

F.E.L. COMPETITION: Climate Change

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

by Gran

Approx 550 words

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Although the first snow of the year was usually in November, it always took us pleasantly by surprise. We were lucky enough to have a wireless which even in those days gave a weather forecast, but our parents kept that information from us as they knew we'd have a sleepless night with excitement.

The first excitement when Mum opened the curtains was to look for icicles as the snow had crept up the windows, blocking outside views of the depth of the snow. Icicles had to be about a foot long or we were disappointed. Soon the heat from the blazing coal fire helped to clear the single glazed windows and we pushed each other to get the first view.

It was wartime and we accepted rationing, but we knew we wouldn't be allowed over the doorstep without our everyday breakfast of French toast. We were lucky to have hens, kept in their coops in cold weather, but a very acceptable addition to our ration. Every Saturday I had to visit old folks with a single egg for each one, but that would not be possible today for they lived too far away.

We couldn't wait to get into our warm clothes, usually cast down from older siblings as new clothes were rationed as well as food. Most garments were knitted, including a long scarf crossed over our body and pinned at the back for extra warmth. We missed big brother who was serving abroad as he had always been good at pulling the sledges back up the hill to help the young ones. He could also take us on his sledge and whizz down the hill faster than a car. At that time there

were only two cars in the street which were stored away till the end of the war as all petrol was kept for 'The War Effort'. This meant we had the road to ourselves which served as our own personal piste in our snowy wonderland. The snow had always melted inside our wellies but that didn't stop us enjoying a healthy outdoor life every Saturday or on school holidays. Our school days were never allowed school closures because of the extreme weather conditions, even when the snow depth was above our wellies

We didn't mind when pedestrians trampled down the snow to give an icy surface, specially to the bigger children with ice skates. Sadly there was no consideration given to the elderly struggling along to collect their message rations. I was often asked to perform this errand for them with the promise of a ha'penny when they got change, but they never managed to get change, and Mum wouldn't allow me to take it anyway.

This was our normal lifestyle every winter only half an hour's journey south of Falkirk, albeit our location was high enough to boast a Sanatorium and the first Television mast because of its altitude. We had a happy childhood despite living through the war, and part of me thinks it's a pity that none of my greatgrandchildren have experienced such happy days at no cost during their lifetime.

Of course I am happy that I don't have to cope with such treacherous conditions in my maturity. If we do have a small snowfall I know I will not starve as I have enough food to last till the rain returns in my freezer. However, we sometimes get a wakeup fright, remembering the shocks of suffering 'The Beast from the East' a few years ago, loved by the young and hated by the mature. Could it happen again?

I am a keen gardener and I love the fact that mild Autumns extend the growing season of plants and vegetables and being able to enjoy summer blooms often lasting till late October and sometimes till Spring. Frosty days are few.

But what of the future beyond my lifespan? Will we end up with constant glorious days of sunshine without the need to travel abroad to get a tan, even when we know that is such a dangerous habit? Lack of rain would endanger our self-supporting farming industry and many others, not to mention the healthy need of water each of us enjoys for healthy living.

Nowadays the thousands of visitors who visit Britain know about our inclement weather but are happy to accept rain and cold as part of the deal because of the beauty produced by the weather. In future centuries, if climate change gradually results in higher temperatures, there will be a shortage of natural rain curtailing depths of water in rivers and seas.

Adversely, should rainfalls increase at the present rate low-lying towns and villages will disappear below flooding level and new buildings will have to be considered on higher mountain slopes. Looking ahead to distant centuries brave divers could be looking for our treasures to educate historians about life in the past in places like Falkirk.

This all sounds far-fetched to cynics, but a lot of climate change can happen in only one century. I need to think back no further than my own experience in the happy days of almost one century ago. Do the powers that be with the aid of AI have the answers or is it time to enforce legislation on everyone to educate that it is criminal to disregard the warnings previously half-heartedly given? It's human nature not to worry about future problems. This is a wonderful world, bruised in many areas

by Mankind. Perhaps in some miraculous way Mother Nature will again show her power by sorting out the problems of Climate Change and we will enjoy appropriate weather conditions naturally. Time will tell.