

# TRAIL OF DISCOVERY

This document provides you with an overview of the 21 characters who feature in the Trail of Discovery project. There are 7 different periods in history from Roman Britain through to the 1960's. This information will enable you to answer questions you may have about the periods, geography and other interesting facts.

You are free to copy any of the information provided in this pack to assist with and use during your visit to the museum.



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## Trail of Discovery Characters

With a few exceptions, the people described in the 'Trail of Discovery' are imaginary characters. We have tried to make them representative of their times, which are accurately described, but they and the details of their personal lives are usually fictional.

The exceptions are:-

Hunu the slave. Hunu really did live in or near Okehampton in the 11th century – in fact he is the earliest person living here whose name we know. The ceremony at the cross-roads which freed him was carefully recorded in the margin of a prayer book, which still survives. We do not however know what happened to him, or anything else about him.

Isabella Payn. A lady of that name lived in Okehampton in the 14th century, but somewhat earlier than the character described. We know of her only from a reference in a property deed. The family details attributed to her are invented.

Elizabeth Holley. James Holley came to Okehampton in 1858 with his 5 sons and 6 daughters, just as described. Elizabeth, however, is an extra daughter whom we have invented. In this case, therefore, her family background is real while the lady herself is imaginary.

Thomas Allin. Constable Allin (No.309) was indeed stationed at Okehampton while the railway from Exeter was being built, and records have survived of some of the problems he faced. Unfortunately we know nothing of his personal history, or what happened to him before or after 1871.

## Roman Britain 1st Century AD: Warrior

You are Cadoc, a warrior herdsman of the Dumnonii tribe, living at Halstock Fort near Okehampton. In 43 AD, news comes that a Roman army has invaded Kent. Will you ever have a chance to fight them?



The Dumnonii tribe inhabit the whole of what will later be Devon and Cornwall. They are iron-using Celts whose culture replaced the earlier Bronze Age societies of the region 500 years or more ago. United by the worship of their god Dumnu, they are otherwise a federation of smaller tribes and clans, ruled by local chiefs.

By and large they are a peaceful people, and the hill forts like Halstock which were built in more unsettled times are now used mainly for herding cattle. Even so a certain amount of feuding and raiding still goes on. Cadoc belongs to the aristocratic caste, and thinks of himself as a warrior, although most of his time is spent in ordinary farm work. The bronze helmet and long iron sword inherited from his father are prized possessions.

An invasion far away to the east seems at first like something for other people to worry about. The elders of the clan say that the Romans came to Britain once before, but soon went back overseas. This time, however, it appears they mean to stay! Cadoc's blood is roused by the thought of fighting the arrogant marauders, but as more news comes of their steady advance westwards this seems like an increasingly bad idea. The warlike Durotriges of Dorset are putting up a furious resistance, but have to submit just the same as their fortresses are smashed one by one. Of course, the Durotriges are hereditary enemies of the Dumnonii, which almost makes the Romans into friends and allies... Perhaps it would be best, after all, to let them do as they please.

For a while not much happens. Cadoc hears that the 2nd Augustan Legion has built a great fortified camp at Exeter, and presently the chiefs of the tribe are summoned there to be told that they are now ruled by the emperor Claudius, and must pay taxes to him and obey his laws. Worse follows, when it turns out the emperor intends to abolish the order of Druids, who supervise religious affairs in Britain. Some local revolts flare up, but are soon suppressed when units of oddly-dressed soldiers fan out across the peninsula, cutting their own roads through the landscape as they go, and leaving forts and garrisons to control the populace. The Romans even try to confiscate all the weapons of the tribe, though most (including Cadoc's) are quickly hidden.

From the moorside, Cadoc watches resentfully as one of the strange rectangular forts is erected down in the valley to the north, on a spur of land above the River Ockment. It guards a new road from Exeter which crosses the river there and continues away into the far west, where other clans of the tribe mine the valuable metal tin from which bronze is made.

Everyday life on a moorland farm continues without any great change through all these upheavals. The new taxes are a burden, but otherwise the Romans don't interfere much. The Britons can go on worshipping their own gods, and there are even still a few Druids around, until their headquarters in Wales is finally destroyed. Cadoc lives long enough to hear about the great revolt of the eastern tribes under Queen Boudicca in 61 AD, but this too ends in defeat, so it is just as well the Dumnonii did not join in. They can only resign themselves to being obedient subjects of the Roman Empire.

## Roman Britain 2nd Century AD: Slave

You are Genilla, born about 140 AD. After your tribe, the Brigantes, revolts against Roman rule, you are enslaved and bought by a minor Roman official. Later you are sold to work on a farm.



The Brigantes are a large British tribe inhabiting the hills and moors of northern England, from modern Lancashire and Yorkshire as far north as Hadrian's Wall. By the middle of the 2nd century they have lived for generations under Roman rule, but are restless and prone to revolt. A serious uprising occurred in 118 AD, and it was partly to separate the Brigantes from allied tribes to the north that the emperor Hadrian ordered the building a few years later of his amazing 80-mile fortification, guarding the frontier from sea to sea.

Completed by about 127, the wall serves its purpose well until the next emperor, Antoninus, decides to move the frontier further north. With Roman forces occupied in Scotland, the Brigantes take their chance for another rebellion in 154, and are only defeated when reinforcements are brought to Britain from Germany.

Genilla (whose real name is Gwenhwyach) is fifteen years old when the revolt is suppressed, and is one of the many Brigantian women seized as slaves by the victorious Romans. Sale of captured enemies is one of the recognised profits of war in the ancient world, and it matters not at all that Genilla played no part in the fighting. Separated from her parents, she is marched south to the great port of London to be sold and probably shipped overseas.

However, she happens to catch the eye of Quintus Atilius, a minor Roman official who has just arrived in Britain on his way to a new post, and who needs an extra servant to wait on his wife and young son. With them, she travels by sea along the south coast to Isca Dumnoniorum (Exeter). It is now that her master changes her name to Genilla, as he finds her own too barbaric.

Exeter in 155 AD is a very different place from the legionary fortress of a century before. The tribal land of the Dumnonii is now a self-governing civitas (canton) of the Province of Britain, with the town as its capital. Since the 2nd Legion moved its headquarters to Caerleon in 75, the rows of barracks and granaries have been replaced by streets of houses and shops, and on the site of the military bath house has been built a stately forum (market place) lined with government offices. Quintus Atilius works here as a representative of the provincial procurator – a tax inspector.

Despite these embellishments, the community is not a flourishing one. Most of the Dumnonii still live on small farms out in the countryside, and have no real use for towns. Atilius's wife is disgusted by the squalor of this rustic backwater, where nearly all the houses are built of wood, and urges him to seek another post. When the family leaves Exeter, Genilla is sold to a Dumnonian landowner, and sent to work at his farm on the edge of Dartmoor. She is not unhappy here, as the moors remind her of the fell country where she was born. Eventually she marries another slave and lives to a good age.

## Roman Britain 4th Century AD: Trader

You are Salabus, a trader in 4th-century Britain. Born a slave in North Africa about 295 AD, you become skilled in business. After buying your freedom you wander the empire until you arrive on Dartmoor.



Salabus is of mixed Greek and Berber parentage. His early life was spent in the city of Volubilis in the Roman province of Tingitana (Morocco), where he became slave to a Greek merchant. It was this master who gave him his name, which is that of a Berber chief who fought the Romans in the 1st century.

Most slaves of course never become free, but those with luck and ability may be given training in a trade or profession, and allowed to save money of their own. Some even rise to positions of political power. Salabus proved to have a knack for business, and when his master died in 330 AD he was able to buy his freedom. Wanting to see the world, he travelled the empire for four years before arriving by sea at Isca Dumnoniorum (Exeter).

Britain in the early 4th century is a peaceful, prosperous place which has suffered less than most from the dynastic wars of the 3rd century. With the Roman world now reunited under the Christian emperor Constantine this good fortune seems likely to continue, and Salabus decides to stay.

South-west Britain is now part of a province called Britannia Prima, with its capital at Cirencester, but the land of the Dumnonii is still governed mainly from Exeter. To Salabus the town appears much like many others he has seen in his travels. Sheltered by massive defensive walls built a hundred years earlier, it has its busy port and markets, its temples and churches, its grand stone houses and noisy taverns. Wealthy Britons come here to sit on the ruling council, to enjoy civilised life, and to buy imported goods. Some are becoming Christians, as fashion and politics now dictate.

Most people in the countryside, however, still live on small farms as their ancestors did, and have little access to the products of Roman civilisation. Salabus sees a chance of profit here, and from a base in Exeter he starts to make trips westward with a string of pack-ponies, carrying mainly inexpensive goods like tools and tableware, cloth and ornaments, oil and wine. As well as selling for money he barter these for local goods, such as native woollen cloth, long famous throughout the empire for making weatherproof cloaks. He also deals in tin from Cornwall, though as this trade is controlled by the government it calls for either an expensive licence or some skill in smuggling and tax evasion.

Returning from a trip in 337, Salabus buries some of his profits for safe keeping under a rock on the edge of Dartmoor, near the old hill fort at Halstock. Back in Exeter he is killed in a tavern brawl, and never returns for his money, which stays securely hidden for more than fifteen centuries until found by a workman in 1897.

The emperor Constantine dies in the same year as Salabus. Wars between his successors gradually break down Britain's prosperity and weaken the western empire, so that in less than a hundred years it collapses. The last of the legions march away, and the era of Roman Britain is over. To their alarm and bewilderment, the Dumnonii are independent again.

## Anglo-Saxon 8th Century AD: Adventurer

You are Ingeld, a West Saxon adventurer seeking land. In 722 you are killed in a skirmish with the British near Jacobstowe and buried on the hillside where Okehampton's church will later be built.



The Saxons are a group of warlike peoples from northern Germany who were already raiding the coasts of Britain in the 3rd century. After the fleets and armies of Rome abandoned the province in 410 raiding gradually turned to conquest, and within 200 years a patchwork of Saxon kingdoms covered most of eastern and southern England.

In the early 7th century the West Saxons ruled Berkshire, Wiltshire and part of Hampshire. Hemmed in by other Saxon kingdoms to the north and east, they began to expand westwards through Somerset and Dorset, expelling or enslaving the British inhabitants. It was an untidy invasion, sometimes conducted by royal armies, sometimes by small groups of migrants in search of land.

Ingeld was born in 690 near Shaftesbury in Dorset, younger son of a ceorl (farmer) whose own father helped to take the land from the British. At 18 he follows his grandfather's example, and joins a band of adventurers led by his overlord's son, heading west into Devon.

Dumnonia (Devon and Cornwall) at this time is still mostly controlled by the British. After the Romans left it became an independent Celtic kingdom, and being well away from the Saxon advance it has remained unmolested until recently, except for raids by the Irish. Even so, many of its inhabitants have fled across the Channel to Brittany, leaving empty land for the taking. Some Saxons have already settled in east Devon, and there is a monastery with a Saxon abbot at Exeter.

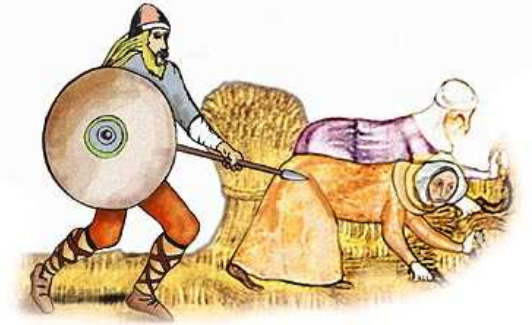
Ingeld and his friends find it far from easy to establish themselves. The British know quite well that the trickle of migrants will soon become a flood, and King Geraint of Dumnonia is gathering his strength to resist. One small Saxon warband has to do some hard fighting just to survive. Then in 710 King Ine of Wessex invades Devon, and Ingeld thankfully joins his army in time for a decisive victory over King Geraint. Most of the British flee west into Cornwall, and Devon lies open for settlement.

With a few companions, Ingeld takes over an abandoned farm by the Ockment river, near the edge of Dartmoor. He sends word to his family back in the east, and more settlers come to join him, including a certain Aelfled whom he later marries. Within ten years there is a flourishing group of farms which in time will grow into a village.

The British, however, are still not far away across the river Tamar. From time to time they raid the new Saxon settlements, and Ingeld has to keep his weapons close to hand. In 722 a strong Cornish force appears from the north-west, and in a clash with them near modern Jacobstowe Ingeld is killed. Friends bring his body home, and he is buried on a shelf of the hillside west of the river. Centuries later Okehampton's first church will be erected here.

## Anglo-Saxon 10th Century AD: Farmer's Daughter

You are Godgifu, daughter of a 10th-century Saxon farmer. After your mother recovers from an illness, you visit the new abbey at Tavistock to give thanks. Unfortunately Viking raiders destroy the abbey, carrying you off to live in the cold north.



Godgifu was born in 987 on one of the farms near the village of Ocmund tune , as the Saxons call the little ‘town by the river Okement’. Her father Aelfric is a respected man in the community, and she has a younger brother Oswy who will one day inherit his land. The family lives happily until Godgifu is 10 years old, when her mother and brother are both taken seriously ill with a fever. They are expected to die, but by what seems like a

miracle they both recover.

Aelfric makes a vow to go and give thanks in the new abbey at Tavistock. This was founded in 978 by Ordulf, Earl of Devon, and contains the relics of Saint Rumon, a Celtic monk of the 6th century. His feast is on 30th August, and Aelfric intends to be there on this special day to pray at the shrine. To Godgifu a journey of 16 miles would be a great adventure. She begs to go with him, and he agrees.

His timing is bad. For years now Viking raiders from Denmark have been plundering the coasts of England, sometimes penetrating a long way inland before being repelled. Aelfric thinks Tavistock is far enough from the sea to be safe, and besides the Vikings were last reported to be on the north coast; but unknown to anyone they have sailed back round Land’s End and are preparing a surprise attack from the south.

While everyone at Tavistock puts on their best clothes to celebrate the saint’s day, the Vikings come storming up the river Tamar and strike at the town before any warning can be given. The abbey is looted and burned, the populace slaughtered, and the raiders thrust straight on northwards towards Lydford, a royal fortress and mint where they hope to find a great store of treasure.

In the event, Lydford is too strong, and the attack is beaten off. Even so the Vikings return to their ships loaded with plunder. Aelfric has been killed, and Godgifu is carried off as a slave. She is taken eventually to the port of Hedeby in Denmark, a centre for trade between the North Sea and the Baltic, and one of the greatest towns and markets in the north. Here she is sold to a trader going home to Iceland, who sells her in turn to a farmer. She passes the rest of her life in hard work on that strange, cold island at the edge of the known world.

## Anglo-Saxon 11th Century AD: Gravedigger

You are Hunu, a slave in late Saxon times. At 42 your master grants you freedom and a ceremony is held at a crossroad. You work for the priest at Okehampton as a gravedigger, and live to the ripe old age of 76.



Hunu was born about 1004AD, and is the slave of Wiglaf, one of the tenant farmers who holds land near Ocmund tune, the town by the river Okement. Their overlord is Osfers, an important thane (minor nobleman) with lands all over Devon. It was he who paid to build the small wooden church on the hill west of the river, and provided some land there for a

priest to live on.

There have always been slaves in Anglo-Saxon society. Some are descendants of the British population who lived here before the Saxons came. Others may be enemies captured in war, people condemned to slavery for crimes, or children whose parents were so poor they were forced to sell them. In times of famine people even sell themselves to avoid starvation.

Hunu works on his master's farm like any other labourer. Of course he is not paid, but he gets an allowance of food and fuel, with extra provisions at Christmas and Easter, so life is not all that bad. The worst thing about being a slave is that he can be bought and sold, but can own nothing himself, so there is little hope of advancement. His master can even kill him if he chooses. Among the Saxons a man's status is measured by his wergild, the fine which has to be paid for killing him; but a slave has no wergild. His murderer only has to pay the market price for a slave – about as much as eight oxen.

The only change for the better that Hunu can hope for is to be set free. The Christian Church disapproves of slavery, and the clergy do their best to persuade owners to release their slaves as an act of piety. People sometimes do this on their deathbeds, or by their wills. Hunu is 42 when his master Wiglaf falls sick, and before he dies gives Hunu his freedom.

The freeing of a slave is always done publicly, with plenty of witnesses who can testify that he is now a free man. A priest named Brown comes from the minster at Crediton to perform the ceremony, and other priests attend from all round the district. By ancient tradition everyone gathers at a cross-roads, and before the whole assembly Wiglaf's son announces that Hunu is free. He can now choose his own path and go wherever he wishes.

After the ceremony Hunu is not simply turned out to fend for himself. The former owner of a freed slave has some legal and social responsibility for him, and there will still be a place on the farm with Wiglaf's son if he prefers to stay. Hunu wants a change, however, and the priest of Okehampton has offered to take him into his service, to work on his land and act as gravedigger in the little churchyard. He will have a respected place in the community, and is still young enough to marry and have children who will not be slaves.

In an age when few people reach the age of 50, Hunu has an exceptionally long life. He survives to see Osfers the Thane turned out of his lands and replaced by a Norman lord, and the building of the great castle at Okehampton which symbolises the power of the new king, William the Conqueror. By the time he dies at 76 the Anglo-Saxon world is becoming a memory, and a new era has begun.

## Medieval 11th Century AD: Norman Soldier

You are Geoffrey, a Norman soldier. You take part in the battle of Hastings in 1066, and the siege of Exeter. After helping to build and garrison Baldwin de Brionne's new castle at Okehampton, you marry and settle in Devon.



The Normans began as Viking marauders from Norway who carved out a home for themselves in northern France at the beginning of the 10th century. 150 years later they are still formidable fighters, and when Duke William of Normandy's title to the English throne is disputed by the Saxon earl Harold, he quickly gathers an army and comes to enforce his claim in person. At

the battle of Hastings in 1066 the future of England is decided, and the Norman duke becomes King William I – William the Conqueror.

Geoffrey was born in 1038 at Meules in Normandy, one of the estates of count Gilbert de Brionne. At 16 he enters the service of Gilbert's son Baldwin, who marries a niece of Duke William and sails with him for England in 1066 as one his chief advisors. Geoffrey goes too, as a footsoldier in Baldwin's retinue.

His memories of the fight at Hastings are confused. For years afterwards he dreams of facing the Saxon housecarles (elite warriors) with their terrible axes, and whatever anyone says he knows the battle was a close-run thing. He is far from happy at the prospect of having to storm the city of Exeter, still sheltered behind the huge walls built by the Romans, when it holds out against King William in the winter of 1067. Luckily the citizens decide to negotiate, and William allows them to surrender on easy terms. Baldwin de Brionne is made sheriff of Devon, and given the task of suppressing any remaining resistance to Norman rule in the county.

Geoffrey spends some uneasy months patrolling Exeter while a castle is being built on the hillock of Rougemont to control the city. He is glad to march west with Baldwin to the next strategic point, a village near the north tip of Dartmoor where the road to Cornwall crosses the river Okement. Like the Romans long before, Baldwin decides a fortress is needed here, and chooses a spur of ground by the river which already has strong natural defences.

Labour gangs are recruited from the unwilling inhabitants, and soon a deep ditch has been cut to isolate the tip of the spur, with the waste material piled on top to heighten it. Wooden stockades surround the whole site, and as Baldwin means this to be the centre of his own estates he begins work at once on a strong stone tower on top of the mound. When this is completed the walls are covered with whitewashed plaster to keep out the weather. It stands out like a glaring white signpost in the landscape, announcing to the cowed Saxons that Norman power has come to stay.

Geoffrey becomes a member of the castle's permanent garrison, and in the following years he sees the Saxon village grow to a small town. The traffic generated by the castle attracts traders, and when officials come in 1086 to make a list for the king of all the land in Devon they are able to record that Ochementone is now a borough with a flourishing market. Soon after this Geoffrey retires from soldiering. He already has a Saxon wife and two sons, and is given some land near the town, where he settles down for the rest of his life.

## Medieval 13th Century AD: Benedictine Monk

You are Brother Gilbert, a Benedictine monk of Tavistock Abbey. Born in 1223 at Crediton, you join the order at 18. You often visit the leper hospital at Okehampton, and become skilled in medicine and herb-growing.



Tavistock Abbey was founded in the 10th century, and survived destruction by Viking raiders in 997 to become one of the largest and wealthiest monasteries in the South-West. Tavistock itself grew from a small village to a thriving town, assisted by a three-day fair held each August at the feast of Saint Rumon, the abbey's patron. More wealth came from the opening up in the 12th century of the rich mineral resources of Dartmoor, which for a time was the main source of tin for the whole of Europe.

Gilbert Dyer is the younger son of a Crediton cloth merchant. As a boy he went to school at the minster in his home town, and decides that he prefers a religious life to joining the family business. There are plenty of monastic orders to choose from, but Gilbert opts for the black habit of the Benedictines, whose rule of life is less harsh than in some of the newer reformed orders. He goes in 1241 to serve as a novice at Tavistock.

The original purpose of monasteries was to be sheltered enclaves where monks could worship and meditate, pray for the common welfare, and generally raise the spiritual tone of society. This is still an important part of their function, but the larger houses also provide a surprising range of other services. In an age when few people can read and write, they are places of study where books are compiled and copied, historical records kept, and children educated. On a more mundane level they distribute alms to the poor, care for the sick, and act as hostels for travellers. With all the additional tasks involved in running the house and its estates, there are many kinds of work for a new novice to try, until it is clear where his aptitude lies.

Although Gilbert can read he has no turn for scholarship or administration, and Abbot Alan sets him to work under the Infirmarer, who is in charge of the abbey's hospital. Sick and elderly monks are looked after here, and medical care is also made available to anyone else who needs it. Gilbert's duties soon take him to the small leper hospital outside the town. This was founded especially for people suffering from leprosy, an infectious illness brought back by crusaders from the Middle East, but any sick or destitute people can go there for refuge. Gilbert learns how to use medicines to treat different ailments, and how herbs are grown in the abbey gardens to make them.

Sixteen miles away at Okehampton there is a similar leper hospital, set on a hill away from the town to prevent the spread of disease. There is no other monastery nearer than Tavistock to offer medical assistance, and Gilbert makes the long journey every month to bring supplies of remedies, and help to care for the inmates. He knows he always runs the risk of catching some infection, but this happens to him only once. In 1254 he goes down with a dangerous fever, and is ill for a long time, but gradually recovers. Eventually he becomes Infirmarer of the abbey in his turn, and dies there in 1287.

## Medieval 14th Century AD: Townswoman

You are Isabella Payn, a wealthy townswoman of Okehampton. In 1349 the Black Death strikes the town, and your husband and three of your eight children die. You decide to go on pilgrimage to Canterbury, and die at 71 leaving sixteen grandchildren.



Isabella was born in 1310, the only daughter of Henry Payn, a successful corn merchant. Okehampton in the early 14th century is a bustling little community, prospering from the wool and cloth trades and acting as a livestock and provision market for the surrounding country. Hugh Courtenay, the town's overlord, has recently rebuilt the old Norman castle as a luxurious residence, enclosing a deer park on the slopes across the river where he can hunt with his guests, and all these wealthy visitors are good for business. Henry Payn will never be as rich as a merchant of Exeter or Bristol, but he is content with his position as one of the chief men of the borough, and expects to be elected portreeve (mayor) before long.

The family lives in a substantial timber-framed house near the market cross at the centre of the town, with a long narrow strip of ground called a burgage running behind as far as the East Okement river. There is plenty of space here for carrying on a business, and also for growing vegetables and keeping pigs and chickens. Henry has acquired other land in and around the town, and as he has no male heir all his property will one day go to Isabella. This makes her an attractive proposition as a wife, and when she is 15 a marriage is arranged for her with the son of a wool dealer. Isabella likes him well enough, and has no objection to the match; heiresses can seldom choose their own husbands.

Her husband dies of a sudden fever when she is 22, leaving her with three young daughters and a wool business. Another arranged marriage follows, but this second husband is killed in a riding accident after two years, and shortly afterwards Henry Payn dies too. As a wealthy widow with no male relatives, Isabella can please herself about a third marriage, and she takes her time selecting a young man qualified both as a husband and as a manager for her property. It is a successful choice, and they live happily for 12 years.

In spring of 1348 news comes of a dreadful plague killing people by the thousand in southern Europe. Merchant ships carry the infection to England, and by autumn it is spreading with terrifying speed across neighbouring Dorset. No-one knows what causes the sickness, and there is no cure. Nearly everyone who catches it dies, some almost overnight, others lingering in agony for days. Some people try to flee, but there is nowhere to go. Isabella and her family wait grimly through the winter. Early in 1349 the plague strikes Okehampton, and within a year half the town's population is dead.

Five priests die in Okehampton during that year. Their duty to comfort the dying makes them vulnerable, but few families are spared. Isabella loses her husband and three of her children. She can only be thankful for those who remain, and as the stunned survivors set about rebuilding their lives the idea comes to her of making a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Thomas at Canterbury, both to express her gratitude and seek comfort for her loss. There is too much to be done at home to achieve this ambition as yet, but she finally does so in 1355, returning to spend the rest of her long life bring happiness to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

## Victorian: Squire's Daughter

You are Elizabeth Holley, 5th daughter of the squire of Okehampton. Born in Norfolk in 1840, you are educated by governesses and at 18 move with your family to Oaklands House. After a life of leisure and dispensing charity to the poor, you die a spinster in 1901.



James Holley is a landowner in Norfolk who decides in 1858 to move to Devon. There is an estate for sale at Okehampton, owned for the last 50 years by the Savile family who at one time exercised a great deal of influence over the town. James looks forward to playing a similar role in local affairs, and arrives with his wife and eleven children.

Elizabeth is the 5th daughter and 8th child of the family. Like most girls of her class she has been educated at home by hired governesses, with an emphasis on 'polite accomplishments' like painting and music. There is no need for any more practical skills, as she is never expected to have to earn her living. When she marries she will be required to supervise a household, but this will mainly involve giving orders to servants.

Oaklands House is a large Grecian-style mansion built 40 years ago, impressive but rather impractical in the climate of the Dartmoor foothills. There is not much for Elizabeth and her sisters to do except pay visits to neighbouring gentry, and interest themselves in charitable causes. Their oldest brother Windham is busy helping to run the estate he will one day inherit, another brother Edmund is beginning a military career in the Royal Horse Artillery, and Charles the youngest is away at school. The family spends a certain amount of time each year in London, but otherwise life for the girls is not very exciting.

Their father James is beginning to regret his move to Okehampton. The estate he has bought was an important one in the days when its owner could nominate the two Members of Parliament for the borough, but the Reform Bill of 1832 put an end to that, and the property mainly comprises a number of small tenant farms and some tumbledown houses in need of repair. Now he knows why the last Savile owner was eager to get rid of the place!

The townspeople also show him less respect than he would like. Times have changed since the Saviles were here, and though the corporation obligingly elects him mayor two years running, he finds the office no longer has much power. When he announces his views about how the town should be improved, he is merely ignored. In 1877 he tries to sell the estate, but there are no buyers.

One by one, most of Elizabeth's sisters find husbands and leave home, but she never receives an offer of marriage she wants to accept. Her brother Charles goes into the church, and when he becomes vicar of Okehampton in 1872 she moves to the vicarage to keep house for him, returning to Oaklands when he marries four years later. Her father dies in 1892, her brother Windham only six years later, and Edmund retires from the army with the rank of major-general to take over the estate. As the new century begins in 1901, Elizabeth catches a cold, which turns to pneumonia. She dies a week before the death of Queen Victoria.

## Victorian: Workhouse Child

You are Loveday Pratt, an orphan, born in 1842 in Okehampton Workhouse. At the age of 11 you are sent to work at the King's Arms inn, and later hired as a scullery maid at Oaklands House. You rise to be under-housemaid and marry the footman.



Loveday's mother is Mary Pratt, an unmarried farm servant from the small village of Broadwood Kelly. She is born in the sick ward at Okehampton Workhouse, the only place where free medical attention is available to the poor, and Mary dies soon afterwards, leaving no relations who can take care of the child. The traditional Devon name of Loveday is chosen for her by the wife of the workhouse governor, a romantic lady whose own name is Heroine Matthews.

The workhouse stands by the West Okement river, near the ruins of Okehampton Castle. It was completed only five years ago, in 1837. Before that, people too poor or sick to support themselves were looked after in their own villages, but now the law has been changed and they must come to live here, often far away from their homes. Conditions in the workhouse are deliberately made quite harsh, so that no-one will want to go there unless they have no choice; but the officials who run it usually do their best to ensure that life for the inmates is bearable, as far as their limited budget allows.

There are quite a number of young children in the workhouse. Some are orphans like Loveday, but many are there with their mothers. A school mistress is provided to teach them, and since at this time there is no free schooling for most poor children, those in the workhouse are often better educated than others of their class. Loveday enjoys her lessons, and is sorry when she reaches the age of 11, and it is time for her to go out to work.

As soon as they are old enough, workhouse children are packed off to live with any local employers who will accept them. They are supposed to be apprentices learning a trade, but many become simply unpaid servants, and may be starved or ill-treated. Loveday is lucky to be sent to the King's Arms in Saint James's Street, an inn whose landlady is a widow named Charity Frost. She has a stern manner but a kind heart, and sees to it that the girl is properly clothed and fed, besides teaching her all she can about household tasks.

Loveday stays at the inn for five years, until in 1858 a new opportunity comes her way. Mrs Holley, wife of the new squire at Oaklands House, needs a maid to help in her kitchen. She is of charitable disposition, and thinks it would be a good deed to employ a workhouse girl, especially one with glowing references from her present mistress. Soon Loveday finds herself living in a great mansion set in a landscaped park – a long step from the grim building at the other side of the town where she was born.

At first all her time is spent 'below stairs', scrubbing and scouring from dawn until dark, but she has been well trained, and after a few years is promoted to waiting on the squire's family. She could have a secure future in domestic service, but in 1864 she accepts an offer of marriage from William Ashley, the footman, who has received a legacy and means to emigrate to the United States. Loveday goes with him, eager for new adventures across the Atlantic; but she dies after the birth of their second child at Philadelphia in 1867.

## Victorian: School Teacher

You are Richard Taylor, born at Devonport in 1872. At 35 you come to Okehampton to teach reading, writing, geography and arithmetic at the boys' school in East Street. Your achievements are highly commended by the School Board.



Okehampton had a school as early as the 17th century, when the chaplain of Saint James's chapel was paid by the town to teach eight 'poor scholars'. This arrangement ended in 1806, and was replaced first by a Charity School for poor children, and then by the church-run National School of 1837. There were a number of small private schools too, sometimes consisting only of a shopkeeper teaching a few boys to read and write at the back of his shop. Unless their parents could afford to pay fees, most children received no schooling at all. The only compulsory education was for children in the workhouse, where they were taught until the age of 11 by a resident schoolmistress.

In 1870 a law decreed that all children must go to school until they were 11. By 1874 Okehampton had a new school in North Street, with separate buildings for boys and girls. When this became too small another school for boys only was built in East Street, and opened in 1897.

Richard Taylor is the son of a warehouse clerk in Devonport. He has taught at a school in Plymouth for three years, but as an 'uncertificated' teacher he is paid only £50 a year. The new school at Okehampton is offering a slightly higher rate of pay, and he moves there, lodging with the family of another teacher in North Street.

Teaching is not an easy job. The school is financed partly from local rates, partly by grants from the government based on attendance and results, so Richard has to make sure that as many of his pupils as possible reach the national standards in reading, writing and arithmetic. There are special grants for children who become proficient in extra subjects like geography, and luckily Richard specialises in this. He is good at making his lessons about the far-flung countries of the British Empire interesting, and his pupils do well. The Inspector who comes to test them is impressed, and Mr Bradley the headmaster praises Richard to the School Board. He hopes for a raise in salary, but doesn't get one.

One of the main difficulties schools face is making children come at all. Many people still disapprove of educating the poor, in case it should give them ideas above their station. Farmers and other employers want children to be working for them at low wages, not sitting in school, and poor families need the money their children could earn. Even when parents do send them to school, many children prefer 'mitching' – playing truant. Caning them doesn't seem to work, and nor does fining their parents, who may be too poor to pay the fines.

Absenteeism at Okehampton is not as bad as in some village schools, which are usually empty at harvest time or in the whortleberry-picking season, but even so the Board is losing attendance grants and having to borrow money to keep going. They are forced to reduce the number of teachers they employ, and to Richard's dismay he is one of those dismissed. At least he is given a good reference, and he goes back resignedly to Plymouth in 1898.

## Late Victorian: Ostler

You are Edward Drew, ostler in the stables of the White Hart Hotel. When the railway from Exeter reaches Okehampton in 1871, your job is threatened, but happily there is still enough horse-drawn traffic to keep you employed.



An ostler has the job of looking after horses at an inn. This is a responsible post, as until railways arrived in Devon in 1844 horses provided the only form of transport on land other than walking. Every important inn must have stables ready to accommodate anything from a farmer's pony to the teams which pull the fast mail coaches and private carriages, and to supply horses for hire to whoever needs them.

Back in the early 18th century even the fastest coaches used to take three or four days to travel from London to Exeter, mainly because the roads were so bad. This led to the turnpike laws, which allowed gates to be put across main roads and tolls collected to pay for improvements. By 1828 the Devonport Mail could manage the London to Exeter run in under 20 hours, at an incredible average of 10 miles an hour! Of course the fares were far too high for most people to afford. The ordinary traveller still went by slow cart, taking most of the day just to get to Exeter from Okehampton.

The White Hart in Okehampton has been the town's chief coaching inn for centuries. Edward Drew has worked there in the stables since he was a boy, and he is worried. The great days of the long-distance coaches, which he has heard of from the older ostlers, have already vanished now that Devon is only a few hours away from London by train. Will the rest of his livelihood soon go the same way? For the railway is coming to Okehampton at last! It has been creeping nearer for years now, and got as far as the next village of Sampford Courtenay in 1867. Guests who used to reach the White Hart by coach now come by wagonette from the station only a few miles away. What will happen when trains can run right into the town, bringing people from Exeter in half an hour?

Edward is 24 years old, and feels it is time he was married. He has an understanding with Faith, the pretty chambermaid at the hotel, but he is reluctant to propose to her when he is not sure he will still have a job next year. Luckily Faith has no such doubts, and takes matter into her own hands by threatening to marry someone else unless he makes his mind up. Edward is not sure she means it, but he takes no chances, and they are married in September of 1871.

Next month the railway opens. In all the excitement of bands and speeches and feasting in the main street, Edward almost forgets his fears, and happily they prove groundless. It is true that most travel over longer distances will now be by train, but there is plenty of local traffic to keep the inn stables busy. Indeed, the railway actually starts to attract tourists who want to enjoy the scenery and fresh air of Dartmoor, and they need hired carriages to take them about the district. Edward remains securely employed for the rest of his working life.

In the long term, of course, he was right. The era of horse-drawn transport is drawing towards its end, but it will be the rise of the motor car in the next century that finally writes a finish to it. Edward lives long enough to see this start to happen, and he can shake his head and tell Faith that he knew it all the time.

## Late Victorian: Police Constable

You are Thomas Allin, a police constable stationed at Okehampton in 1871. You have to keep law and order among the unruly ‘navvies’ building the new railway, who like to get drunk and fight in the town’s public houses.



Police Constable Thomas Allin, number 309 in the Devon Constabulary, has a daunting task on his hands. He is the only officer assigned to enforce the law in Okehampton, which would be problem enough at the best of times. Like any town this one has its assaults, petty thefts, drunkenness, and a score of other offences to be dealt with. All the perpetrators must be tracked down and summoned before the magistrates, with depositions carefully copied out in Constable Allin’s neat copperplate handwriting. Some offenders come quietly, others resist arrest or threaten to shoot him. It’s a hard life – and these are only the ordinary drawbacks of a policeman’s lot.

It is 1871, and the new railway from Exeter is about to reach Okehampton. That means the town is crammed with itinerant workmen, ‘navvies’ as they are still called, from the days before railways when their chief work was building canals or ‘navigations’. They are rough, dangerous men with little respect for the law, spending their days in back-breaking labour and their nights drinking, fighting and consorting with loose women. However loudly the mayor and councillors complain, there is not much that one constable can do except try to prevent the disorder from getting too far out of hand.

There was a time when Okehampton had its own police force, in the form of two permanent constables who could hire extra help when they needed it. A town prison was built near the West Bridge in 1623, and stocks and ducking stool were available as well for discouraging unruly behaviour. Now the stocks are gone, the prison is derelict, and since 1858 the undermanned county force has been responsible for policing the borough. The mayor writes scathing letters to the Chief Constable from time to time, and Thomas wishes the Chief Constable were here to take some of the blame.

It would be pointless anyway to start arresting drunken navvies, as he has nowhere to put them. There is no proper police station in Okehampton – the council are still talking about building one – and Thomas has to manage with a makeshift lock-up behind the Town Hall. Besides, if their workmen were arrested the railway contractors would only have to bring in more. On the whole the best policy is probably to keep a low profile, and wait for the nuisance to end.

It is not as though the substantial citizens of the town never break the law themselves. There is a case pending against Mr Joseph Chamberlain, a respected surgeon who lives in one of the big houses in Fairplace, for ‘driving a carriage furiously’ in Fore Street. This is quite a serious matter, since carriage accidents are frequent and sometimes fatal; but instead of admitting his guilt Chamberlain insists on calling half a dozen witnesses to contradict the constable’s account of the affair. Sometimes Thomas thinks he might have chosen a more rewarding line of work!

## Late Victorian: Copper Miner

You are Albert Kelly, a copper miner born in 1876. In 1896 you go to work at the Wheal Emily mine at Ramsley. Every Monday you walk five miles to work, returning to your family on Saturday night.



The tin deposits of Dartmoor were already being exploited in the Middle Ages, but it was not until the 19th century that copper mining became an important industry in the region. Copper is found in the narrow band of metamorphic rocks just beyond the edge of the Dartmoor plateau, and for a long time one of the richest sources was the Wheal Friendship mine, twelve miles south of Okehampton at Mary Tavy.

Albert Kelly's father James has worked at Wheal Friendship most of his life, and he stays on even after copper production begins to decline in the 1870s. The mine is now producing mainly arsenic, which is dug up as an ore called 'mispickel' and refined in huge ovens. When Albert is 12 he goes to work as a helper in the crushing plant. He envies the high wages paid to the men and boys who go into the ovens to scrape out the arsenic, but his mother will not hear of him applying for this job, which is so dangerous that the workers have to cover their mouths, nostrils and even ears to keep out the poison.

In 1893 Albert's father is killed in an accident underground, and he moves with his mother to Okehampton, where she can earn some money by sewing and washing. Albert hears that there is employment at the Wheal Emily copper mine, only five miles to the west. There are no buses or other public transport, so he simply walks there, and is taken on to work on the dressing floors where the crushed ore is washed and separated from waste material. He lodges with a family in the hamlet of Ramsley which huddles under the steep hillside below the mine, and at the end of each week walks back to Okehampton to spend Sunday with his mother. After a few years he can afford a bicycle to make the trip easier.

Wheal Emily is still producing a good yield of copper, but the mine is short of investment and the equipment needs modernising. There is talk of closing, but Mr Jobling the manager is determined to keep going as long as possible. In 1895 Albert graduates to working underground in the deep shafts which plunge hundreds of feet below the surface. Water gushing into the tunnels has to be constantly expelled by pumps powered from a large water wheel, and even then it is so wet underground that the miners are soaked to the skin after a few minutes. There is no lift to take them up and down the shafts, so they have to manage with ladders, and for light they still depend on candles stuck to the brims of their hard felt hats.

In 1900 a new company takes over the mine. Winding gear is installed at the main shaft, and even a steam engine to power the pumps, with a tall stone chimney. The heat from the engine also makes it much easier to dry the miners' clothes! The workings are extended down to over a thousand feet, new crushing and dressing plants are built, and the future seems assured. Albert marries one of the daughters of the family whose house he lodges in, and his mother comes to live with them.

Unfortunately the price of copper is falling due to foreign imports, and the mine is not making enough profit to cover the cost of all the new equipment. It closes in 1909. The mining industry in Devon will never recover, and Albert goes north with his family to work in the iron mines of Cumberland.

## Second World War: Soldier

You are Bob Throstle, a soldier in the Royal Artillery. During the Second World War you are evacuated from Dunkirk, three years later while fighting in North Africa you are wounded. After the war you find work at Meldon Quarry.



Dartmoor was used for military training as early as 1873, when a whole army corps arrived quite unprepared for the terrain or the weather. After a few weeks of losing themselves in the mist and their equipment in the bogs, they retired in confusion. However, the army was back a few years later, perhaps having decided that troops who could cope with Dartmoor could cope with anything.

The empty rolling landscape was ideal for artillery practice, and by the end of the 19th century there was a permanent training camp on the edge of the moor above Okehampton.

Bob Throstle first sees Dartmoor at the age of 19, in 1937. He is a milkman's son from Bristol who claims he joined the Royal Artillery to get away from those early morning delivery rounds. After a few weeks of drilling in freezing rain he wishes he was back on the milk cart; but army life is not all that bad when you get used to it. Except for the food and the sergeants, of course.

He is not so sure about liking the army when war breaks out in 1939, and he is sent overseas to help discourage the Germans from invading France. They invade it anyway, and Bob's unit is separated from the main body during the retreat. He is never sure afterwards how they found their way back to the coast in time to be rescued by the navy. The scene at Dunkirk stays in his memory for the rest of his life: the endless beach, the sea smooth as a millpond, the long lines of men wading out to the ships as calmly as if they were queuing for a bus, and the huge spouts of water hurled up by the mercifully few German bombs. He can't quite believe it when a destroyer drops him safely on an English dockside.

After a pause to re-equip, he is off to North Africa and the Libyan desert, fighting Italians and then Germans again. First one side captures Tobruk, then the other, as if anyone would want the place. It's just Bob's luck to come through everything without a scratch, including the battle of El Alamein where Montgomery finally gives Rommel a licking, and then to get a nasty chest wound at the very end of the African campaign in May 1943. He is shipped back to England, and spends a long time in hospital. Even when he returns to duty he is not fully fit, and with a mixture of disgust and relief he finds himself back on Dartmoor, training reinforcements for the fighting in Italy and the great D-Day invasion of France.

Okehampton is not quite the sleepy little backwater it was before the war. There are troops everywhere, Americans and Poles as well as British, and their relations are not always friendly. More than one pitched battle between units is fought in the streets with sticks, belts and bricks. Bob develops a liking for the town, and even more for a girl named Jenny Pearse who works at the big grocer's shop in Fore Street. When the war ends at last in 1945 they are married.

Bob is tired of soldiering, and the milk round back in Bristol still has no attractions, so he decides to settle down in Devon. The big quarry on the edge of the moor at Meldon is recruiting men, and he takes a job there. His mother, he tells Jenny, always said he would end up breaking rocks on Dartmoor!

## Second World War: Evacuee

You are Peggy Darling, an 8-year-old evacuee from East London. In 1940 when the German planes bomb the docks near your home, you are sent to South Zeal for safety. The quiet of the countryside and the local accents seem very strange!



Peggy never wanted to go to the country. Her life revolves round the crowded streets of Poplar in the dockland area of East London, where her father works as a stevedore. When her parents talked about ‘evacuating’ her in 1939 she begged until they gave up the idea, and she hopes the same tactic will work this time. She finds the bombing exciting, especially having to get up at night and rush to a makeshift shelter in a neighbour’s cellar. Her uncle Tom has a book that tells you how to recognise different kinds of planes, and Peggy spends hours gazing up hoping to see a German Heinkel bomber.

However, as more and more streets are damaged, her parents make their minds up that she must be sent away to safety. A party of evacuees is due to leave for Devon at the end of September, and Peggy is packed off with them, clutching her suitcase and gas mask and feeling much more afraid to be going to a strange place than she has ever been of the bombs at home.

After a long train journey, nibbling unhappily at the sandwiches her mother gave her, she finds herself in a strange little town that might as well be at the end of the world. The streets are all pitch dark because of the blackout, and the children are led in a stumbling crocodile to a draughty hall lit only by candles on the trestle tables. They are given cups of tea and biscuits, then presently people start to come in and walk along the line of children, picking which ones they will take to live with them. Peggy thinks it is like being a puppy in a pet shop, and feels like growling when the strangers peer at her.

Fortunately she likes the stout smiling lady who chooses her, though it is hard to understand anything she says, her accent is so odd. They are driven off in an rattling old car by the lady’s husband (with an even broader accent), and arrive finally at a farm miles from the town, where Peggy meets the couple’s four sons, all much older than her. When she goes to bed at last in a tiny room under the thatched eaves she can hardly sleep because everything is so quiet – at least until nearly dawn when cocks start crowing and cows mooing! Peggy decides the country is a queer place, and wonders how long it would take her to walk back to London.

After a few days things seem better. Everybody is kind, but Peggy is still homesick, and her adopted family hit on the idea of taking her to the cinema in Okehampton as a treat. Halfway through the comedy film there is a terrific bang, then several more. The audience all wonder what is happening – except Peggy, who knows bombs when she hears them. When they get outside they find the street covered in rubble and broken glass, and are told that an enemy plane has flown across the town dropping a string of bombs, one of which just missed the crowded cinema. Peggy stands looking superior while everyone else runs about and exclaims. Now she really feels at home!

## Second World War: Land Girl

You are Kathleen Ormthwaite from Leeds. In 1941 you join the Women's Land Army and are posted to Tenby House. Although potato picking and muck spreading are exhausting work, you somehow find the energy to go dancing at the Market Hall.



With so many men away in the armed forces during World War 2, there is an acute shortage of people to work on the land, producing vital food supplies. The Women's Land Army recruits young women to fill this need – 87,000 of them by 1943. Publicity posters tend to show pretty, sunlit vistas of rural life, but the reality is rather different, as Kathleen Ormthwaite discovers when she joins up in 1941.

She is 20 years old, and has lived with her parents in Yorkshire and worked in a city office since she left school. Now she finds herself at the other end of England, billeted in a hostel with 30 other girls. Each morning a lorry drops them off in groups at one farm or another, and picks them up at night, with more hard work in between than she has ever imagined! Threshing and rick-building, carting and spreading manure, picking and sorting potatoes, hedging and ditching, clearing and burning brushwood ... there is no end to it. After a week Kathleen has aches and blisters in places she never knew she had.

Lunch means a cheese sandwich eaten on the sheltered side of a hedge in a muddy field, and if the weather is too bad to allow work in the open there are always piles of old sacks to be mended in some freezing outhouse. As a Yorkshire girl Kathleen thought she knew about bad weather, but the rain that comes down off Dartmoor is the wettest and coldest she has ever felt, and the mackintosh provided by the WLA seems as thin as paper. Staying warm on the worst days needs all the clothes she can huddle into.

Luckily Kathleen is strong and healthy, and once she grows used to it she starts to enjoy the work. It becomes a matter of pride to show sceptical farmers that a Land Girl can handle any task thrown at her. The sun does sometimes shine, and she makes good friends among the other girls. Besides, there are the dances held after work in the town's Market Hall. Somehow she can always find energy for those – though if she wants her hair to look respectable it means working in curlers and scarf all day. It takes plenty of scent to cover the aromas of muck-spreading, too! The stone floor of the hall is hard on the feet, but Land Army shoes are tough enough to cope.

There are servicemen billeted all around the district, Poles and Canadians and 'Yanks' as well as British. Kathleen and her friends have no shortage of dancing partners, and at weekends there are walks and picnics with the men of their choice. The warden at Tenby House is strict about having everybody back by 10 o'clock, but that leaves plenty of time for getting to know someone, and several girls are married with their fellows providing a guard of honour.

Kathleen becomes very fond of Jack Hobart, an American sergeant, and they talk of marrying and going to live in the United States; but he is killed in France in 1944, and after the war she returns to Yorkshire still single.

## 1950's – 1960's: Teddy Boy

You are Tony Brooks, a farmer's son born in 1940. At 15 you leave school and find country life too slow, move to Plymouth. You work in a factory, and at weekends dress as a teddy boy, until being called up for National Service.



Tony likes rock and roll music. In particular he likes Bill Haley, and plays 'Rock Around the Clock' on his wind-up gramophone far more often than his family thinks necessary. His father hopes he will take more interest in helping on the farm now that he is about to leave school, but Tony has other ideas. His ambition is to see the world, and to have a motor bike and leather jacket like the picture of Marlon Brando in an American film magazine someone gave him. There is not much hope of that unless he can escape from the farm to a more exciting life elsewhere.

Tony's chance comes in 1956 when he hears that one of his friends from school is going to work in a factory at Plymouth. The wages are better than he could earn nearer home, and after some argument his parents give in and agree that he can go, provided he lodges with an aunt who keeps a boarding house. This doesn't sound very exciting, but it's better than nothing, and he catches the train with high hopes.

Work in the factory turns out to be nearly as hard as on the farm, but at least it's in the town not the country, and there are cafés and dance halls to go to in the evening, with all the rock music anyone could want. Tony discovers the joys of 'teddy boy' fashions, and adopts the long draped jacket, tight trousers and greased quiff of hair that have become the badge of teenage rebellion. His parents would certainly not approve, since 'teds' have a reputation for bad behaviour, but his aunt is short-sighted, so with any luck they won't know.

By 1958 Tony has saved enough to buy his motor bike. He can now take girls on trips up the coast to Torquay, and even let the more favoured ones wear his studded leather jacket! Life is pleasant – but an interruption occurs when he is called up for two years National Service, and finds himself learning drill and peeling potatoes in a windswept army depot, wearing scratchy khaki and regulation short haircut. Then comes a posting to the Middle East. It's not exactly a war, just some argument between the locals, who seem to want to kill each other and anyone else who gets in the way. Ducking bullets while not being allowed to shoot back was not what he had in mind when he used to wish he could go and see the world!

Tony's army service ends in 1960. Somehow the idea of returning to his job in Plymouth has lost its appeal. Everything he left home for has been achieved, and while he was abroad he came round to thinking that his old life on the farm wasn't so bad after all. He picks up his motor bike from the garage where it has been stored, and heads towards Dartmoor.

## 1950's – 1960's: Aspiring Fashion Designer

You are Carol Harding, educated at Okehampton Secondary School. Your parents want you to get a job in a bank, but it is the Swinging Sixties, and you prefer to work at a fashionable boutique in Exeter.



The Hardings keep a small draper's shop in Okehampton. Their daughter Carol was born in 1947, two years after the end of the Second World War, and goes first to the Primary School in North Street (which was first built in the 1870s), and then to the Secondary School in East Street. Her favourite sport is hockey, and she gets into the school team, but finds time to do quite well in English and maths as well. When she leaves school at 16 her parents think she has a good chance of a job in a bank or office, and pay for her to take a secretarial course at the Technical College in Exeter, where she goes each day by train.

Carol has every intention of making a sensible choice of career, but it is hard to concentrate on typing and shorthand when there are so many more exciting things to think of. The year is 1963, everyone is dancing the Twist, and the Beatles 'Yeah, yeah, yeah' is heard from every transistor radio. Somehow their music sounds quite different from anything she has heard before, and seems to make the world brighter and more colourful. She can understand why people scream and faint at their concerts!

Exeter is not exactly a hub of fashion, but it is a lot more up market than Okehampton. Carol admires the stylish clothes and bobbed hair-styles she sees in the shop windows, and copies them as far as her resources allow. Her father says if her skirt was a bit longer it would do for a cake frill, and her efforts to demonstrate the Twist remind him of someone with ants in their pants; but her mother grins and helps her make a stylish shift-dress from a pattern in a magazine.

With her college course completed, Carol looks for a job. She really was going to try Barclays – but a new 'boutique' has opened in Exeter High Street, and she goes in on impulse to see if they need an assistant. They do! Now she is able indulge her taste for trendy styles, and her father really has something to stare at. Soon she can afford to move to a bed-sit in Exeter, and make trips to London at week-ends. As the Swinging Sixties advance, she becomes the complete 'dolly bird' and goes dancing as often as possible in the city's only night club. She thinks of going to live in London for good, but decides it's more fun just to visit the bright lights. Besides, there's a boy-friend called Adam whom she doesn't want to lose contact with.

Carol thinks her lifestyle is the best anyone could want, but by 1969 her enthusiasm is flagging a bit. The latest trends aren't so fresh and exciting any more, and even the Beatles look like breaking up. She goes with Adam to the pop festival on the Isle of Wight to hear Bob Dylan and The Who, but finds too many hippies and drugs there for her liking. The boutique is losing custom, and closes. Adam and Carol decide to marry. He is a commercial artist and wants to start his own business, while Carol has ideas about designing clothes; or if that doesn't work, perhaps she might get a job in a bank.

## 1950's – 1960's: Grandmother

You are Emily Furse, a farmer's wife born at Halwill in 1912. After the railway closes in 1966 you move to Okehampton where your married daughter lives. Although you disapprove of her working in the new International supermarket, you enjoy looking after your grandchildren.



Emily has spent all her life in the tiny village of Halwill, ten miles west of Okehampton. She can just remember the First World War when her father, a blacksmith before he joined the army, was killed at the Battle of Arras in France. She married a young farmer in 1930, and struggled to bring up two daughters through the Depression and the Second World War. Now the children have left home, and her husband died of pneumonia after trying to save his sheep during the dreadful winter of 1963. Emily had to give up the farm, and now lives in a small cottage near her native village, supporting herself on her savings and by cooking and cleaning at a few of the bigger neighbouring houses.

Her daughter Joan lives in Okehampton, married to a builder, and has three small children. She likes to bring them to visit her mother, and can still do so by train to the station at Halwill Junction, but there is talk of the railway line closing, leaving the small parishes it serves quite inaccessible except by car or occasional buses. Joan wants her mother to come to Okehampton, where she and her husband can look after her in case of illness. Emily feels reluctant to leave the village where she grew up, but it has changed so much that she almost feels a stranger there anyway. When the railway finally does close in 1966 she agrees to the move.

After selling her cottage she is able to afford a small terraced house in North Street. It is certainly more cheerful to live in a bustling community, and Emily enjoys the convenience of having shops on the doorstep. She notices however that there are not quite as many small shops as she remembers from previous visits, and even the larger ones are changing. Not long after she comes to Okehampton the big grocery shop in Fore Street is pulled down and replaced by a self-service store, what people nowadays call a 'supermarket'. Joan goes to work there, pressing buttons on the big electric cash register. She has no time to chat to the customers as the assistants did in the old shop, because there are always more people lining up impatiently at the back of the queue.

Emily sometimes shakes her head over all the changes she has seen, although she is only in her fifties. When she was a child nearly all the local traffic in villages like Halwill was still horse-drawn. She hardly ever saw a motor car until after the First World War, and not many then. Now cars are everywhere, and yet travel is getting harder for people like herself who can't afford one. You can still go by rail from Okehampton to Exeter and London, but everyone knows the line will soon close, just as the one to Halwill did. In a few years there will be rockets going to the moon, but no trains to Okehampton!

Still, the changes are not all bad. The electric lights in her little house are a big improvement on the lamps and candles that used to strain her eyes, and electric stoves don't need to be scrubbed and blackleaded. The workhouse that old people were still terrified of being sent to in her childhood is now a hospital. Emily often jokes that she may end up there yet, but younger people don't really understand why this is funny.

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