

Glaswegians of a certain vintage will readily recall the days when children played outdoors from dawn till dusk. 'Are you coming up for your lunch?' was often met with the standard reply, 'can you just chuck me down a piece, mum?' A jam sandwich was duly despatched from a second-floor tenement window, perhaps tucked safely inside a brown paper bag your mum had procured from the corner shop, although normally it would simply fly unprotected through the air and whether or not its intended target managed to catch it was immaterial. The grubby paws awaiting the tasty 'treat' probably hadn't seen soap and water for a few hours so it was no big deal, not where it was going. Bacteria and viruses weren't around until the 1980s!

But that was Glasgow tenement life: there were no rules in the back court play areas where children spent the bulk of their time. No day excursions to the museum or cafe on Byres Road for 60s and 70s kids. Daybreak till nightfall was spent playing peever, tig or myriad other contemporary games.

And one learned to improvise from an early age, which meant utilising whatever you could find, be it an old tyre, tin bath or length of rope, which could effortlessly be converted into a swing.

I was brought up in a Maryhill tenement and that sometimes meant 'raking the midgies' for 'luckies', or, to put it another way, checking to see what others, perhaps slightly better off, had dumped in their rubbish bins for weekly collection by the cleansing department!

Parents seemed content, nay, delighted, that their offspring were happy to spend the bulk of the school holidays running around completely unsupervised from day to day. No computer games or an endless supply of DVDs to watch. You made your own entertainment and, if fortunate enough, a couple of 'ginger' bottles would come your way, which allowed you to march proudly into the corner shop and exchange them for a few sweets. Nothing extravagant – just a toffee 'frying pan' or penny caramel.

Then it was back out to play until the first patches of darkness began to fill the early evening sky.