



Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

Recollections of working at The Mill House Tea Rooms –Lin Hawkins

My employment as a waitress at Mill House Tea Rooms in 1960 began unexpectedly, in fact as I got off the bus from school one day, I heard

“Would you like to work at the tea rooms each weekend”

It was Miss Pat Lloyd

“Err... yes...thank you”

I mumbled

“Good – be here at 1.30 sharp on Saturday”

And that was the start of 3 or 4 years part-time work – weekends & holidays.

You would describe Miss Pat Lloyd as a character. A tall, short sighted person with round national health glasses- she had been an officer in the wrens during the war. And her short hair & brusque manner left her, not unexpectedly, a spinster.

“My father frightened off my only boyfriend”

Was her sole comment on the matter. As far as I could see only one person ever actually intimidated her, this gentleman was the local schools attendance officer. On his not infrequent visits he would find fault with everything, the tea was indifferent or the cakes not sweet enough or too sweet. Nothing was ever right. We girls were not allowed to serve him. Miss Pat Lloyd herself fussed over his every wish, beaming & fawning like a veritable lap dog.

We were relieved, we were village teenage village girls, good at work but socially naïve

The tea rooms were the centre of a busy social milieu. Every day the women from the Gertrude Myers Home in Mill Lane would come down here for morning coffee & afternoon tea, and at the weekends they would come with their visitors as well.



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Meanwhile Brummies' would also arrive for their week end treat, driving in their stately Sunday fashion from as far afield as the Longbridge works, Kings Norton or even Wolverhampton.

Parking was often mayhem. Once the car park next to the garage was full, cavalier drivers would park all down Hoden Lane, or on the Main Street, or the pub car park. Sunny summer afternoons would see queues at the door. And on those days the three of us waitresses, each looking after four tables, would be anticipating our 15minutes rest in the kitchen with great relish. There were Cleeve Prior people as well, but not at weekends.

I shall always particularly remember the tea rooms in winter, with a good peat fire burning in the grate, and on the shelves & fireplace, a pretty selection of goods for sale. For the Lloyd sisters sold not only teas, but Wade pottery, brought each Monday from Birmingham, and special cakes ordered by locals for birthdays & Christmas and daily consumption. They also sold home-made jam & biscuits.

Almost everything was home cooked, supplied from the kitchen garden opposite the tea rooms, [now part of the garden of 1, School Cottages]. There were all the fruits and vegetables you could desire.

What could have been better? My first job, wonderful pay, pleasant employees, and all the tea room tips divided equally among all of us.

Well one thing could. Our uniform. No smart black and white set up for us. Instead we were made to wear the Misses Lloyds old summer dresses, sleeves cut off, and any pastel or flowered old frock was ours. Uggh!



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We may have been village girls, but we wore miniskirts and smart tops, with a hint of makeup round the eyes and heels as high as we dared. A cut down 19wo's utility frock was shameful, but the abominations did not last for long, as Mr Lloyd the sisters brother was a gentleman's outfitter in Evesham, with a very posh wife. She made it gratingly clear that this was an upmarket tea room and should have waitresses to match. Soon we had smart nylon overalls, and indeed we did look elegant.

We waitresses fell into the habit of how we should serve customers. First present them with a cheery Hello, and leave them with the menu. We would then return and take the order on our own pad and then return to the kitchen hatch to write the order up on a wipe board. The hatch would open and Miss Betty Lloyd who seated the customers & took the money, would inform the kitchen of the culinary delicacies required, and bang the hatch was closed.

And those teas were memorable. A pot of tea, sugar lumps were mandatory, bread cut in impossibly wafer thin by pat Lloyd herself, and a variety of sandwiches, boiled eggs, scones, jam & fruit cake. In the summer you could add strawberries and cream to the menu and in the winter, there came a popular choice, toasted tea cakes.

Of course laying the tables before opening, filling the jam pots for tomorrow and dusting the cabinets was mundane and boring, but if I were lucky, about once every three weeks, I would spend a delightful afternoon, sitting in front of the grill toasting myself and of course the tea cakes, what a treat!

I was young, but this was the Mill House Tea Rooms, It was my first job and I was proud of it.