

## The Whitsun Parade

The children in our street loved the Whitsun Parade, or Whitsun Walk as we called it. This was a custom that took place on the seventh Sunday after Easter every year. This special day was to celebrate the churches and chapels being built. Elders of the chapel, members, and children of the congregation all took part. Our family belonged to the Congregational Chapel, which is now called the United Reform Church. We were accompanied by St Peters Church and the Salvation Army, which had a small band that would accompany the hymn singing. All would congregate outside their place of worship then join in one long parade. Each place of worship had its own banner proudly held by some of the older teenage boys. Children a little younger would proudly hold the gold silk cords attached to them.

Everyone wore their best clothes for the parade. There was much excitement in our house as sometimes we had a new dress for this special day. My mother liked to dress us four younger girls all the same. If it was not possible we certainly wore something very similar or the same colour. There was a time in the nineteen-forties when we wore straw bonnets adorned with artificial flowers and tied with ribbon. These bonnets caused our heads to itch and we scratched madly as if we had head lice. My mother scolded us, looking so upset; my sisters and I giggled but didn't complain too much because we so loved the pretty bonnets and there was so little my mother bought that wasn't practical and made to last. I can always remember the sun being warm upon our heads as we marched and sang hymns. Mothers and fathers stood in doorways and waved to us as we marched by. Never in my memory was there a wet walk out with umbrellas dripping with rain.

When we reached Senghenydd Square where the war memorial is situated, we would stop and with heads bowed and a special hymn and prayer would be rendered. After the parade we returned to our respective church or chapel and a small Whitsun tea was served in the downstairs room where the children's Sunday School classes were held. Small tables and chairs were set out. The tea was very modest, just a couple of dainty sandwiches, tinned spam or salmon, plus a couple of iced fairy cakes. It would delight us nonetheless as if it was a huge banquet. The small plastic beaker of cordial served from a large white enamel jug brought delight too – it tasted heavenly after the singing and the walk.

Hanging on the wall of our Sunday School room was a large coloured print of Jesus. All around him were little children from different countries with different skin colours and different dress, all smiling. I loved the picture so much. I believe it still hangs there.

