

For toys we had old sardine and salmon tins with a bit of smoking waste which we pulled along paths out into the veld. Then there were the clay oxen and the Dolos - the knuckle-bone of an ox shaped like a cake of Palmolive soap. And, Oh Boy! What fun we had with these simple home-made toys. See the toys of today.

How we looked forward to receiving and spending our weekly Saturday tickey - or sixpence if you swept the garden paths. Today these coins would buy you nothing; yet as late as 1912 one could buy a cup of tea and three buns for sixpence here in East London.

Mentioning coins - the old tickey (threepence) has gone out of circulation and so has the half crown (two shillings and sixpence). The florin (two shillings, today twenty cents) was known by the natives as a Scotsman because some traded them off as half crowns.

Apart from the games of cricket, football, tennis etc, we had the schoolboy games, Bok Bok, Kennetjie, Hassie etc. Today these games are never seen and I doubt if present-day boys know what they are.

To digress for a while, regarding the word Dolos which today has become well-known, not as an ox bone but in connection with concrete blocks. The East London Harbour Engineer, Mr Merrifield, produced a concrete block shaped more like an anchor and not the usual square block, which, for some reason best known to himself, he named the "Dolos". These have proved so successful in strengthening the breakwater and withstanding the heavy seas that they have been adopted by many countries and he has refused any payment or Royalty for his invention or whatever one might call it. As a matter of interest, a short while ago the little island of Tristan da Cunha, where they have always had trouble with their small harbour, asked for some assistance and Mr Merrifield was asked to go to their assistance and instruct them in the making of Dolos blocks with the two or three moulds he took over. He travelled over in the South African arctic ship, the R.S.A. The islanders were so pleased that they wanted to start making them right away, but for some unknown reason, the British Government stipulated that the cement used had to be imported from England and that would take time. However, I believe that they have had great success with the blocks.

My parents then living in Maseru, Basutoland where my Dad was employed by the Government as chief telegraphist, found that on the 14th April 1893 they had an extra responsibility as on that day I was born. My being born in Basutoland was, as I shall relate later, the reason for my being taken to Rome by the Italians in whose hands I was being held as a Prisoner of War after the fall of Tobruk. Now however, before going further, let me introduce you to my family.