

THE HIKE

"Jan, RUN, RUN" shrieked Olive, frantically putting on her shoes and taking off through the trees. As I bent to put on mine I saw him standing a few yards away, motionless, menacing but most terrifying of all, completely naked. I started to run but he was after me. I saw his arm reach out, saw the big black wrist watch

We had started out early that morning full of enthusiasm little realizing what was to befall us later in the day. Dressed in our Girl Guide uniforms, each carrying a haversack containing food, sketch book, pens and compass, we were embarking on an 11 mile hike as part of the test to obtain a First Class Badge. The instructions were to keep off roads and use mainly tracks and common land, to sketch, identify trees and plants and later write up a log of our day.

It was a beautiful early September day. We were happy in each others company having been friends since we started school at 5. We caught the 301 bus which took us to our starting point the road leading to the village of Adlbury, a very popular destination in the Chilterns, where the Stocks and remnants of the witches ducking pond still exist. We bought an ice cream and a postcard at the village store, popped into the church and copied some inscriptions, then set off for the walk up a long track to the Bridgewater Monument, built to commemorate the construction of the Grand Union Canal by the Earl of Bridgewater. For 3 pence you could go to the top of the Monument, climbing the narrow steps around and around whilst the people coming down had to squeeze by. At the top it was possible to look out over the surrounding countryside. It was a great place for family picnics, donkey rides and walks. Of course this day we didn't have time to dally but continued on our walk through Frithsden Copse.

The sun was high in the sky, the air balmy, just a light breeze as two very tired girls trudged along. Olive glanced at her watch "Can we stop and have our lunch, I'm really tired". I didn't need any coaxing and so we happily flopped down on the grass, chatted away about our progress and munched our food. I suggested we speed up our progress by taking an easier route

via a nearby gated road with a lodge, "I don't know" said Olive, "we're supposed to keep off roads". "Come on" I said, "Whose going to know, we can go back on the track further along". Olive needed a bit more convincing but after a bit of bickering this is what we did, eventually turning off the road and going along the edge of a corn field where we chatted to a family having a picnic.

After a while we were back in the woods. I started to lag behind "My feet are killing me let's take off our shoes". Olive agreed so we sat on the grass and rubbed our feet, what a relief. Suddenly Olive let out a gasp "There's a man down there, I don't like the looks of him, let's go back". "We can't do that" I said "Let's keep walking" That's when our hike became a nightmare.

In a flash Olive had gone, running through the trees.

"Don't be scared girl" said the man, his hand brushing my arm, as I started to run, I veered to the right then to the left, why weren't my legs responding. I don't know how I managed to avoid his reach but somehow I did. With my lungs bursting I was suddenly out into the corn field running, running. I reached the picnickers, I was safe.

What followed is somewhat of a blur. I was taken to the lodge on the gated road where the police were called. It was about an hour before they arrived. By this time I was beside myself as to what had happened to Olive so the police agreed to take me to her house before getting me home.

Olive's Mum came to the door. "Thank God, thank God, Olive thought you had been murdered, she's in her room". Olive was called and we all went into the front room where Olive described how the man had zoomed by her on a motor bike with his shirt flying open and no shoes on his feet.

Unfortunately there was no counselling in those days. The local paper printed our names and addresses which caused quite a stir. We both had trouble deciding whether we should go back to Guides as the incident affected us badly but eventually we did and became First Class Guides. Although it's more than 58 years ago, Olive and I still talk about that day. It has remained vivid in our mind

