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# The Sideboard

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Date

Monday 22 January 2018

## A Guest Blog from Maureen Jessop

'What's tha doing round there?' came the voice from the worn brown leather chair. This was a question my brothers and I heard every time we visited our grandparents. The voice was grandad's. The sin was going too close to the sideboard.

The sideboard was even older than the chair, acquired at least second hand when my grandparents married. There was no money for new stuff just after the war that didn't end all wars. It was a grand piece of dark wood with drawers, cupboards, shelves, one large and two small mirrors.

Of course we weren't interested in the whole sideboard, only one corner of the second draw down – the home of a white paper bag full of Riley's Chocolate Toffee Rolls. We were always allowed to have some but we had to wait until grandad felt the time was right and he had to get them out and offer them to us.

He was definitely cantankerous. You had to be careful around him as he was quick to show his displeasure. Apparently he hadn't been an easy person to live with as his children grew up, being a champion shouter with a bad temper and bouts of violence.

Who knows what made him that way. Maybe his upbringing in a big family in the slums; or that his chance of becoming a jockey was scuppered when his drunken mother tore up the forms; or the horror of the trenches where his brother was killed and he was injured and taken prisoner; or maybe it was just the hard life endured by the working class of that generation.

But a kind side was revealed by the sweets ritual and when his children were young he couldn't eat his dinner without sharing it with them. And we weren't scared of him, his displeasure didn't stop us going near the sideboard – it reminded him of our treat.

One source of his annoyance came from people who got his name wrong – 'me name's Tom not Thomas'. He now lies in a shared grave, beneath a headstone that marks the life of 'Thomas Cooper'. The general consensus about this abomination was "e'll be playing 'ell wherever 'e is!"

And the sideboard – it's still going strong but, sadly, not Riley's Chocolate Toffee Rolls.



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