

## **D for donkey stone**

They say women had a life of drudgery before the advent of washing machines, dishwashers and vacuum cleaners but I sometimes wonder if they didn't have too much time on their hands when you consider that they spent some of that precious time on pointless tasks like donkey-stoning the door step. My mother was highly critical of her neighbours who were lazy or slovenly if they didn't mop their step at least once a week. The front door step and the pavement immediately outside the house had to be swept thoroughly. Then a bucket of hot soapy water and scrubbing brush would be carried through from the kitchen. Step and window sill would be scrubbed. Fresh water to rinse off the soap. Then came the donkey stone, so called because of the imprint of a donkey on the hard yellow stone. Donkey stones were given away by the rag and bone man in exchange for old clothes. The stone was rubbed into the damp door step in a rectangle of yellow which dried to white, leaving clear demarcation lines, ruler straight, and a margin at the each edge of the step. I became adept at jumping from the pavement straight into the front room as, woe betide you, if you left an imprint of shoe on freshly donkey-stoned step.

\*\*\*\*\*