

'When Me Was A Boy'

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INSTITUTE of Jamaica Publications' latest title will take readers back to the Kingston of fifty years and more ago, seen from a young boy's point of view. That young boy was Charles Hyatt, who went everywhere, from Hope Gardens to Bournemouth Bath, watched everything, asked questions, had adventures, and registered it all in his remarkable memory.

Listeners to Hyatt's popular radio series, 'When Me Was A Boy', will remember how vividly he brought the Kingston of those days alive. Now over seventy of those programmes have been gathered into the book 'When Me Was A Boy' so

that those memories will survive in a more lasting form.

Extraordinary talent

Charles Hyatt has an extraordinary talent for reconstructing the past. School, friends, home and family all become real to us together with other characters and the life of the streets. He describes all kinds of outstanding occasions and the joys — and sorrows — of Christmas.

'When Me Was A Boy' is one of those rare books which makes the reader laugh out loud — at Charles'

town boy visit to the country, his encounter with a so-called dentist, his attempts at being stylish. And there are more thoughtful moments, particularly when he writes about his mother and his two grandmothers who gave him a great sense of his past and where he was coming from.

This collection takes the reader back to the Kingston of the 1930s and 1940s. Everything is seen through the schoolboy's eyes: the streets of Kingston with almost more mule carts than cars and tramcars instead of buses; the busy life of

those streets, higglers calling their wares, gangs of workmen singing their digging songs, street entertainers, against a background of school life and home.

All teachers flogged

From his point of view, all teachers flogged, the black heart man would get you if you were troublesome, the fastest food was what you shared with your school friends, sitting outside the baker's shop, home and family were a solid part of your life, whichever house you were in, and Christmas was the high

point of the year — and had its dramatic moments.

After reading Hyatt's book, it is possible to see traces of the old Kingston around us, just as it is possible to see the tramlines of the old tramcar days surfacing here and there through the asphalt.

'When Me Was A Boy' is the first in a new series, Heritage Books, being introduced by the Institute of Jamaica Publications Limited. It was launched yesterday, December 18 and will be on the market in time for Christmas giving.

— Contributed