



Eating Ivory

Thanks to Geoff Garnett, Editor of 'The Dental Historian' who passed us this item from G.H. Roberts, of Banff.

Every now and then in the 1930s Cousin Herbert, an elderly man with fair but thinning hair, used to call at my grandmother's farm house, "Fir Grange" near Harrogate. Cousin Herbert worked in Sheffield where he was employed in the manufacture of cutlery with ivory handles. Whenever he visited Cousin Herbert brought with him a heavy little package full of ivory dust and from this my grandmother made a junket using milk. Both ingredients were held to be good for the development of bones and teeth in children. My younger brother and I were obliged to eat the junket but our enthusiasm for this delight was minimal.

By chance the other day I came across a recipe for "Ivory Jelly" in a mid-nineteenth century cookery book full of conventional recipes, and others strange. This was the recipe for "Ivory Jelly":-Put half a pound (22.7g) of ivory powder into three pints (1.70 litres) of cold water, let it simmer until reduced to one and a half pints (0.85 litres); when cold take the jelly carefully from the sediment; add to it the juice of a lemon, half the peel, 2 or 3 cloves, and sugar to taste, warm it till quite dissolved, then strain it". There was no recommendation that ivory jelly bequeathed the alleged marvellous memory of elephants. (1)

(1) "Modern Domestic Cookery, based on the well-known work of Mrs Rundell and adapted for Private Families by A Lady", John Murray, London, 1855.