

Chapter 19: The Handyman

Grandad was extremely “*handy*” and, as a child, it appeared to me that he could make almost anything, particularly from wood. When we were growing up, he had a well-equipped workshop at the back of his house and would often make things for us. This ability to make all kinds of different things was clearly seen during this period.

He made a range of things for the various houses in which he lived over this period and for the houses of family members and friends. Once, in 1930, he faced a challenge because a new suite and bed had been delivered but they could not get the wardrobe upstairs. So, grandad “*sawed*” the wardrobe and then reassembled it the next day! He also did things for the outside of the houses where he lived, that is in the back yard and garden and again for those of family members and friends. In May 1938, he “*fitted up*” a bird aviary. Mum recalled that this was at the back of the Station Street shop. There is a picture of her in front of this. In July 1938, he laid a brick path to the aviary and mum is pictured standing on this.

Of course, my recollections are of him making things for us when we were children and he did this for those family members who were children at the time. For his nephew, Leonard¹, he made two rabbit hutches and a box to hold his “*maccano [sic]*”.² For his other nephews, Basil³ and Roy⁴, he made a barrow and a toboggan.⁵ He also made Basil a dog kennel. Mum was born in 1934 and, from that point, he made various things for her. This included a swing frame, a table, a cupboard, a scooter and, perhaps oddly, a clothes horse and a mangle.



Mum at back of Station St in front of the aviary grandad built



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At the start of the 1920s, factory-made radios were very expensive, so it was [common to construct home-made ones](#) as this was possible for “*almost any family who was handy with simple tools*”. This definitely described grandad and so he made “*wirelesses*”⁶ for several family members. He appears to have been more interested in making and mending the radios than in recording what he listened to although he does note this in passing in several places in his diaries. In August 1931, he listened to “*Dunmo Flitch*”, an ancient folk custom in which couples compete to win a pig’s carcass or flitch.⁷

Home-made radio receiver from the United States in 1925

¹ John and Olive’s son

² Presumably, this refers to [Meccano](#).

³ Cyril and Minnie’s son

⁴ Arthur and Eva’s son

⁵ At this point, Basil would have been 11 and Roy nine. It is perhaps noteworthy that he did not record making a toboggan for Olive, Roy’s sister, who would have been 12 at the time.

⁶ While this is now a dated term, radios were commonly referred to as “*the wireless*” in those days.

⁷ More details are available [here](#) including a radio broadcast from 1938.