road  
his wellies fillin' as he strolled.  
He stopped beside a blackberry  
bush, the berries ripe and tasty.  
In his haste to go, he spilt the lot  
the wellies full the buckets empty.

### ***PHEME GLASS***

This story and two poems are in her book *Seeds of Memory*, self-published in 2013. She read the story on *BBC Radio Ulster* in July 2005 as part of the 'My Story' series.

This love of the village of Plumbridge at the foothills of the beautiful Sperrin Mountains has also been her inspiration in writing *The Blossom or the Bole* in 2017, a novel based on facts of events of 1912 leading up to WW1. She is currently writing the sequel, which will be available 2019/20.