

Jacky Daydream remembers



In this autobiographical extract, novelist Jacqueline Wilson (born 1945) recalls shopping trips with her grandma and her pretend friend Gwennie. After World War 2 (1939–1945), Britain was very short of money. To ensure that the food and clothes available were shared fairly, people were only allowed certain amounts. The amounts each person could have, and when these were used, were written in a 'ration book'.

Shopping was very different in those days. I loved going to Sainsbury's, but it wasn't a big supermarket with aisles and open shelves and trolleys. The Kingston Sainsbury's then had beautiful mosaic-tiled walls like an oriental boudoir. You queued at the butter counter and watched some white-overalled wizard take the butter and pat it into place with big wooden paddles. You couldn't afford very much butter so you always had margarine too. They were both so hard you had to butter the end of the loaf and then slice it. There wasn't any such thing as ready-sliced bread in packets then.

Then you queued at the cheese counter until another white-garbed lady sliced off the exact amount of cheese for you with a wire and ticked your ration book. You queued at the bacon counter and watched the bacon boy (who always wore a pencil behind his ear) use the scary bacon slicer, cutting your four rashers of best back bacon into wavy ribbons on greaseproof paper. You could queue for a whole *hour* in Sainsbury's and still come out with precious little in your string shopping bag.

Then we'd go to John Quality's on the corner by the market. It was another grocer's, with big sacks of sugar and nuts and dried fruit spread out on the floor, just the right height for me. I was always a very good girl, but Gwennie sometimes darted her hand into a sack and pulled out a dried plum, just like Little Jack Horner in the nursery-rhyme book at home.

Then we'd trail round the market, maybe queuing for plaice or cod or yellow smoked haddock from the fish stall on a Friday, spending a long time haggling at the fruit stall and the veg stall. You could get bananas and oranges now the war was over, but everything was strictly seasonal and none of us had ever even *heard* of exotic things like kiwi fruit or avocado pears or butternut squash. Fruit meant apples and pears, veg meant cabbage and carrots and cauliflower. The frozen pea hadn't even been invented. We didn't have a fridge or freezer anyway.

