

The Small Ones by Adrienne Wallman

I was very frightened when I first went into the orchard. Well I'd never seen anything like it before. Then one of the tall ones came towards me – and I bit her! She wasn't at all happy – well I didn't know she was nice and friendly; all the tall ones I'd met before had been nasty to me. Then I bit another tall one – on the leg while he was out working on the fruit trees. Apparently he's now very important – Mayor of Lancaster (whatever that is). I think he's forgiven me.

I go into the orchard practically every day now – I enjoy the smells. Every blade of grass and every leaf has a different smell and you can pick up messages left by other small ones. I leave a lot of messages myself. Sometimes there are interesting things to eat, like little white crunchy crumbs left outside the back gates. I go up every time to check because I assume they've been left especially for me, but the tall ones always tell me to 'come on!'. I like to take my time – the tall ones are always in such a rush – 'come on!' they keep saying. I ignore them.

Unlike most of my small friends I'm not that keen on running about and chasing balls. However, I do love to meet the other small ones – apart from Ted – we just snarl and snap at each other. Unfortunately he's got arthritis now and doesn't get out as much, which is a shame. I think I've known Molly the longest. We sniff each other's bottoms – how on earth do the tall ones get to know each other as they never sniff?

Recently we've been walking on the new path. I don't really like it as much as they've put wooden planks down, presumably so the tall ones don't get their feet wet. But it's hard on our small feet which can easily get caught in the spaces. Still, I understand that if the fields and orchards weren't here we would have roads and houses – and they don't smell interesting at all.

Marcey and the Farmer

Introduction –

Marcey Clegg lived in Fairfield for over 50 years before moving to the Wirral to be near her son. She and her husband came here in 1964 when her husband became the first professor of physics at Lancaster University. She and I met while walking our dogs and I gradually discovered that she too was a physicist: she'd met her husband when they were both postgraduate students at Cambridge and they later met again when doing postdoctoral research in California. She used to tell me fascinating stories of life in Fairfield before the building of the Abraham Heights estate. This is based on one of her stories:

Marcey and the Farmer – an Imagined Meeting

The farmer brings his cows across the path – I haven't seen him because it was about 50 years ago. Marcey told me about him. She remembers him from the days before the houses were built. The stone pillars are still there leading into the field. His farm is at the top. So what did he look like? I expect he wore a hat – well people did in those days. And he smoked a pipe – people did in those days. I expect he had a staff to urge the cows along. He was probably a bit gruff. I doubt whether he would have spoken to Marcey but he might have done. She never said and now I can't ask her because she's moved to the Wirral. So let's imagine a conversation between the bluff speaking farmer and the professor's wife – and physicist in her own right which I only discovered very recently. Did they talk about milking cows or did they talk about physics? Maybe the farmer was secretly interested in physics and had never had the chance to discuss it before. I don't think Marcey was fascinated by cows. So let's leave them considering the origins of the universe as the cows amble across the field and lie down in the grass.