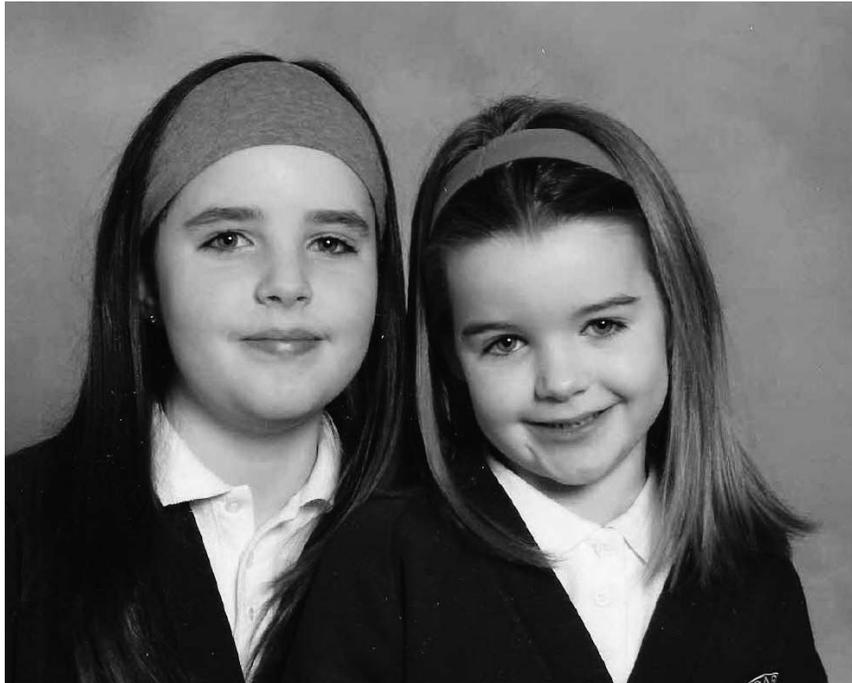




Winter scene showing Whitworth with Brown Wardle in the background

In the shadow of Brown Wardle

By Beryl Howarth



This has been written for my lovely grandchildren Charlotte and Jenna who were born into a very different age to the one in which I was a child.

It started off as a short account of life in the 1930s and 1940s but as the old saying goes like "Topsy, It Just Grewed".

I hope they can understand the way life was then. Charlotte is the thoughtful one and Jenna I am afraid could be a chip off the old block.

BH



Beryl Howarth

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The aerial photograph on page 4 by courtesy of Google Earth 2006

The people and events recorded in this book are as they are recalled by the author many years later. Any errors or inaccuracies are regretted.

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**WHITWORTH - an
aerial view 2006**

Chapter One - FEELING THE PINCH

They've done it" somebody yelled, "they've bloody well done it". "Done what" shouted another disembodied voice from an upstairs window? "Declared war" came back the first voice as heads popped out of windows and doors, the voice went on. "Chamberlain has just announced it on the wireless" the second voice chipped in "so much for peace in our time then".

We kids looked up from playing peggy, hopscotch or marbles, but soon lost interest and went back to play, it didn't concern us, peggy was more exciting at this moment. As we clouted a piece of wood cut from the end of a cricket stump and then tapered at the end with a knife. When you tapped the tapered bit with a bat it flew up in the air and you belted it as hard as you could up the street, the winner was the one who hit it furthest.

Our street ran down from the only main road in the village, it was compacted dirt not having been cobbled and on one side was a terrace of back to back houses while the other side had a terrace of modernised buildings which had originally been back to back dwellings but had been knocked through and had bathrooms added. The next street beyond the back to back houses had another terrace of houses backing on to them and across the street from them was a factory. Originally the three streets had been called North Street, Middle Street and South Street but now the fronts of the modernised houses were re-named School Terrace and the back doors were still in Middle Street

We, the Halstead family, lived in the fourth house from the bottom in the modernised houses next door to the Clegg family. We were father, mother, brother Gerald and myself Beryl, father and mother were Dora and Samuel. We had moved there from the fish and chip shop on the main road. Next door to us on the uphill side was the Clegg family, there were six of them, mum, dad, Harold, Cyril, Doreen and Phyllis, on the downhill side were an elderly couple from Belgium, Mr and Mrs Bishop and daughter Alice.

It was September the third Nineteen Thirty Nine and peggy was more exciting than war to the kids playing in the village where we were born. The village sprawled untidily among the Pennines, equidistant from Manchester, Oldham and Ashton-Under-Lyne in the south and Accrington, Burnley and Blackburn to the north.

Whitworth was a cotton village nestling comfortably under the benign shadow of Brown Wardle with Middle Hill and Hades Hill stretching further up the valley. Most of the inhabitants worked in one or other of the many mills dotted around the village. The large black square buildings which housed the huge machines that were part of our daily lives were turning out cotton cloth for the clothing and bedding industries. All of the mills had tall chimneys belching black smoke up into the grey skies and most of the trees growing in the valley were black and stunted from the years of grime that had been laid on them from the chimneys. In the early mornings you didn't hear the dawn chorus around here,



The Fish and Chip shop in 2007



School Terrace 2007- the school was to the left of the picture



A picture of me at 2 years old

the rattle of the iron shod clogs clattering down the cobbled streets as the mill workers headed for their daily grind blotted out any birds that might have the temerity to brave the thick sooty breeze blowing down the valley.

My dad was a striker in the quarry for my grandad; who was a blacksmith making tools for quarrymen. The quarry was in a place called Whitewell Bottom near Rawtenstall and my father rode his bicycle there daily. How my grandfather got there I do not know but presume it was by bus or tram as there were few private cars around in the nineteen thirties. I remember running up the street to meet my dad on the dark winter evenings so that I could be taken up on to his bike to ride the last few yards home. Even though it was coming on to winter and darkness came early all the shops were lit up, the lights spilling out across the pavements competing with the street lamps to dispel the shadows, then, along came the war and total darkness quickly followed!!

I don't know when it was decreed that all lights which shone on the streets should be extinguished but this is what happened as a consequence of the war. Not one chink of light was to show, every one with legitimate business out after dark carried a torch which had to be shaded so that it did not offer a target for enemy aircraft.

All vehicles had to have their headlights covered with a grill and every house had to have blackout curtains or blinds at the windows, wardens patrolled the streets to enforce the regulations. No more street lamps and the brightly lit shops were in darkness.

When it was announced in September that we were at war with Germany I was six years old but when my father enlisted for service in the army I was seven having had a birthday in the meantime. Dad was one of the first people in our village to join up. Why? Who knows. I don't think my mother knew although my grandfather might have had some idea..

Our family had been going downhill steadily, financially, for a number of years my dad's wage - like most other people's at that time - was just enough to keep body and soul together. But after he left we began to learn what real poverty felt like. First to go was the electricity because the bill had not been paid. We did our school work and reading by candle light and my mother did most of the cooking on an open coal fire. At first it was quite exciting the nightly ritual of collecting the candles, lighting them and dribbling a little hot wax on to the saucer and standing a candle in the wax before it could set; far cheaper than candle sticks, which we

could not afford anyhow. The candles were lit and placed at strategic positions around the room so that my brother and myself could do schoolwork and afterwards read our comics - Dandy and Beano were in vogue at the time and we were brought up on "Desperate Dan and my namesake "Beryl The Peril".

My brother Gerald was twenty months older than me and we fought like cat and dog over just about everything. So lighting the candles became a contest between the two of us who could light the most and get the biggest pool of light, to read our comic.

The candles cast huge shadows on the walls and if you looked up from your book you could see a giant silhouette of yourself hunched over the table. We could also produce great shadow pictures with our hands. The other side of the coin was the eerie frightening feeling if you were left on your own for any reason, like the time my mum was in bed with



Gerald and me

bronchitis and as I sat downstairs reading I also listened to the laboured breathing coming from the upstairs room where my mother was sleeping. My fevered imagination soon began to work overtime; what if the breathing stopped, would I find the courage to go up the stairs or would I sit huddled in the chair until someone came. It felt like hours that I waited with my ears standing out on stalks hoping the rasping breath would not stop. Of course it didn't and my brother arrived home from the pictures unaware of the near panic that my mind had created.



Brother Gerald

The thought of the house burning down with all of us in it never crossed our minds. But it must have been a distinct possibility, especially when our mum cooked chips. The chip pan was set on an iron trivet which then swivelled round into the flames and when the dripping was up to heat the potatoes pieces were dropped in, making a great spluttering

sound as they went. An old soot blackened kettle sat on the trivet at the opposite side of the fire and if we needed to cook bigger items of food such as a joint of beef then the fire was turned towards the fire oven by a damper.

Our kitchen floors were of red tile and the hall had little square black and white tiles and one of my jobs on Fridays after school was to scrub the hall tiles on my hands and knees, but the kitchen tiles were polished by my mother. The rest of the downstairs had concrete floors, cold and bare to the feet especially in winter. We also kept livestock!! Not very welcome livestock either. When we got up in the mornings and opened the curtains to let the light in the floor was covered with cockroaches, as soon as the light hit them they began scurrying away under the cupboards and down the cracks to get away from the daylight. Then before you put on your shoes you had to have an inspection or you could find your socks covered with little squashed beasties, ugh!

Our winter evenings were spent making peg rugs to relieve the bareness of the concrete floor. Most houses had an assortment of colourful peg rugs which were made by cutting up old coats and trousers into strips and threading the strips through a sacking material forming intricate patterns from the different coloured cloths.

When we kids came home from school in the evening we had to light the fire so the house would be warm when Mam came home from work and she could get on with cooking the tea. First the ashes from the previous nights fire had to be raked out, the wood chopped and placed upon scrunched up

newspaper in the grate, small pieces of coal and cinders placed on top and finally a match was put to the paper. If you were lucky the wood caught fire and this in turn caused the coal to begin to burn, if you were unlucky you had to go through the whole rigmarole again.

My brother always seemed to be on the missing list when fire lighting was on the menu and it usually fell to me to do the job and I just didn't seem to be able to get the hang of it which meant a cuff round the ear later. Then I learned a valuable lesson from a kid down the street called (would you believe) Benny Pod. If you got a big sheet of newspaper and held it very close across the opening after you had lit the paper in the grate, then pulled the damper full out you stood a better chance of the wood taking hold. The big snag; the sheet of newspaper usually caught alight as well and you had to be quick shoving it into the grate from where the back draught drew it up the chimney and it appeared at the top in a shower of sparks.

Trouble seemed to follow me around, if there was any about I was in the middle of it. If there were clouts flying I always seemed to be on the receiving end. I always had this feeling that lads got away with everything and maybe if I had been born a boy things would have been different. Our front door had panes of reinforced glass squares running from the top to about eighteen inches above the step and one day chasing after my brother I had just got to the door when he slammed it in my face. My foot was raised to go through the door but it went through the window instead. When my mother came home from work she took me next door to Mr

Clegg who had a first aid certificate, he probed the gash in my leg with a darning needle looking for bits of glass with me screaming as if I was being murdered, then he then told Mum to take me to the doctor as it probably needed a stitch. So Mother took me off to see Doctor O'Brien who had a look at it and sent me home without a stitch; to this day I still have two scars on my right calf because it was not stitched.

Looking for approval from my mother seemed to become a way of life but somehow I never quite made it. Affection seemed to be in short supply, children were told what to do by adults without explanation and they obeyed without question, argument was not tolerated.

One good side of the war was that all the cotton mills in Lancashire were in full employment churning out cloth for the war effort and one of these mills was a life saver for our family. At the bottom of our street was a weaving shed and standing apart from the shed was a fire hole where the boilers were stoked to keep the looms running. The stoker here was a big Irishman named Tom McNulty, he seemed to have a house full of children all who attended the local Roman Catholic school as soon as they were old enough. Covered in coal dust and stripped to his vest Tom kept the fires burning. Each evening before he damped the fires down for the night he raked out all the ash and cinders and piled it in the mill yard to cool. This pile of debris kept our fire at home burning for many a long month.

Each day after school I went along with a bucket to pick cinders from the pile so that we could have a fire that night. Tom often turned a blind eye if a little coal got mixed in with the cinders. On these

occasions the bucket was dragged home because it was too heavy to carry. I must have looked a real little urchin, down at heel, black as the ace of spades dragging a big zinc bucket over the cobblestones.

The fire-hole was a haven in other ways too especially in the winter. When Tom was not working two great big doors were closed and you could not see the boilers, but when the mill was operating these doors were opened wide and standing just inside the opening you looked down from the top of a pile of coal (my favourite place to sit) to where Tom stood in front of the two big iron boiler doors. Coal rakes and shovels were lined up by the wall, and you could hear the fires roaring behind the closed doors. Then Tom would haul open one of the doors to shovel in the coal and a blast of hot air would rush out and bathe you with a rosy glow and for a few moments you were in heaven. There was one drawback of course; you were red hot at the front but frozen stiff at the back, so every now and again you turned around to thaw out the rear end as well. Tom kept the fires stoked through the whole of the war years, bringing up the steam to turn the pistons which drove the machinery of Brookside weaving shed where the cloth was produced to feed other industries where the uniforms, parachutes and all the other paraphernalia of war was produced.



View from the summit of Brown Wardle

Chapter Two - GRANDAD'S

Mum had been working in a cotton mill when war broke out but the war effort required everyone to do their bit so she left cotton to work in a munitions factory which was sited in a local beauty spot named Healey Dell - this was a thickly wooded ravine where the river Spodden, in some places, tumbled over the rocks but in other places was calm with deep pools which mirrored the trees along its banks. Different parts of the Dell had fanciful names "the fairy chapel" was a recess in the rock beneath the trees and nymphs and fairies were said to inhabit the tree filled glades. It also had a darker side, a deep pool where legend had it a beau-



River Spodden in Healey Dell

tiful young girl had drowned because of unrequited love. There were many different kinds of tree in the Dell, very tall pine trees towering over the oak, mountain ash and birch trees and this made it an ideal spot for the munition works which was also camouflaged to help screen it from enemy aeroplanes. Beyond the big house and just before the munitions factory was a high viaduct which carried the railway line along which the local steam train chugged several times each day. Many years ago Lord Byron who was apparently the "Lord of The Manor of Rochdale" was supposed to roam Healey Dell and Brown Wardle with his lady love, how much truth there was in that I do not know.

Before the war we had gone there to picnic. At the bottom of the ravine was a large house where the girl guides used to meet, they cooked sausages and dampers over camp fires. We picked bluebells and cut pussy willow taking them home and arranging them in jam jars on the window sill. Just before the stream entered the Dell it passed through Meadow Bottoms and here we collected blackberries and whinberry the wild cousin of the cultivated bilberry. We ate this straight from the plant and went home with tongue and lips a delicious shade of purple.

Mum's job was filling shells with high explosives and before going into the shed she, along with all the other women was searched and woe betide anyone caught with a box of matches in a pocket. The women wore bib and brace overalls and turbans (scarves wound around the head and tied at the front) to keep the shell dust out of their hair.

Because she had to work nights and shifts we were sent to my grandmothers for several weeks at a time and this suited me down to the ground because Gran was caring for two evacuees from Manchester, Mickey and Brian. I thought Mickey was a smashing lad so being under the same roof was absolute bliss for me. Mickey was twelve years old tall and blonde and never ever looked the side I was on but that did not stop me thinking he was the cats whiskers and following him around whenever I got the chance. Then I found out that every dog has its day because I eventually managed to glean some praise from my paragon. You see I was a dab hand at marbles or "murps" as we called them and one day all us kids were holding a marathon marbles tournament - the excitement growing unbearable as first one then another contestant was beaten and knocked out of the game, until only two were left - myself and a lad from over John Street called Cyril Kendal who could not let a snotty nosed girl beat him - or so he thought. Brawn has no place in a marbles game and I knew my onions when it came to tactics and when most of his marbles were on the pitch in front of us I played my best shot knocking his marble for six and ending up the winner of the biggest bags of dobbers and glass ollies I could ever imagine owning. Then the icing on the cake; Mickey slapped me on the back and said he would walk home with me, not walk me home - that was different, but I didn't care because my marbles would be safe.

That was not the end of it though. A couple of hours later a loud knock came on the door and when

gran opened it a big chap stood on the doorstep accusing me of cheating his lad out of his marbles. Gran demanded an explanation and I started to bawl at the thought of my marbles disappearing up the road with this fellow. Then Mickey came to the rescue and when Gran heard the full story she, being a very formidable lady sent the chap off with a flea in his ear and we celebrated our second win of the day and I was allowed to keep the bag of dobbers.

In Gran's living room on one side of the fireplace was a window set back into an alcove and a built in cupboard was under the window. The wireless sat on top of the cupboard, it was a great big wooden box with big knobs on the front and Gran was very proud of it because it plugged into the electric. Most of her neighbours had to take accumulators to the signal box to be charged so they could have the wireless on. In the cupboard was an assortment of useful junk, what Gran called her "glory hole"; there was an odd assortment of clogs and shoes, a cobbler's last which Grandad used to repair our shoes, an assorted mixture of books and toys, oh-- and my marbles. But one whole shelf was given up to big bars of soap! The bars were a little smaller than a house brick in size and at one side was the "Red Carbolic" at the other, the yellow "Sunlight" soap. It seems that when the war started everyone thought there was going to be a shortage of washing soap so Gran had started to hoard it and although to my knowledge the shortage never happened the soap stayed in the cupboard.

Grandma was the best cook in the village so even though rationing of food was strictly adhered to she usually managed to come up with tasty meals and we lived a lot better than we would have done at

home. Grandma was named Mary Ann but everyone knew her as Polly. She always wore a red "pixie" bonnet tied under the chin with two strings and she had an illness which meant she had to push a needle into her leg twice a day to give herself insulin (many years later I realised it was maturity onset diabetes). As I watched her pushing the plunger home I felt as poorly as Grandma looked. When there was to be a wedding in the village Grandma was usually asked to make the cake and ice it and it was wonderful to watch her making the swirls, trellis work and flowers with the icing flowing out of a paper bag. She made the bag by wrapping grease proof paper around her hand and then dropping in a steel piping cone, filling it with icing and then by squeezing and pressing the bag she made all these beautiful patterns. She also taught other people cake decorating in the kitchen. Young women came to the house and practiced on sheets of cardboard which (after they had gone) were thrown into the hearth ready to be burned. These were a great temptation for me and many is the crack round the bonce I got for trying to sneak the icing when she was not looking.

Grandad's name was James Henry known locally as Jim 'O' Barks because his dad had been called Barker and at that time in Lancashire this identified you better than your given name. Grandad was not very tall and he had short greying hair with a donkey fringe at the front. At weekends when he was dressed up he wore a waistcoat fastened across his ample stomach and over this was stretched a gold Albert. My brother was almost as tall as Grandad who said this was "because as tha' geet owder tha' wer' like a cows tail, tha' started growing downhill".

He spoke with a broad Lancashire accent and sometimes had a colourful turn of phrase. One day Grandad was standing on the landing outside the house when he spotted me running up the street and he shouted for all to hear "why lass, thar't calve legged". Which to the initiated meant that I was knock kneed, I was mortified now that everyone within earshot were having a good laugh. Another phrase that sticks in the mind was "tha' tek's na notice on him lass he's nobbut tenpence shillin'". Meaning he was not quite all there in the brains department.

Grandad's mother was a Sanderson related to the "The Great Pedestrian" a runner named James Sanderson who was champion of England over one and a quarter and one and a half miles, Jim was known locally as Treacle (pronounced Traykle) and this nickname passed down through the years and anyone in this particular Sanderson family was "one of Treacle's".

The original "Treacle" was a blacksmith by trade (as was my grandad) and was something of a legend. He practiced his running at the top of the road which led up to the water works cottage and reservoir. Around the reservoir was a dry stone wall and into the stone of the wall had been carved a cross and below the cross was the number 440 written upside down, presumably because Treacle had squatted with his back to the wall and bent over to do the carving. The distance between these marks and the waterworks gate was the practice ground for Treacle to keep his superb running up to scratch.

When my mother and father were stewards of the cricket club on Rawstron Street there was a list of Treacle Sandersons triumphs pinned up behind the



Grandad's house at 46 Tong Lane - pictured in 2007

bar. Sandersons were the local quarry owners and one of the foremost families in the village they called the quarry "Jack`O`Jims" after the owner Mr Sanderson who like my grandad was recognised from his father's name so Gran thought it was alright to claim them as relatives.

Grandad owned the house he lived in and also another five in the same block - one was next to his on the landing at the front with the other four round the back. The lavatories and an ash pit were at the back of the block as well and this caused me untold problems at night because we had always had a lavatory in the house before and it scared me half to death when I had to pay a visit after dark, especially in the blackout. I would be dancing about, on one foot then on the other pushing the key into the keyhole and trying desperately not to pee in my knickers, peering fearfully over my shoulder into the

darkness.

The lavvies were a row of stone shed like buildings with a dark ginnel separating them from the houses. The first one in the row was a hen hut for Grandad's six hens, the next one held the hen food and other things to do with the birds. All the rest were lavatories except for the middle one which had a half door and was the ash pit. This was where all the rubbish and ashes from the coal fires was put in the bins. In winter the ashes also served as road grit to stop the horses from slipping on the ice.

In one of the houses lived Grandad's older brother, Abraham, a very tall spare man who seemed to me to be very old, he had a big painting of a lurcher called Peter on one wall and in a drawer Peter's pedigree was lovingly preserved on parchment written in a beautiful copper plate hand writing.

The rationing of most items of food had been brought in by the government soon after the start of the war, especially of foods like sugar which came from overseas. Abraham could never understand food rationing and regularly wandered into the local grocers shop for sugar and jam to feed his remarkably sweet tooth. Bertha the grocer knew him well and would try to give him extra when at all possible, but it never seemed to be enough.

Owd Ab, as Grandad called him had also been a useful runner in his younger days and had travelled to Canada to take part in races, he was also a brilliant carpenter and had made many items of furniture. Ab` died after the war and before anyone else could be allowed to live in his house it had to be fumigated by the council because it was infested

with fleas. Under the sink were found hundreds of jam jars which were given to my brother and myself to take back to the local shop where we got a half-penny for each jar. His house was taken over eventually by a young couple with a small boy. They came from Burnley and had a motor bike and sidecar for getting to and from the car component factory (Lucas) where they worked. Jeff and Alice introduced me to biking through Alice`s brother Douglas and several years later I bought my own motor bike.

Tong Lane was the longest street running up from the main street (Market Street). At the bottom right side was Trains joinery and funeral business, followed by Ircast the iron foundry and after that came the Anglo Felt works which stretched up to where the houses began. Anglo Felt was a long low building without windows, the light inside came from the roof which was composed of undulating hills and troughs inset with reinforced glass, very much like



The Cowm Reservoir

the weaving sheds in the cotton mills, it chucked out a mucky brown dust. Along the top side of Anglo Felt and at right angles to Tong Lane was John Street, and running parallel with John Street was Cleggs Avenue which at the bottom end had a well, the water bubbling up from under the stones and halfway down the avenue an old disused pump was sited. After Cleggs Avenue came several cottages, Jimmy Ducks, Marthans and a few yards further on the railway with its big gates. The left hand side of Tong Lane was terraces of houses up to Lizzies shop then my maternal grandparents on the landing, Bertha's shop and a few houses up to the railway signal box. The railway became the border between Tong Lane and Tong End and on the other side was the Railway Inn and the lane up past Cuddie's farm to the reservoir and Back Cowm.

When the reservoir was built in the late eighteen hundreds there had been a thriving community in Cowm Valley but because water was needed the government decreed that the people living and working there had to move out for the reservoir to be built. I believe my great grandfather lived around there at the time and uncle Ab, grandad's brother was born there apparently. What I did not know was that my maternal great grandmother and her father lived in Cowclough around the back of the reservoir. A few years ago I started tracing my family tree and manage to locate a marriage certificate for my great grandfather and found that his wife Sarah lived in Cowclough which began to ring bells with

me, I knew I had read about Cowclough somewhere else and after a while realised it was a little book that Joan Douglas had written called "The Valley That Died". Investigating further I found that Sarah and her blacksmith father were my ancestors and another cog had slipped into place.

Back Cowm was one of the places where we played, we knew there were houses and farms underneath the water and where Cowm Brook ran into the reservoir were ruins of an old mill and dotted around the water were other ruins of abandoned cottages and farms. Bob Parker had a farm a little higher up than the reservoir, he had hens running around and possibly some sheep as it was real sheep country. Margaret and I used to go up looking for any eggs that the hens had laid away from their hen cotes. What we would have done with any that we found I do not know because if we had taken any



My grandmother Sophia on the right of the picture, taken in the mill where she worked.

home we would have got a thick ear.

On the hills above Back Cowm was the quarry which produced stone for sale all over the country. We used to see the quarry men in their cloth caps and overalls walking up and down Tong Lane on there way to and from work and occasionally great big lorries loaded with stone would rumble down the street.

On Sundays in the summer my grandad used to take us walking around the water works and Back Cowm to get us out from under Gran's feet whilst she cooked the dinner.

We did not know our paternal grandparents, they died before we were born, Robert my grandfather died in 1922 aged 47 and Sophia my grandmother in 1931 aged 58. Robert was a shopkeeper and Sophia worked in a cotton mill.

Chapter Three - CUDDIE'S AND CLEGG'S

Manchester was taking a pounding from the German bombers at this time and although we were about fifteen miles away we could see the night sky lit up with fires and searchlights. In fact we had a searchlight battery stationed in our village. It was parked in Ned Clegg's hay meadow and was a source of great excitement for us kids. No one took too much notice of the war until we had a couple of near misses when one bomb fell in the large garden of the local big-wig, (it did not explode but left a lovely big crater.) The other fell on the moors above the reservoir. After this every time the siren went Grandma hauled us from our beds to make the trek into the coal cellar. Grandma, Grandad, Mickey, Brian, myself my brother Gerald and the budgerigar. It was quite fun at first but after a while got to be quite a nuisance because our siren went every time the Germans bombed Manchester and as this was almost every night it came as a great relief when, as no more bombs had fallen on us, Gran said we were not being driven out of our beds again by that Mr Hitler and we once again began to ignore the air raid siren.

Smells of Gran's house have stuck in my memory for more than fifty years, coming home from school on a wet day to find the fire surrounded by the weekly wash; hopping around behind this wet screen with the dog trying to find a chink through which we could feel the fire and sniffing the wonderful smell of steamy clothes. On baking day the lovely smell of newly baked bread and in the oven muffins and baked potatoes, her broth with every available vegetable, a large piece of silverside and

lovely big suet dumplings was heaven on a cold winters day. The first course was a pint pot full of broth with a dumpling in the bottom, then came a slice of beef and potatoes mashed with butter and cream scrumptious! Although meat, like everything else, was rationed one shilling and two pence per week each I think, (this is about seven pence in today's money) all the coupons for the family were pooled and meat, sausages and bacon were bought from the little local butchers who knew every family in the area. Milk came with the local farmer in his milk float, the float was pulled by his horse which was called Dolly, the milk being carried in big churns on the back of the float. You took your jug to the back of the cart and the farmer served you by dipping a measure into the churn and transferring it to your jug. Dolly the horse knew every house on her round, customers gave her bread and tit bits and as she approached a house where she knew there was a treat her pace quickened and the farmer was often left well behind up the street shouting "who'a Dolly".

The milkman was a farmer called John Cudworth and he lived on his farm higher up the street from Gran over the railway crossing, where the road became Tong End, past Fallon's farm on the right and the Railway Inn on the left, the street narrowed down and was lined on each side with little cottages. Just before it became a farm track proper (which led to the reservoir and the waterworks cottage) Cuddie's farm came into view. There was a stable where Dolly and another horse lived and in the farm yard was the shippon where the cows were

milked; above the shippon was the hay loft where us kids spent many happy hours during hay making shaking out the dried grass and spreading it evenly into every corner and sometimes getting a shilling for our efforts.

Besides John who was the oldest there was, Donald and two sisters, Janie and Emily all who helped to run the farm. The cows were milked by hand whilst sitting on a three legged stool and the milk was poured straight into the churns from the buckets ready to be taken out on the milk round. In the farmyard a few yards away from the shippon was the muck heap where the waste from the horses and cows was piled until it could be spread on the land. The land was three large hay meadows which supplied the grass for the winter feed for the animals and the muck was spread by hand from a horse and cart and when haymaking came around the same horse (Dolly) pulled the mowing machine which cut the grass. Then it was all hands on deck, after the grass was dried by the sun it was raked into rows by lines of men and women using great big wooden rakes, each row was raked into cocks from where the men pitch forked it on to the cart until it was so high they could not reach the man on top of the hay with the long pitchforks; now it was ready for the horse Dolly, to pull it to the barn. Once there the pitchforks again threw the hay off the wagon and into the hay loft where we kids were waiting to level it out. Cuddie's big meadow bordered on to Ned Clegg's meadow where the searchlight battery was sited; there were green fields all around and further down the lane were some big hen pens on

top of a grassy hillock which dropped down to a clear stream where we fished for sticklebacks and paddled in the summer, we were surrounded by buttercups, daisies, water marigolds and all kinds of other wild flowers and we watched the dragonflies hovering over the water. The brook was called Cockhall Brook but we kids corrupted it to Cockle Brook; it started out as the overflow from Cwm reservoir up the valley and lower down it ran into the river Spodden and eventually into the river Roach.

We roamed the village and the moors unrestricted and during school holidays left home early in the morning with a couple of jam butties and a bottle of spo (thick black liquorice mixed with water) disappearing for the rest of the day into Doctors Wood or Shawforth Park. No one worried about us; we would appear again when our stomachs started to tell us it was time to go home.

Sometimes we would go swimming in Wam Dam, a deep pool over the moors towards Norden, but at other times it might be Shawforth Park that took our fancy, the possibilities were endless. In winter when it had been snowing we went over the Cockle with our sledges and dragged them up the long hill to the farm then sped down either on our bellies or two to a sledge. We spent the whole day on our home made sledges built from pieces of wood begged from the shop owners with strips of tin nailed on for runners. In summer we had gossies made from a set of old pram wheels with an orange box nailed to them, we sat in the box and steered it with a piece of rope fastened either side of the front axle. With a good push

you could get up a fair bit of speed going down Tong Lane.

One summer there was an outbreak of Anthrax and all of the Cockle farmers' cows had to be slaughtered. They buried them in big holes in our field, then covered them with lime before filling in the holes, sledging never was the same after.

Ned Cleggs was not the same kind of farmer as John Cuddie, although he still had the big meadows and in summer there was haymaking to get the winter feed ready for his horses. Ned had the most beautiful Clydesdale horses which he used to pull a coal cart around the village delivering coal. They were very big hardy, gentle natured animals and I used to love going up to the stables to see them when they were not working. During the working day they pulled the big flat bedded wagons, loaded with hundredweight sacks of coal, around the village and delivered them direct to the customers.



Norman Clegg with one of the prize winning horses - picture by courtesy of the Whitworth Museum

Everyone had coal fires then and the smoke from domestic chimneys added to the general griminess. The coal man lifted a bag of coal from the wagon on to his back and carried it to the pavement where the housewife had pulled up the lid on her coal cellar. He dropped it to the floor then upended it so that the coal fell through the hole into the cellar, and it was then left to the housewife to clear up any left over debris.

Most houses in the back streets had to hang their washing out across the street with the washing line fastened to a house on either side. Washday was always on a Monday morning and all the streets would be festooned with clean washing blowing in the breeze and when coal delivery day coincided with wash day every woman in the street dashed out and held the washing line up with a long prop for the coal wagon to get underneath without dirtying the washing.

One of the highlights of the summers was the agricultural shows and we always had one in a big field opposite Falinge Park a few miles down the valley near Shawclough. Ned was very proud of his horses and when the show was due you could go up the stables to watch his sons getting the horses ready for the show. They would groom them to shining perfection and comb their manes and tails and also the feet of the Clydesdales and Shire horses which had long hair around them. They would then plait the manes and tails with coloured ribbons and polish the harness and tackle to bedeck the horses before taking them to the show. The horses all knew what was expected of them and they

always looked very proud as they stepped out in their finery. It would be a sad day if several prizes were not brought back from the show and I must confess I do not think this ever happened.

Most of the village turned out on show day, it cost very little to enter the ground and was a wonderful day out. Beside the horses being judged were sections for showing sheep, cows, the best bull in the show, lots of sideshows, the beer tent of course and the sheepdog trials, and you could spend a very full day wandering around the stalls and animals.



Looking eastwards up School Terrace toward "The Bonk" 2007. What used to be the Rawstron public house can be seen on the right behind the van

Chapter Four - THE PEA WOMEN

A little way up and across the street from Gran's lived Martha Ann the pea woman, the locals pushed her name together and called her Marthan. She was a very old lady who boiled peas and beans and sold them to households in the vicinity.

As you walked into her house it was almost like going into a time warp even in those days. Through the front door you were straight into the living room, on the left was a door leading into a tiny little scullery with a shallow stone slop stone (sink). On the right was a big old fashioned fire range the fire standing about a foot and a half above the grate where the ash fell into a tin ash box when the coal had been burned. The fire itself was enclosed by three iron bars to stop it falling into the hearth, on the right of this was a fire oven and on the left an enclosed boiler which had to be filled with water from a white enamel ladling can so that the fire could hot it up for use. When it was heated it had to be ladled out of the boiler again to be used, apart from the old black kettle this was the only source of hot water. The whole of the fireplace and surround was shiny black from the black leading it received every week. High above the fireplace was a mantle piece which held various ornamental items and at each end of the shelf was a white china pot dog with brown hair (many years later these pot dogs became collectors' items). The mantle shelf had a fringe of dark green velvet dangling from it, this was matched by the green velvet table cloth which covered the big square table at the weekends when Marthan was not working but during the working week the tablecloth was removed to show a wood-

en table top that had been scrubbed so often it was almost white. At these times when she was doing a boiling it held a great big dish of mint sauce for flavouring the peas and beans for her customers. The rest of the room was taken up by a big old mahogany sideboard a horse hair sofa and two chairs, one on either side of the fireplace where Marthan and her husband sat watching the pans bubbling away on the hob. The husband wore dark worsted trousers and waistcoat, a union collarless shirt and sometimes a red spotted handkerchief at the throat, Marthan herself had on a long black voluminous skirt that had seen better days, a drab long sleeved blouse and if she was going out a shawl pinned at the neck with an amethyst broach.

The sideboard was polished lovingly to a shiny redness which brought out the colour of the wood. Usually three pans sat on the fire hob, one held green peas, one black peas and the last one butter beans. Hanging on a hook by the fire was a large iron toasting fork and a ladle for the peas. Customers brought along a basin and Marthan ladled out the portions of peas or beans, the customer put in mint sauce as required, paid a few coppers and took the basin home to eat the peas. Today this would seem a very strange way to earn a living but in those days it eked out a meagre income for the pea woman, and gave a hot meal to children who otherwise would not get one, because, either parents could not afford one or were too feckless to make one.

Gran had a cat named Bubbles. She was - my grandad said - the biggest thief in the Northern

Union and one day hearing a commotion in the street outside and going to investigate we saw Bubbles tearing down the middle of the road teeth firmly clasped around a string of sausage which bounced along crazily behind her, after Bubbles came Marthan's husband waving his stick and shouting invectives at the cat which had evidently pinched his dinner. Needless to say the cat was winning hands down as it disappeared under the fence leading to the cricket field. The cat had a good dinner but Mr Marthan got nothing only beans.

Another neighbour of Gran's was Florrie White. Florrie delivered the mail each day during the war, she got the job because so many men had gone away to war and the Post Office for the first time had to employ women to do what until then had



Marthan's husband

been men's work. You got mail the day after posting and it was delivered even on Christmas day.

Florrie's mother was called Beattie and she had a very badly deformed spine. From just above her hip joints her upper body was bent forward until it was almost horizontal, but it did not stop her from working and every day she went down to the rope works with Betty Jackson's mother where they tended machinery which twisted strands together to make rope. Beattie was an extremely important person in village life because she was the person called upon when someone had died to wash and lay them away ready for the undertaker. There were no funeral parlours in those days and dead people were laid out in the coffin in the best room in the house and the neighbours could then file in to pay their last respects.

Death happened; it did not impinge upon our lives very much and when a well known local butcher died we thought that we might learn more about it if we went to see him. So Margaret Waddington and me queued up after school along with all the adults to have a look at this phenomenon. We were not disappointed as we filed past the satin lined coffin and stood on tiptoe to peer at this man lying there. He was dressed in white satin and was not at all as I remember him. He had been a big jolly man with an ample belly and ruddy complexion, now he seemed to have shrunk and was a sickly looking grey colour. It seemed that we had been gazing for a little too long as the next woman in the line gave me a gentle shove to move me out so they could shuffle along. We came out round eyed and silent and never again went back to look at another dead body unless we were a part of the mourners.

We had several cemeteries in the village, a municipal one up Facit brew, two more at St Bartholomew's Church near the golf course and one at Hallfold Chapel. St Bartholomew's was the Church and Sunday School Gerald and I attended and Gerald was a choir boy. The church was sited on a hill overlooking the village surrounded by one cemetery, the Sunday School was in a separate building in a smaller cemetery (I believe my maternal great grandmother was buried there)

We could get there in two ways either the long way round by the main road then up Church Street, or the shorter way up the Bonk (a steep lane leading on to the tops) by the side of the Rawstrons public house and over the moors. Which way we went usually depended on the weather, if it was wet the longer way was opted for.

Quite a lot of local events were organized around



At the pantomime - (l to r) Hilda, Beryl, Rene and Gracie

the churches or chapels and there was considerable rivalry between the different denominations, especially around Christmas time when the pantomime season began. St Anselm's Roman Catholic church

and our own St Bartholomew's, Church of England, both had extremely professional and well produced pantomimes. Ours was produced by a very talented tap dancer named Tom Horsefall, so much of our production centred around singing and dancing. I was part of a troupe of four acrobats and tap dancers, along with me were Hilda Pearson, Rene Hill and Gracie Simpson and we took our pantomimes very seriously. We spent about three months rehearsing and then two or three weeks performing every evening except Sunday. Most of our performances were sell outs as we had a very good name in the surrounding villages for enjoyable nights out.

During Easter week we used to make our way to Hollingworth Lake a beauty spot on the opposite side of Brown Wardle to Whitworth. On Good Friday we set off to walk the several miles over the tops and past the foot of Brown Wardle over Lobden golf course and through Wardle village, down past Birch Hill hospital and up Smithy Bridge Road to get to the lake. When we got to our destination there was a small fairground with swing boats and roundabouts and usually lots of people rowing around the lake in boats.

Lobden golf course had more than one memory for me as a few years later I had started going out with a lad from Wardle called Terry Howarth. I had met him in Rhyl where I was on holiday with my mother and he told me he had seen me before when we had put on our pantomime in Wardle school and he had been peeping through the window watching the show. One night after meeting him and a mate in Wardle we missed the last bus home. His mate got out a scrambles bike and brought myself and

Margaret Clegg over the tops in pitch darkness and three on the bike to Whitworth. You can imagine the state of us when we arrived home after several sessions in the ditches on the way and Margaret having burned her leg on the exhaust, believe me it took a bit of explaining to our parents.

Whitsuntide was a highlight of the church calendar and eagerly awaited by everyone, Whit' Friday in Lancashire during the nineteen thirties and forties was, traditionally, not just a Christian festival, but also the start of the annual summer holidays. The "Wakes Weeks" started in May and went right through to September. All the cotton mills closed and every family in each town and village rested for a week, the lucky ones going off to Blackpool or Southport.

What was so special about Whit' Friday apart from this? The whole of Whitworth valley came alive with people: all the churches and chapels getting their congregations together to walk with the scholars (the scholars were all the children from the different denominations around the village) in their particular procession through the village streets. Every brass band for miles around had employment on this day, because there were hundreds of similar processions all over Lancashire.

Before the great day the local greengrocer shops were busy decorating little wicker baskets with flowers, the smaller children carried these in the procession. Each church or chapel would unearth a beautifully coloured religious banner which would accompany them, carried by the young men of the church. These banners hung between two long poles which were held in containers slung around the necks of the men, other men and women holding on

to long twisted cords almost like guy ropes to stabilize the banners in case an unruly gust of wind tried to wreak havoc.

The bandsmen had polished their instruments to shining perfection and the church or chapel which had managed to obtain the services of the "Whitworth Vale and Healey" brass band had pulled off a real coup.

After breakfast of bacon and eggs Gerald and I were dressed from top to toe in our new clothes which we got once a year, with instructions 'not to get dirty' we were dispatched to show our grandparents our finery where grandad would tell me (as he felt in his pocket for a penny). "Ee lass tha' looks reet bonny".

Our church group, St Bartholomew's Parish Church met in the square at the top of Church Street outside the Red Lion pub. This was because our particular church was up a steep hill and it would have been difficult to start from there.

When we were all assembled the walk started with the vicar and choristers leading off in their white surplices and black frocks, followed by the banner, the band and the smaller children (in straw bonnets) carrying baskets of flowers and enclosed by rope barriers with watchful adults walking beside them. Then came the rest of the procession, the rose Queen, the older children and lastly the adults.

The band played lustily but the pace was sedate, it was a long way for little legs to walk and sometimes children were lifted out to be carried by their parents. At predestined points along the route were pauses for prayers and hymns led by the vicar. At

these times all the doors of the nearby houses were opened and families who were not walking crowded into the street to take part. There was an air of festivity and happiness, simple people enjoying simple pleasures in a village brought to life with noise and colour.

It was inevitable that our procession would meet up with one of the others on the only main street (although they did not all start at the same time); there were two C of E's one Catholic, a Congregational, a Wesleyan and a Methodist, most of them walking on the same day. Then there was glorious confusion with the local Bobby trying to keep the traffic moving through it all. The walk ended at the Sunday school or the day school attached to the church and everyone sat down to sandwiches and cake with tea for the adults and pop for the kids. Usually by this time we children were all beginning to look a bit disheveled but the most exciting part of the day was still to come. First we had to go home and change from our best clothes into something more suitable, then we would be ready for the "field day" which was next on the agenda. This was the highlight of the day when we kids showed our prowess at sport, running and jumping through the rest of the day. The sports usually took place on the cricket field or sometimes over the Cockle.

We had egg and spoon and three legged races, the hilarious sack race with everybody falling all over the place, I loved this part of the day because being an adequate runner I usually managed a prize or two. It must be admitted that Christ and religion were thought of very little at this stage of the proceedings.

John Sutcliffe`s ice cream cart was on the spot for well earned refreshment. John made beautiful ice-cream and sold it from his cart where it was kept cold in a large stainless steel container. In those days ice-cream did not come ready wrapped in paper, wafers were made in front of you in a mechanical wafer maker, the biscuit going in first, ice-cream put on top from a wooden spatula then topped with a second wafer, or you could have a penny cornet covered in raspberry vinegar; scrumptious! At the end of the day we all went home tired but as happy as Larry.



Scenes from the Whit Walks

Chapter Five - GAMBLING FEVER

We had a lovely old Airedale dog named Trixie, she had a beautiful curly, reddish brown coat with a black saddle. Trixie loved tripe which we bought her as a treat from the local tripe dresser. The shop was next door to the tripe works and we asked for a pennyworth of tripe bits for the dog and a pig's trotter for my grandad. The stink from the tripe works was so awful that it put me off tripe for life, but the goods had some very strange names. There was fatty seam, honeycomb, black tripe, elder, cow heel and the aforementioned pigs trotters and, most likely, others that I have forgotten.

Trixie played her part in the war effort by patrolling the moors with Bob Lord the fire watcher in our area who spent his nights above the reservoir looking for fires and saboteurs taking Trixie with him both for company and protection. Bob was too old for military service but insisted that no parachutists or fifth columnists would ever get past him and Trixie no matter how dark the night. Sometimes the planes dropped incendiary bombs which did not explode like the big high explosive bombs, they started fires surreptitiously and this was one of the things that Bob had to guard against. I think this must have been why they called them fire watchers, they wore tin helmets and carried gas masks. Then there were the ARP men, they went around the houses looking for anything which might give the Jerry aeroplanes a target to aim at, like lights showing from windows or torches which were not shielded. They had ARP stencilled on their tin helmets which I think stood for "Air Raid Precautions" or "personnel" - I am not sure which. They were

thought to be over-officious, if they saw a chink of light they would yell at the top of their voice "put that light out". Kids being kids we followed them about and would mimic them behind their backs.

Our mother wasn't a bad mother but she was a harassed one and with two children, a mortgage and an electricity bill to pay off it was no wonder she lost her temper occasionally and let fly at the nearest thing to hand (usually me). There are reasons for everything though and Mother's temper was no exception. Seemingly when they were married it was thought she was a cut above Dad by my grandparents but they kept a low profile and were prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt.

Apparently Pop was a bit of a lad who mixed in very well with the local community, he was the goal keeper for the Britannia football team and quite a good player. He was also a "Nutter"; but before you start thinking he was crackers; the Nutters were a troupe of dancers called "The Britannia Coconut Dancers" and, no, they did not dance on coconuts! They wore black pantaloons and knee stockings with bits of wood tied to the insides of the knees. They had on black clogs with bells fastened to them and blacked their hands and faces. They also carried hoops of flowers and travelled around the district (usually where the public houses were located) dancing. They came home happy but very unsteady on their feet at the end of the day.

When my parents first married they had a motor bike and I believe from my ears wagging when they should not have been, that my mother lost her first

baby when they had an accident on it. They were stewards of the local football and cricket club and both my brother and myself were born there. Besides a football and cricket pitch there was also a crown green bowling green which had to be tended. There was a great big roller for the cricket pitch and I believe a donkey was kept to pull it over the ground but I do not remember that. Downstairs there was a card room, a back room and outside the back door a building that housed communal baths for the football teams, upstairs was a large concert room. Our living quarters were next door with a large back yard and I do remember we had a couple of rabbits.



The Britannia Coconut Dancers

Dad liked to gamble, horses, cards, football pools, two spiders running up the wallyou name it he would back it!! Once he won six hundred pounds

on the football pools; this was a fortune in those days, he could have bought a nice house, furnished it and still have had money left over. But what did he do? He took his three brothers to the Grand National at Aintree and lost the lot, he was then heard to complain that there were so many people there they could not see the racing.

This upset Grandad and he insisted they move from the club where it was too easy for a card game to get out of hand and Dad took over the local fish and chip shop where he proved himself an excellent fish fryer and Mum made puddings and pies and the business did very well. But the Conservative club was across the street from the shop and Dad was soon up to his old tricks, each afternoon taking money out of the till and crossing the street to play cards with men who were much better off financially than he was. So we had to move again!! There was enough money left to put down a deposit on a house, which is how we ended up in the middle of the row of back to back houses that had been modernised. There was a living room a sitting room a kitchen, hallway, three bedrooms and of course the bathroom, no tin baths hanging outside our back-door!! We also had a tiny front garden and beyond that, over the wall was the school yard, in fact our front street was named School Terrace. When I got older I used to charge out of the front door jump on the dustbin then over the wall and I was in school. Dad (disgraced) went to work for my grandad in the quarry. This was how it stood at the outbreak of war.



Old traditions die hard - the Coconutters perform in Whitworth 2002

Chapter Six - LLOYD STREET SCHOOL

At the top of our street (School Terrace) and at right angles to it, was a row of back-to-back houses, the one's at the front were on the main road and a landing ran around the gable end for access to the houses at the back, except for a flight of steps at the far end which took the residents down to a back alley this was the only way anyone could get in or out of the houses, which were about twelve feet above the ground facing the school across the alley and the school yard. The landing was held up with iron pillars; underneath the landing was another row of derelict cellar houses all boarded up.

In the first house on the landing lived a very old woman and her daughter, Edith. The old woman was known as Snuffy because of her habit of sniffing snuff, she always had a brown stain underneath her nose. Snuffy wore a black dress which had seen better days and came down to her ankles over a pair of dilapidated clogs and if she bent over you could see two skinny legs encased in a pair of wrinkled lisle stockings. In winter her head was covered with a black knitted shawl from which peeped a little wrinkled face and a few wisps of grey hair.

Snuffy was less than five feet tall and as skinny as a rake with dirty finger nails on the end of claw-like fingers. All the local children stood in awe of Snuffy when they were face to face but tormented her mercilessly when at a safe distance and I was no exception although I always felt a little uneasy having read all about the Pendle Witches in a book from the library, and Snuffy in my mind was the personification of the witch Elizabeth Device! Edith

worked at one of the local cotton mills and wore the unofficial uniform of the mill girl; a flowered vee necked cotton overall fastened at the back with two ties, at the front were two big pockets to put the cotton waste in as they worked. Edith had bright red hair and did not resemble her mother in any way being bigger and beefier. Both women kept themselves to themselves, I suppose they were treated with suspicion by the locals, just like today people were very intolerant of what they thought of as "not normal".

I had a special reason for thinking about Edith and Snuffy because one day I had overheard a neighbour telling my mother that "Edith had been born on the wrong side of the blanket". This intrigued me and I spent several weeks examining my bedding each night trying to find the wrong side and what was so special about it; I never did find out.

Next door to Snuffy lived Mr and Mrs Earnshaw and their neighbours were the Tweedales, Mr and Mrs and Bertha their daughter. I cannot recall the names of their neighbour but the end property belonged to James Duckworth the grocer and had been turned into a storeroom. This was the only house in the row which had a front and a back door, having been knocked through so that the room at the front was the shop and the back room became a store room for goods.

James Duckworth in Lancashire might have been the forerunner of the modern day supermarket as he had several stores in most towns, we even had two in our little village; the other one being across the



Lloyd Street School

street from my gran's. The shops were known affectionately as Jimmy Duck's and sold good quality foodstuffs most of it cut and wrapped as you waited, bacon, cheese, butter, and eggs, sugar was weighed out in stiff blue bags. If you wanted it delivering a boy would bring it around on his bicycle at no extra charge with your parcel safely ensconced in a carrier on the front.

The top of the row of houses was the same height as the school across the way and the school roof was a delight to me; it fascinated me; it rose up from the guttering in glorious peaks and troughs, the apex at the front was an inverted vee duplicated on its other three sides. Between the vee's the slates ran back to meet the slates of the next vee and these were separated by lead lined channels which rose up to the top of the school where all came together as ridge tiles. A nice convenient drainpipe gave very easy access to the guttering from where one could

scoot up the channel between the slates and sit on the ridge tiles enjoying the view. I often did this but the big snag was Bertha's mum, we were eyeball to eyeball so to speak with about two hundred feet between us. She was a lovely lady but got really upset when I went onto the school roof, she would shout at me to get down, with me pretending not to hear her, after a time she would hurry to the steps at the end of the landing and as quickly as her bulk would allow begin to descend to the alley. Before she reached the ground I would have disappeared from the roof and slid down the tiles at the back of the school where she could no longer see me. Mrs Tweedale would then climb the steps again and by the time she got to the top I would be sitting on the ridge tiles again.

This went on for several weeks during one particular summer but got nipped in the bud when Mam came home from work early one afternoon and caught me in the act. She took me to see the object of my tormenting and pledged me into running errands for her after school for the rest of the summer. My climbing didn't always get me into trouble though. The neighbours well knew my penchant for ascending drainpipes and trees, in fact anything I could get a foothold on. So if one of them managed to lock themselves out and had left an open window upstairs, it was me they came looking for. My drainpipe days also came in handy when a few years later my dad came home after an evening out, locked the door put the snick on and went to bed not realising his daughter was later than he was. I got home from the dance, found myself locked out and undeterred, up the drainpipe I went, high heels as well, in through the bedroom window and got into bed with

no one being the wiser

My mother must have been desperate having a daughter who was forever in bother, I think the little girl she wanted was always neat and tidy, didn't arrive home with torn clothes and always did as she was asked without turning a deaf ear the first few times of asking. I was still of the opinion that boys got a better deal than girls. I could run faster, climb higher, hit as hard (if not harder) than many boys my age (and often did) so most of them had a healthy respect for me, that is all except my brother he thought I was a pain in the backside. This was reinforced when at Christmas he got a pair of boxing gloves and we were larking about, each with a boxing glove on and I walloped him on the nose (accidentally of course)!! But his head shot back and he gave it a resounding thwack on the wall and I got a thick ear from my mother. I don't think I was a really bad kid, but I was certainly mischievous and my antics kept me in trouble with my mother most of the time, I was scruffier, tore my clothes more often and had more cuts and bruises than any other kid in the school. I also got more wallops so it was a good thing I also had a sense of humour which neither my mother nor Mrs Stirrup, (one of my school teachers) ever managed to knock out of me.

Make no mistake there were times when I more than deserved what I got, like the time I had half the kids in our street running around the house playing hide and seek and Mum came home from work early and caught me. She quickly dispatched the other kids, then started looking for me getting angrier and angrier when she could not find me. In the end I lost my nerve and quietly said "I'm here";

"where" she bellowed "in the roll of lino" I whispered. The lino was rolled up in the corner of the bedroom waiting to be laid and I had crawled in to hide. Somehow I never learned that the longer I stalled before taking my punishment the worse the punishment was. When my mother came to the door and shouted up the street I knew that I had been caught out in something again but I always stood at the back door hopping around as she waited to clout me when I ran past her. Then I would mumble I am going round to the front door, the only trouble was as I got to the front she would be waiting there as well and instead of being hit with her right hand as I scuttled past I got a wallop with her left hand which had her heavy wedding ring on it and was much worse.

School was Lloyd Street Church of England, the primary school fronted on to Lloyd Street and at the back steps went down to the main school in the yard. Under the primary school was the institute which held billiard tables and the football teams got together there.

My best friend at primary school was Margaret Waddington and when I stayed at my grandmothers we always walked to school together. We were an unlikely pair, Margaret with her short blonde hair, always with a brightly coloured ribbon fastened on top, and me, although my grandmother always sent me out clean and tidy, I didn't stay that way for long. I used to call for her to go to school and waited while she had her breakfast; sugar butties ugh!!! In winter when we had a good fall of snow it was great fun as the snow stuck to the bottom of our clogs, our weight compacted it down until we were a good six inches taller and competing to see who

could get most snow on before it fell off. At school we could always find a good slope in the yard and made slides along the tarmac balancing with our arms outstretched as we sped down the hill.

I remember the cloakroom in the baby class with its rows of pegs and at the far end was a sink and a gas ring. Every day at break time the teacher made coffee by lighting the gas ring and putting a saucepan of milk on it and when it got very hot sprinkling coffee onto the milk before pouring it into two beakers for herself and a colleague.

The next class up from the babies was easier to remember and Mrs Eastwood was the teacher, she was very kind to the children. There was always a problem with head lice in this class, we all had nits, and if you were sat behind someone with short hair you could sometimes see the lice running along the back of the neck. Nits were a horror in more ways than one; the scratching was almost worse than the itching and when the nit nurse from the clinic came to school parents had a blitz to get rid of them. Brown Derbac soap from the chemist was the universal remedy, but my mother also had a steel fine tooth comb that was lethal. The teeth were so close together that as she raked it through your hair you were almost scalped, every night we had to kneel in front of her whilst she, with a large paper on her lap, pulled the comb through your locks as you squealed and quivered. This was one time when I was glad she had kept my hair short, when she used the comb it was pure agony as she raked the teeth across the scalp and when one of the little pests fell onto the paper she either dropped it into the fire or pressed it on to the comb with her thumb nail and it made a satisfying crack as she squashed it. The only conso-

lation was that the whole class was in the same boat.

The clinic nurse also looked at teeth to see if a child needed to see the dentist and when I was five or six years old I was sent by the nurse to see the dentist at the school clinic up behind the council offices. As I sat outside the dentist room waiting for my turn I could hear this awful sound of the drill as he worked on another patient. Finally he sent for me to go in and after peering into my mouth with a great deal of tutting he pushed this great syringe into my gum and told me to wait outside again. Once more sitting outside the waiting room the dreaded drill started up again and I, losing my nerve, decided enough was enough and slid out of the chair and hot footed it home. I do not ever remember any repercussions from my decamping from the waiting room, but I am sure there must have been some. As I think back now maybe they were asking for trouble by sending six year old children to the dentist alone, perhaps more than one child had absconded after listening to the sound of the dentist's drill!!

One other thing that sticks in my mind about this class is something that I was ashamed of for many years. In our class was a girl called Amy Lane, she was a timid little thing with not many friends. One day as we were all walking home from school Margaret dashed up to me and said "will you be on our gang we are going to bash Amy Lane". To my eternal shame I said yes and we chased her up the road and I walloped her. Even at my young age I was aware that it was me who was supposed to do the bashing because the others were afraid of the consequences, but I didn't have the sense to say no. The following day I was brought out of the class by

the teacher to see Amy's mother standing at the door and I got the dressing down of my young life. Needless to say I never troubled Amy Lane or any of the other kids again, but that's not to say I would not stick up for myself in a scrap. Funnily enough I do not remember Amy apart from this one incident and I think her family must have moved away from the valley soon after. I can only hope it had nothing to do with my treatment of her that day.

When I was seven I moved up into the "big" school which was just down a few steps in another building. Miss Sutcliffe was the first teacher who initiated me into the world of learning and she was a real sweetie who taught me to knit on great big wooden needles. When I came back to school after being away with tonsillitis a concert had been organised to take place at St Johns Church of England school up the valley and all the other kids had been allocated a place. Miss Sutcliffe saw my disappointment at being left out and put me in the soprano section of the chorus to sing "Jerusalem". As a soprano I would have probably have made a good baritone but that did not stop me belting it out at the top of my voice on the big day and ever after that time I have held a soft spot for William Blake's Jerusalem

Our teachers did not specialise in any one subject, they all taught arithmetic, English, geography, history and every other subject including games.

I was a big hitter particularly at rounders and when we played in the school yard I often clouted the ball on to the school roof. Because of my climbing skill I shinned up the drainpipe, located the ball and chucked it back down. The teachers used to stand around with the kids waiting for the game to

start again, I don't think it even entered their heads that I could fall off the roof or break an arm or leg. Can you imagine the trouble if one of the teachers allowed that to happen these days. Even if I had fallen I would have been kept at home (and probably got walloped for being so stupid) then sent back to class once I had been repaired.

The other teachers were not all as kind as Miss Sutcliffe, the next class up was run by Mrs Stirrup the headmaster's wife and she was a terror. She carried a drumstick around the class with her and many wallops came my way (usually from behind) as she crept up on me. The first I knew was the drumstick on the back of my bonce then "Halstead, stop shuffling your clogs" would boom through the air. Needless to say I hated her and she obviously had no love for me either. But I did once manage to take the wind out of her sails, she was so used to me being one of her most untidy pupils that when my grandmother bought me a new gymslip and blouse and sent me to school washed and brushed up like my mate Margaret her face was a picture. I don't think she recognised me at first her vinegary expression became almost a smile until she remembered who I was.

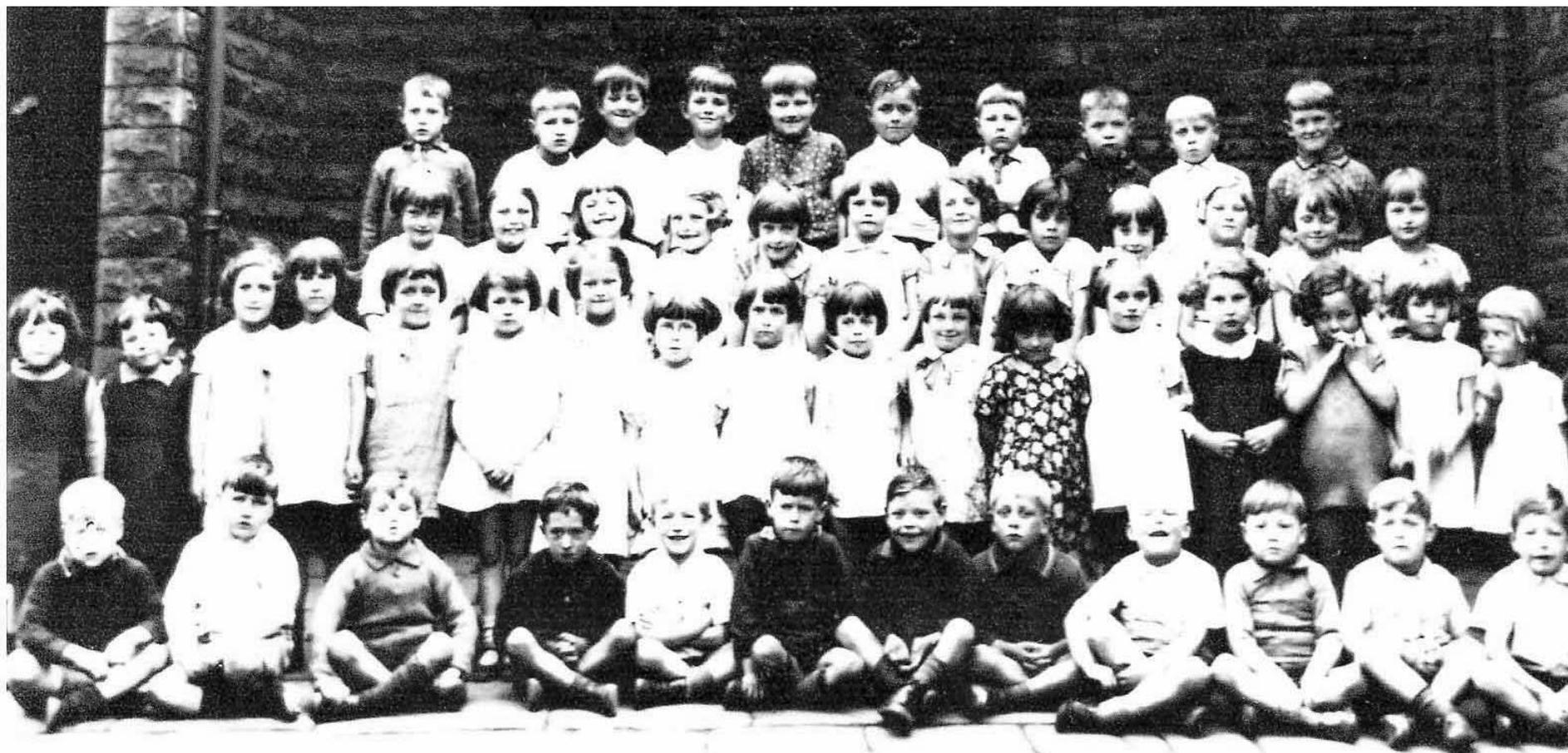
Mrs Godber was the next teacher to try and instill some learning into me and after Mrs Stirrup she was a joy. She taught me to read and to write a fair essay, although we called it composition but even she could not make a mathematician out of me. I was eleven when I went into her care and this was the age when you could take examinations to go either to Bacup and Rawtenstall grammar school or to Littleborough Central high school. These exams were not compulsory, you were only put in for

them if you had a good chance of passing and had asked to be considered. I asked for homework to be set for me with a view to taking the exam and went home eagerly clutching my papers. When I tried to do the sums I did not have a clue what they were all about and my dad tried to show me by doing them with me. After he had gone out I copied them all out in my own handwriting and duly handed them in the following day. But of course I got my come uppance..... did I not. The sums were all correct apparently but I in my haste I had put the right answers in the wrong sums and was found out ignominiously; that was the end of any aspirations I had of being a grammar school girl.

I was taught to swim when I was in Mrs Godber's class but as usual I had another traumatic experience before this came about. We were allowed to go to Bacup baths quite regularly when Mum had money and it was here I almost managed to drown myself. Around the pool a few inches above the water was a round pipe which I used to pull myself round hand over hand, one day as I got to the deep end my hands slipped from the pipe and I went under. What happened next defied all that I have since learned about swimming. Instead of rising to the surface three times before drowning I stayed on the bottom and walked along to the steps, climbed up and collapsed on the side of the pool. I had not drowned but it now seemed that I would choke to death as I lay on the side of the pool coughing and spluttering until all the water which I must have swallowed was out of my system. Once again I got away with no one knowing about my predicament,

there was no attendant around to pull kids out if they got into trouble and I am sure that if I had lost my head when I found myself on the bottom of the pool I would not have survived.

Miss Wilcox was the next class up the line and she was not averse to using the large cane standing in the corner. That is; not until the day that Clifford Walsh grabbed the cane which was about to be used upon him and threatened to hit her with it. Clifford was a thirteen year old and a big lad for his age and I think he put the fear of God into Miss Wilcox who never again tried to cane the bigger lads. Clifford was hauled up in front of the headmaster Mr Stirrup and got his caning in the end. But at least he avoided the ignominy of being caned by a slip of a woman. Mr Stirrup was the last teacher and he taught the top class, the thirteen and fourteen year olds who were getting ready to leave school to begin working. He was no pushover but I preferred him to his Mrs because he was at least fair in the punishment he dished out, unlike his wife he did not creep up behind you and I stayed in his class until I left school.



Lloyd Street School Photograph - c. 1935/36

Back Row: Jack Marshall, Eric Parkinson, Keith Barker, Derek Barker, Cyril Jackson, Brian Hill, ----?----- , ----?-----, Jack Taylor, Harold Holt,
Second Row: Freda Ashworth, Kathleen Taylor, Alice Coates, Joan Sutcliffc, ----?-----, Barbara Crabtree, Marion Pilling, Phyllis Kendal, ----?-----,
 Freda Leach, Marion Ashworth, Norma Ormerod,
Third Row: Doris McLucas, Eva McLucas, Brenda Richardson, Doris Bentley, Barbara Mills, Clara Whatmough, May Bailey, Eva Gater, Irene
 Stockdale, Ivy Hardacre, Jean Lord, Laura Simpson, Brenda Hill, Phyllis Marshall, Irene Horsefall, Doreen Grindrod, Evelyn Warburton.
Front Row: Clifford Palmer, Alan Bartram, -Harry Chadwick, David Ashton, Norman Cook, Peter Hardacre, Albert Crossley, Derek Mills,
 Derek Jackson, Gerald Halstead, Morris Crossley, Alan Rothwell.



**Lloyd Street School
Photograph
- c. 1937/38**

Back Row: Laura Simpson, Irene Entwistle, Cicely Catlin, Phylis Marshall, Doreen Clegg, Marion Cudworth, Joan Sagar; Marjorie Walker

Second Row: George Gater; John Bowker, John Pilling, Victor Morgan; Derek Mills, David Ashton, Harry Hall, Sidney Cudworth, Raymond Earnshaw, George Chadwick

Front Row: Norma Colby, Grace McLucas, Beryl Howarth (nee Halstead), Jean Bromley. Betty Jackson, June Duckworth, Barbara Kettleton, Jean Holden

Chapter Seven - JOHNNY CLOGGER'S

Between the school and my grandmother's on the main road were most of the shops in the village and we had a great variety of them.

At the top of North Street was the chip shop where we used to live, then across a ginnel where one of my great friends lived was the tripe shop, a solicitors office then another ginnel. At the other side of this was John Buckley's fruit and vegetable shop where you could also buy fresh fish straight from the docks at Fleetwood. Next to Buckley's there was a house, then Mrs Fielder's sweet and tobacco shop, a dress shop, then the electricity board and last in the row was Highley's bakers where you could buy wonderful meat pies. In the next row was a newsagent, another bakers, several houses, Varley's plumbers, the Co-op, a butchers, a row of houses then Albert Shaw's toffee shop at the bottom of the brew that led up to the bug hole. The next little shop had a door which was recessed back up a wide step, it had a shiny brass latch and letter box the latch being worn and curved to the shape of the countless thumbs that over the years had depressed it to lift the catch to open the door. As you walked in through the door you were struck immediately by a warm welcoming glow, doubly welcoming on a cold winter's day. The warmth radiated out from a pot-bellied stove set in the middle of the room - glowing redly in the dimness its tall narrow chimney rising up to the ceiling and disappearing through the plaster. The second thing you became aware of was the smell, it took a little while to assimilate the subtle aroma of warm wood and leather and sometimes a slight hint of pipe tobacco.

The worn wooden floor had been polished over the years by the myriad pairs of feet which had journeyed in and out and you could clearly see the shininess of the nails which held the wood in place.

From the ceiling dangled an electricity wire with a lone bulb covered with a white translucent shade shaped like a small Chinese coolie hat

As your eyes grew accustomed to the dimness of the shop you saw a figure sitting in the window alcove where the eyes could take best advantage of the available light, a tiny little figure of a man in the ubiquitous striped collarless flannel shirt fastened at the neck with a gold collar stud. His trousers were dark grey worsted protected from the work he was engaged in by a leather brat. A pair of gold rimmed spectacles was perched on the end of a long nose, and two twinkling blue eyes peered over the top as a smile creased the wrinkled face turned to welcome a customer into the shop. The gnarled hands were busy all the time shaping and forming the material held between his nimble fingers, and often some other old man would be sitting there chatting over bygone days with the worker.

Looking around the room you saw neat little rows of shiny wooden drawers with tiny knobs set into them for opening, all neatly labelled with their contents. At the base of the stove arranged within a fender surround were set several iron poker like instruments (a child's fertile brain could imagine them as instruments of torture). Strung around the walls were wires holding strangely curved pieces of thin iron with holes punched in them at regular

intervals and heaped upon a table at the back of the room, piled higgledy piggledy were sheet upon sheet of creamy coloured leather straight from the tannery. Near to the little man was another table and on this were arranged an assortment of wooden handled strangely shaped knives with bright shiny blades. Some were short and fat with a distinct curve in the middle of the blade and others were long and slender with pointed blades. They all had one thing in common, they were razor sharp.

The little man sitting on his three legged stool was the local clogger John Jackson known to everyone in the valley as Johnny Clogger. He made and repaired every clog in his little shop and clogs came in all sorts of shapes and sizes but were always coloured black and each day we had to brush on Cherry Blossom boot polish and rub them with a brush or piece of rag until you could see your face in them.

Women's clogs were usually fastened with a bar across the instep and a buttonhole at the end which pushed down on to a stud to hold them in place, others had a clasp in the middle of the instep. Men's clogs were invariably shaped more like boots and had leather laces to fasten them. Johnny made them by cutting out the shape of the clog from the leather sheet before placing it on a wooden base which he had already formed, he then covered the join with a leather welt and nailed them all into place with tiny flat headed nails. Lastly he finished them off by nailing irons on the bottom which caused the early morning clatter as the mill workers went to work.

At regular intervals clog irons either wore out or fell off and we had to visit the clogger to have new ones fitted, he whittled little bits of wood and hammered them into the holes left by the previous irons before making new holes to hammer on the new irons.

Running parallel to the shops on Market Street ran the River Spodden, it was not very deep and behind Johnny Clogger's there was a drop of several feet down to the water. Often after school we would walk between the clogger's and Kettleton's fruit and vegetable shop to play by the water. One particular dark and stormy day when we went round the back the river was a torrent, rushing and tumbling at great speed down the valley towards Rochdale. We had spotted a wooden box caught up on the bank and decided to find out what if anything was in it, Margaret was hanging on to my arm as I strained to reach the box as the river fought to drag it clear. Just as I thought I had got my hand on it the water swirled it away and my foot ended up in the river with Margaret holding on to my arm for grim death. As she yanked me onto the bank my wellington came off and the last we saw of it, it was bobbing merrily along behind the wooden box. You can probably guess what happened when I got home without my wellie and I do not think you would be wrong.

One day we were playing on a disused tennis court behind the Wesleyan Chapel near to Facit park. There had once been a big chain link fence around it but it had been broken down in many places and at one end there was no fence at all but a drop down of about four feet. After running wildly around for

a time I shot along the court and went to jump from the end to the grass below. What I had not realised was there was a strand of wire still attached to posts at either side and as I took off it caught under my chin, it pulled me up short and almost decapitated me. I spent several weeks after that hiding this great big weal across my throat from my mother. Luckily we were left to our own devices so much that she never found me out.

As you can imagine keeping growing children fed and clothed at this time was a bit of a problem, not only for our family but for many others in the village.

The Cook family lived along Cleggs Avenue near my grandmother, they had three daughters Eileen Joan and Olive and three sons, Norman and Harry and one who's name escapes me. The girls were all older than I was and all quite good dressmakers, they made many of their own clothes. One summer they had a clear out of their cupboards and sent a parcel of the clothes they had grown out of to my mother for me. There were several dresses and one pale blue pleated skirt which was nicer than anything I could ever own and I wore it until it was threadbare, until my mother consigned it to the rag man with loud protestation from me. The shortage of clothes was not only because of having little money to spare, it was also because we had clothing coupons and if we wanted anything new we had to have enough coupons before we were allowed to get them. We were only allowed the bare minimum even underclothes were rationed and it was many a mother who wore her husband's old underpants instead of knickers when she had no coupons.

Sheets, pillow cases, towels and table cloths all had to wait until there were enough coupons to buy them.



St Bartholomew's Church

Chapter Eight - WASH DAY

Mother managed to scrape enough money together to pay off the electricity company so at home life became a little more like normal.

Then Dad came home on leave and threw a spanner in the works again, a few months later we had another baby brother, James Robert. This put paid to the munitions work and with a new baby to feed Mam didn't have a lot of choice and she started to take in washing from the local trades people. I became the delivery girl, when I wasn't turning the handle on the mangle. As far as I was concerned this meant less time than ever for playing, my talents were required elsewhere so away went the marbles and the whip and top and out came the pram. I became a whiz at pushing the shabby old pram, complete with baby brother tucked cosily under the great piles of clothes, backwards and forwards between customers, my gran's cellar (where the washing was done) and our house (where the ironing was done).

My grandmother had an electric washer which my grandfather had bought for her and it was very unusual then for anyone to own a washer. It was a boon to my mother, she boiled the cotton whites in a gas boiler then transferred them to the washer, washed them then took them out and put them in a bowl of dolly blue, she then pushed them through the electric mangle on the washer, all except the larger items like sheets and these had to be mangled by the big wooden rollers which were turned by hand, and this is where I came in. If my gran had not had the washer she would have had to do what other

people in the village did, get out the dolly tub, the posser and the washboard and use elbow grease to get clothes clean.

After she had done the washing it was dried outside if it was not raining, then I took them the couple of miles to our house to be ironed. The iron was a charcoal iron, a real old relic even in those days. It was the same shape as a flat iron but much deeper and hollow with a door at the back which slid up for the charcoal - which was heated on the fire - to be pushed in. It had to be charged up several times for each bout of ironing then out came the pram and I delivered the washing back to the rightful owners. There was only one main road in the village but a myriad back streets and alleys to get from one place to another. The baby and I were great pals, as he got older and could sit up we had a whale of a time running pell mell up the Mucky Back between the hen pens and allotments pretending we were Spitfires and Messerschmits dog fighting over the English Channel. That is until one day when running through the gasworks yard I had to stop a bit quick and the clean washing shot into the mud, what happened next is best forgotten, but I found it a bit difficult to sit down for a day or two.

Lots of people had allotments where they grew vegetables for the table, they were encouraged to do this by large posters put up by the government telling them to "Dig For Victory". If you had an allotment the chances were you also had an area fenced off where you kept a few hens, these could be fed on scraps and vegetable peelings and the

eggs went to supplement your ration of one egg each per week. Then at the end of their laying life the poor old hens ended up in the pot as broilers, many a good dinner was enjoyed from an allotment hen and vegetables. Other posters were put up in places where people congregated, "Walls have ears", "Careless Talk Costs lives" and "Be like dad, keep mum", are some that readily spring to mind. In London the underground stations were used as air raid shelters and in other parts of the country public buildings with large cellars or, failing that, brick built reinforced blast shelters (which would have been no earthly use in a direct hit). The posters were to remind people that there might be spies about and to be careful what they said. There was also an unseen enemy in these shelters where people crowded together and this was disease. The Clegg family, who you remember lived next door to our house in School Terrace were great friends and often when the lack of lighting got me down I would pop next door to play board games with them.

The youngest girl Phyllis caught polio from being taken into an air raid shelter in Manchester when on a shopping trip. An ambulance took her off to hospital and after several months she came home again on crutches and with a caliper fitted to a wasted leg, she has had to spend the rest of her life in this way as there was not a cure for polio. At the bottom of the street lived the Walsh family; they caught everything that was going. Dorothy was first with scarlet fever and no sooner had the ambulance taken her away than it had to come back for her sister

Madaleine. When the winter set in along came diptheria and off went a couple of the Walsh's again, this time Clifford and Dorothy then Neil followed.

All the children were head and shoulders above me in height. They grew like weeds and were as thin as pins, I was little and sturdy and never caught anything, which was as well because my mother had enough on her plate. Dad Walsh was the caretaker of one of the local schools and there were always a few funny rumours floating around about him which I didn't understand at the time, they concerned his sexual orientation. He was the caretaker of one of the local schools and the lads used to whisper about him behind their hands.

Most of the front gardens were neat and tidy and had lots flowers, all apart from ours and Moorcroft's who lived next door but one to us uphill. This was probably because our dad and Moorcroft's were both away in the war; Clegg's garden next door was always a riot of flowers in summer and all the family helped out in the garden. The only thing I planted was my mothers engagement ring. I must have thought I was like Long John Silver in "Treasure Island" burying gold doubloons. It was found some time later when Gerald thought he would try to grow some spuds to help with the rations, until then no one had a clue where the ring had disappeared to. Mother was so pleased that it had been found that she did not go to deeply into how it had got there, it wasn't until I planted it a second time and I admitted that it was me that she realised I had also done it before, and this time although we dug all over the garden we did not find it and Mam never forgave me

The Walsh's had a beautiful laburnum tree in their

front garden that had lovely golden yellow flowery tails which we were told we must never touch because they were poisonous. Beyond this garden were the coal houses where each household kept a stock of coal, these were never locked but to my knowledge no one ever touched a cob of coal that didn't belong to them. In fact our back door was left unlocked as often as it was locked. There were eight houses in our terrace and in the top one lived a boy called Melvyn Douglas the namesake of a very famous handsome Hollywood film star. Next door to his house was a cellar bakehouse belonging to the top shop were two elderly spinster sisters made a living.

Margaret was little and skinny and was the baker, Bertha was little and stout and ran the shop where she sold home made bread and pies and cakes. Across the road from the shop stood the Rawstron's Arms public house, just a few doors away was the Conservative club which had been my dad's downfall.

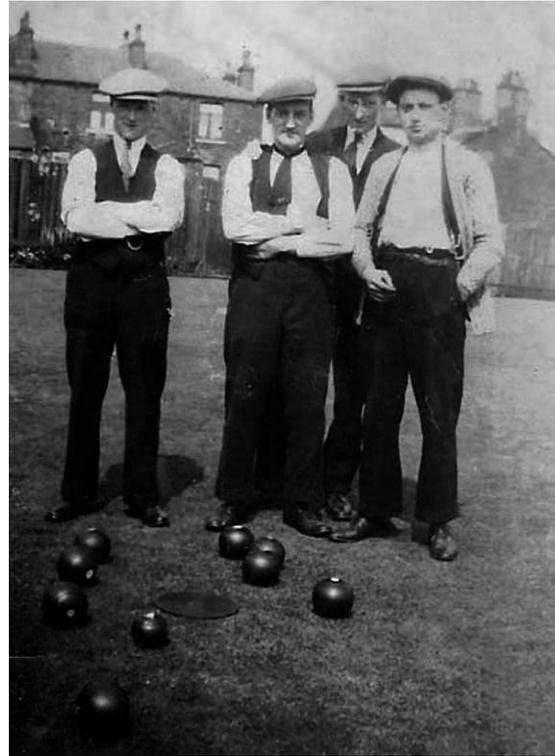
Around this time the Government was looking for accommodation for Polish families that had been displaced through the invasion of their country by the Germans and because we had a spare room which was never used as we could not afford the coal to heat it, mum took in a Polish officer and his wife. Stefan and Josefa had come to England with even less than we had and that was a wonder to me; someone who had less than we had!! Stefan's older brother and Anna his wife stayed at my grandma's. Now we had a little more income. Who paid us for having our Polish lodgers I do not know, but things must have been looking up because we now cooked on an electric cooker instead of the fire. Josefa

made strange meals the like of which we had never seen before, herrings pickled in vinegar just was not a part of our staple diet. After a few months Stefan went away to join the Polish soldiers who were once again ready to fight for the freedom to return home one day and Josefa stayed with us for a little while longer, then she too went away, presumably to be nearer her husband who was stationed in the South of England. Brother John and Anna stayed with my gran until they managed to get a house and settled in the village. After the war Stefan and Josefa emigrated to Canada.

In nineteen forty two the Yanks (Americans) also arrived because at the end of the previous year Japan had attacked the American fleet in a place called Pearl Harbour and President Roosevelt who was a friend of the Allies quickly got off the fence and declared war on Japan. The Americans had little effect on us at home as the nearest American base was Warrington in East Lancashire, but we began to hear some words that we had never heard before. Words like jitterbug, jive and jazz plus the phrase "got any gum chum" which was picked up by kids all over the country. Apparently dancing for the teenagers and young adults was never the same again when Glenn Millar music hit the British Isles. He was an officer in the American Air Force and the leader of a band that entertained the American troops. Sadly later in the war he was lost in the English Channel when the plane he was travelling in went down. Unfortunately I was much too young to fraternize with Americans so never experienced the bounties they brought with them. American servicemen were a magnet for the young English women with their odd drawling accents but the men were not so happy to have them chase their girl-

friends and it was not long before a derogatory phrase began doing the rounds. The GI's became known as over paid, over sexed and over here. Rationing hardly affected the American forces at all and it seems that many a household rations were spun out by the kindness of the GIs. Although dads and mums were wary of the way they tended to monopolise the young female population. The fact remains that if America had not entered the war it might never have been won and would certainly have lasted much longer than it did

After the war many of our young women went to America as GI brides and also many of them were left in the lurch after promises that could not be kept.



Here is a picture of Dad (front row right) and Mr Simpson (front row centre) on the bowling green. But who are the others?

Missing Names

Here are two pictures with people whose names I never knew or can't remember. Perhaps my readers can help?



A group picture on the cricket field. In the middle row on the left is my mum with Edith and Beattie with Mrs Horsefall and Mrs Cudworth to the right of the unknown lady in the centre. In the bottom row Judith Crabtree is second from the left with my brother Jimmy second from the right. But who are the others in the picture?

Chapter Nine - SAM

When my dad Sam went into the army he was thirty four years old, he weighed nine and a half stone was five foot six inches tall and had an expanded chest of thirty six and one half inches, hardly a titan you might say. He was enlisted into the Pioneer Corps and from there was posted to the Royal Engineers and because he was attached to the more elite regiment was allowed to wear the same uniform as they, which meant that instead of the forage cap which most army units sported, he wore the much more up market peaked flat hat with the RE. badge in front. It didn't mean a lot other than it looked nicer, he was still a humper and carrier and ditch digger for his more elite compatriots.

They did the prestige jobs like blowing up German bridges or building new roads for the Allies, demolition and/or construction was their forte, whatever was required at any particular moment in time. Dad went to France twice with the British Expeditionary Force, once in December 1939 returning to England in March 1940. Then away again to France a few weeks later. At this time during the first expedition Gran had managed to get a turkey from the butcher and she had cooked it to perfection, cut off some prime breast meat and sent it away to him in France. It was not until it had been dispatched that she found out the bird was not fit to eat and the rest of it was consigned to the dustbin. Dad apparently ate and enjoyed his treat which causes you to wonder what army food consisted of. Was it coincidental that in April he was admitted to hospital in Davyhulme with a gastric ulcer and the radiologist blamed his condition on the fact that the

army had removed his teeth and not yet given him new dentures. On the sixteenth of April he was discharged from hospital and once again on the second of May returned to France and it was the end of June before we saw him again. I am not too sure of what happened in France as the adults did not tell children anything in those days but I gathered that they left France so quickly that all personal belongings and equipment were left behind. It was at this time that soldiers were evacuated from Dunkirk and I heard later that my dad had been evacuated from a village higher up the coast from Dunkirk so we were very lucky that he came home at all.

Dunkirk was one of the very low points of the war but it brought out the fighting spirit of the British nation and has inspired many books since then. A bit of it which was fairly near to home was when one of the Mersey pleasure steamers that plied its trade around Liverpool went to help bring the troops home from Dunkirk. She was the "Royal Daffodil" and her crew were heroes as she made seven trips unscathed but on the eighth was holed by German bombers. A bomb went straight through her deck and engine room and out through the side of the ship, the planes then machine gunned her and set her on fire. But that was not the end of the "Royal Daffodil" by any means, she was listing very badly on one side, so her Master lowered the life boats into the sea on the opposite side, they filled with water and the weight lifted the bomb hole clear of the water from where the engineers stuffed the hole with bedding and mattresses until it was plugged, they carried on picking up soldiers



My father in his RE uniform in 1940

from the water then one of the crew stood up to his neck in the water in the hull whilst the others kept the pumps going all the way back to Ramsgate*.

* 1940 by Laurence Thompson

In September Dad was still toothless when attending the out-patients department at the Royal Gwent hospital. He was discharged from the army in July Nineteen Forty Two after several hospital stays and was diagnosed as permanently unfit for any form of service in the military in consequence of chronic endocarditis. So here we were a family again and Dad recovered sufficiently to get work in Fred Smith's engineering works and life began to get a little easier, although his health was never again much to write home about.

Mum went back into the cotton mill and the baby, Jimmy, was looked after by an elderly neighbour and I found time to play again although I still had my chores to do after school.

Life went on for us kids, more or less as it would have done even if there hadn't been a war, the biggest problems our parents had was the scarcity of some items of food and how to make the tiny amounts of meat and other staple foods spin out, of course this not being our problem did not worry us overmuch as long as our stomachs were filled with something. What did worry us though was the rationing of sweets!! Two ounces a week per person, that did not go very far and of course everything that had to be brought in from overseas was in very short supply. The ships sailing across the Atlantic were in grave danger from German U-boats and travelled in convoys escorted by destroyers for safety, but if one of the U-boats managed to get inside the ring of escorts they would pick off the merchant ships one at a time.

The merchantmen carried mainly armaments from America to aid the war effort, but around Christmas we sometimes got an apple or orange from

America, although most of us never saw a banana for the whole of the war.

The village boasted a picture house it was called the "Pavilion" but we called it the "Bug Hole" it opened every night and had three different shows each week. So if we were lucky we could go to the pictures three times a week and also on Saturday mornings. During the week they showed a short film and after the news a big picture but on Saturday mornings it was for children only and this is where we saw the serial "Flash Gordon" who each Saturday got into dire trouble just at the end of the episode and you had to wait a full week before you could see him triumph again, before once again having his life threatened just as it finished. It was here at Christmas that after the show we had to stand in line to receive an apple, an orange and a little bag of sweets.

The film stars of the thirties and forties were very different from today's offerings. We had Roy Rogers and his horse Trigger, Gene Autry the "singing cowboy" and Hopalong Cassidy to mention just a few. There was also four cinemas in Rochdale our nearest town, two of them the *Regal* and the *Rialto* were much more up market than our local bug hole. Although they also had a *Pavillion* which was not much better than ours, the other one was the *Ceylon*. If Mum ever took us to the *Regal* it was a real treat because she also bought a bag of cats tongues to eat. These were pieces of chocolate shaped, we were told, like a cats tongue and they were delicious.

Cigarettes were also rationed although I didn't know how many an adult was allowed each week. My dad smoked Will's Woodbines which came in a

bright green packet, if you bought five they were in an open topped paper packet but ten's came in a closed cardboard packet and my dad smoked them until the day he died, Mum to my knowledge never smoked at all.



Brother Jimmy on the beach at Blackpool with Judith Crabtree

Food was not the only thing in short supply, iron, steel and aluminium was needed to make all the items to wage war, so we had salvage collectors who came around looking for any metal pots and pans that were not in use. All the iron railings that could be used without leaving a danger to the public were uprooted and taken off for the war effort. Grandad's railings were left intact because he lived on a landing and it would have been a danger to remove them.

Then we had the "swill" men who emptied the bins which were set aside for scraps of food and vegetable peelings that the farmers used to feed the pigs.

The pickings for the "rag and bone" men were very thin on the ground at this time, but they still wandered the streets with their little horse and carts looking for anything saleable. They carried goldfish in little tanks which they gave to children who brought them rags. As they roamed the thoroughfare they called at the tops of their voices "any old rags, bottles or bones". We had two rag men's goldfish for many years, often when we got up in the morning one would be floating on top of the water in the bowl looking as dead as a Do-Do and Dad would put it in a clean bowl of salty water and he would miraculously recover. The fish were called Freddy and Freda.

The war rumbled on until 1945, without it impinging on our lives much more, we did of course read real horror stories in the papers of the bombing of London, Liverpool, Manchester and anywhere that the enemy knew there were docks or munition works. We had to carry our gas masks in little square cardboard boxes hung round our necks with a cord, at school we were shown how to put them on and had an hilarious half-hour watching all these strange characters wagging the funny long snout like things under the perspex eye pieces. When you took them off you had sweat running down your face because they were so warm and they were difficult to breathe in.

We saw pictures of people being pulled out from the ruins of houses young and old some dead and some barely alive but they were only pictures, we did not know these people. We were used to the rationing and other shortages especially the children, as we could hardly remember anything else.

I suppose the next really momentous event in our

lives in School Terrace was the birth of my sister in January of that year. By this time the war had turned in favour of the Allies and a couple of days after Edith was born I remember all the kids in the school yard (behind our house) throwing their caps in the air and cheering. Were they I wondered welcoming Edith into the world? To this day I do not know what they were celebrating.

Edith was born at home with the midwife in attendance and I was kept at home from school to help. Edith appeared to be a lusty child, but almost from the day she was born she had problems and the hospital doctor said she had a squint and when she was very young he prescribed glasses for her with one lens covered to make her use the other eye more. Because she was so young the glasses were fastened on with elastic around her head.

I remember Edith having fits of screaming and she could not be consoled, my mother used to splash her with cold water to try and quieten her.

Of course later in the year that Edith was born came Victory in Europe and it presaged the end of the war, Germany had surrendered and the whole country went wild, in London the Royal Family and Winston Churchill appeared on the Palace balcony. In Rochdale we all congregated in the town hall square and if my memory serves me right Gracie Fields appeared on the balcony and entertained us with some of the wartime songs. I can also remember a girl playing an accordion and singing to the crowds of people and at the end of the evening she was invited up to meet "Our Gracie".

In the Far East the Japanese had to have an atomic bomb dropped on them before they gave up. Who



Dad with Edith at Blackpool

could know that the end of the war to end all wars would be the beginning of the cold war with Russia and many more years of uncertainty still in the world.

Later in the same year my grandmother died, I am not sure why, but presumably it was a complication of diabetes. Treatments then were not as sophisticated as they are now. Insulin injections twice daily were, as far as I know, the only medication available. As she got older Gran became very bad tempered and my memories of her are that she was not a very loving grandmother, but of course as I have said before we were not told much and after she took to her bed it was not long before she died at the age of sixty four. She was cremated at Rochdale crematorium and her ashes scattered on the Garden of Remembrance.

Grandad moved out of his house on the landing into one of the little one up and down cottages round the back and we moved lock stock and barrel into 46 Tong Lane leaving School Terrace behind forever.

It was a strange kind of house with four steps going up at right angles to the pavement then a ninety degree turn up another three steps brought you to the front door and into a small square vestibule. A door to the right led into what would appear to be the kitchen and this was where gran did her cooking in an electric oven, but it was a kitchen without water or a sink, all the water had to be carried through the living room. A flight of stairs led from one corner up to three bedrooms and another flight led down from the opposite corner to the small coal cellar where we had sat during the air raids. This in turn led into a large square cellar where the washing machine was kept and it also had a fire oven with a big iron door where gran used to make dinners for the mill workers. There was a door to the outside from here and a big window so it really was not most peoples idea of a cellar, but we always called it the cellar. Back upstairs in the vestibule a door directly in front of you led into the living room and in the opposite left hand corner was the bathroom; it was called a bathroom because it had a bath installed, but there was no toilet; if you remember we had to go round the back to the lavvies.

It had a sink and two little windows one of which looked over the bowling green and cricket field where my life had begun. Grandad was quite wealthy by village standards in those days and had been the first in the village to buy my gran a washing machine and have a bath put in the "kitchen". I suppose because of hygiene problems and because there were no pipes to take sewage he could not have a toilet installed, we had chamber pots for during the night which had to be emptied and every morning you would see housewives emerging from



Outside the house in Tong Lane (l - r) Mother, Linda, Grandfather and me

their doors with buckets full of pee to be emptied down the big grates in the gutter.

So the house from the outside at the front was a two storey building rising up from a landing, but from the side it was three stories rising from the cellar. My grandad gave my dad the job of painting the outside of the houses for some extra money and Dad was happy to do most of the work until it came to painting the little bedroom window three storeys up above the cellar. He then conveniently remembered my climbing feats and I got the job of going up the ladder to paint the window for which he gave me the princely sum of one pound.

When we moved to Tong Lane my mother got a job in what had been an old chapel but it had been converted to a works assembling electric irons and it was here that I had to take a telegram from the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital telling her that Edith's eye had to be removed; she was eighteen months old. It turned out that she had been born with a growth behind her eyes (so all the screaming she had done was from pain not tantrums), her left

eye was removed and radium needles inserted around the right eye to kill any remnants of the growth. The consequence of this was that gradually over the years she lost her sight and by about the age of eleven became totally blind, but this did not stop her riding her three wheeled bike full pelt down Tong Lane and turning the corner into John Street where she braked turned around and set off for another go. How she ever knew when it was time to turn into John Street we never knew. She spent most of her younger years away from home, first at a blind school in Wavertree near Liverpool (which she hated) and then later at a training centre at Redhill in Surrey.

Mr and Mrs Cudworth lived in the first house in John Street with there two sons Sam and Sydney, Sam was the oldest and Sydney was in my brothers class at Lloyd Street. Next door tom the Cudworths lived Nanny Shaw who looked after Edith when my mother was working, she had a son who went into the police force in Hong Kong. Then came Bernard the overlooker at the Dublin Company, I think the Hamptons came next in line but I can only remember the name of the boy Alfie and his mother Katie. The next few houses have become one of the blanks in my memory apart from the Waltons who lived near the end of the terrace. From there John Street then turned into a street of what we called new houses, semi detached council houses up almost as far as St Anselms church.

Chapter Ten - MILLS, MOTORBIKES AND BABIES

After the war ended the next milestone in my life was the twenty first of October nineteen forty six, my fourteenth birthday and fourteen was the age when the working classes left school behind forever. At fourteen years and four days this is what happened to me, and three days later I began my first job.

There was no problem getting work as the war had rejuvenated the cotton industry for a short time (as it proved a few years later) and there was a well established hierarchy for the kind of work you ended up with. If your parents were of the professional class or "something in the community" then your first job was likely to be office work at the age of sixteen, or into further education from where you went on to become the next generation of teachers. On the next rung down were the shop girls and nannies, but the lowest rung went into the mill which is where I ended up at fourteen years and seven days old.

Although I lived in Lancashire I became a cop winder in of all places a woollen mill!! For this I was paid the princely sum of one pound ten shillings (£1.50). Cops were cigar shaped rolls of cotton which you put onto spindles and they were then wound at high speed on to wooden bobbins, the end product was a double strand which was then taken away to the next department on its way to producing cloth.

The working day was from seven thirty in the morning until five thirty in the afternoon with one hour break for dinner (lunch) and four hours work-

ing on Saturday morning. Being a winder was thought to be a cut above working in the card room (very dusty) or chasing the cotton back and forwards as a mule spinner. I was not very tall and the winding frames were way over my head so I was given a stool to drag behind me to stand on as I "pieced" the ends (strands) together. Comments of "get some ho'ss muck in thee shoes" often rang down the alley where I worked away, but I was quick at the job and fortunately grew rapidly when I left school and the stool was very soon discarded. My wages rose as well because after training you were put on "piece" work which meant you were paid for the work you got through and the quicker you worked the more you got paid.

There was a lot of noise from the machinery and we tended to talk at the tops of our voices but unlike the weavers we did not need to lip read nor as we got older did we suffer from the occupational deafness; a hazard of the weaving shed. We were usually a cheerful lot, happy enough because we did not have any great expectations from life. Banter and ribaldry were often the order of the day and horseplay was never ruled out. Winding was women's work, the men and boys were the humpers and carriers, they repaired the machinery if it broke down and were responsible for keeping the winders supplied with cops. They did not escape the ragging either, many the shame faced lad have I seen come back from the engineer having been sent for a "glass hammer" or a "little bag of steam".

Although it was October when I first started work, the following January (1947) was the hardest win-

ter on record, the whole country came to a standstill and we were laid off work because the coal could not be transported on the icy roads. A double decker bus was stranded up Britannia covered in snow for a whole month, and I spent the intervening time sledging over "The Cockle" until the roads were opened up again.

After a short time and with a much thicker skin, I became true to my Lancashire birthright and went to work in a cotton mill. It was here I found out I had made the biggest mistake of my young life. My mother worked at the same mill and kept her eagle eye on me the whole day, curtailing my activities considerably. As you can imagine because of the noise if you wanted a civilised conversation you had to find somewhere a bit quieter to talk. One such place was the lavatories were the teenagers would congregate to chat about which boys were available and worth chasing and which were complete dogs. Our overseer, Bernard, would stand so much of this and then start chucking bobbins at the door and using a few choice words to get us out. We took very little notice of Bernard; but woe betide me if my mother heard the bobbins hitting the wooden door. She would dive through the door like a whirlwind, clip me round the ear and chase me all the way back to my frame vowing what she would do to me when she got me home.

During this time Gerald was in Germany doing his National Service and he sent me a pair of nylon stockings that he had scrounged from an American soldier. We had never seen anything so sheer and glamorous, our own stockings were disgusting in

comparison, the only snag was my feet were too big and they would not fit me so I sold them to Nellie Kendall for five shillings.

Bernard was an ex navy rating and when the local council decided to organise a carnival he said he would decorate one of the lorries to look like a ship if we girls would be the crew. He got some of the chaps together to build our "ship and organized to borrow the uniforms from the naval cadets. The ship was called the "Dublin Company " (the name of our mill) and there was a captain and nine crew members, although we did not get a prize we had a great day saluting our way around the valley. .



Our float at the Carnival - I am third from the right

I had to do something about my mother keeping my nose to the grindstone, so when a vacancy came up in the gassing room I was front of the queue for it and went from being a nice clean winder to the dirtiest job in the mill. A gasser: it was nothing to do with talking or with the fuel industry. If you can imagine a machine about forty feet long divided into about forty high speed rollers, each roller hav-

ing a gas flame above it, onto each of these rollers was placed a wooden bobbin with a strand of cotton attached and as the bobbin revolved at high speed winding the cotton on to it the strand passed through the flame and all the little whiskers were burned off. It was all those burnt whiskers which made gassing such dirty work, the black dust got into your hair, your eyes, your throat, up your nose , everywhere there was a nook or cranny would be filled with black dust. Not surprising there was not a waiting list for the job, we gassers were just two, everyone else had more sense.

The other gasser was a man named Sam Picken who I thought must be at least a hundred years old, he was a shriveled little man with a humped back. He wore a collarless shirt of indeterminate colour, his scrawny neck emphasised by a gold collar stud, his trousers held up with a broad leather belt.

Sam spent the whole day chewing tobacco and spitting it on the wooden floor along the alley where he worked. He chewed and chewed until he could get no more moisture from it then a stream of black saliva shot from his mouth to hit the floor with a squelch. All along the floor were great black dollops of tobacco spit.

A couple of years as a gasser was all I could take and in the end I deserted Sam and his tobacco and went to Rochdale Corporation to ask for a job as a bus conductress, which I got, and at seventeen became the youngest clippie at the bus depot in Mellor Street at that time

In the late forties I had been introduced to biking by Douglas the brother of Jeff Coop who you remember lived in one of my grandfather's houses.

I started to go out with Jeff, Alice and Douglas on Sundays and it was on Arndale Sands near Southport that Douglas first allowed me to control his bike with him sitting on the pillion. Funnily enough his bike was a Douglas and a fairly powerful bike so it was a privilege to learn to ride. A little later I bought my own bike, I had saved £60 which was a lot of money then and bought a second hand 250cc BSA.

My cousin Jimmy lived at Shawforth and he like me was a bus conductor. One day after work he said to me " Hi Ber' do you fancy a trip to Blackpool" to which I replied "Too right". Jimmy had an Ariel Four Square motor bike, a beautiful machine much more up market than my BSA. So off we went to Blackpool in our bus uniforms, no one wore crash helmets then. As we neared Blackpool I was riding pillion and noticed we were being followed by a police car and indicated as much to Jimmy. We realised it was because he had put `L` plates on and he should not have been carrying a passenger. We pulled into a petrol station and stopped and the police car waited across the road as we filled up. I took of my cap so that they could see I was a girl and you could almost see them drooling at catching us breaking the law. After we had filled up I put my cap back on and got on the front of the bike kick started it and shot away up the road leaving two very bemused policemen sitting in their car and we continued on to the coast without any more incidents.

One day Jimmy wanted to stay after work and go for a drink with friends but because he had his bike there he did not know how he could. Anyway in the end he asked me to take his bike home for him so

that he could go. I took the bike round the back of his mother's house still in my uniform with my cap pulled well down. As I walked in she was stirring a pot on the stove and as she turned around started berating Jimmy for being late home for his dinner, and it wasn't until I took my cap off that she realised it was me.

The Blackpool incident was not the first time the police had had their eye on me. When I got the bike originally it was quite a novelty with my friends, and one day Audrey Tattersall said "Give us a ride Beryl", and I obliged. We were going up the road quite happily with Audrey sitting on the pillion, when we saw coming towards us the local bobby. I did an about turn and gunned it back to where Audrey lived; she quickly dismounted and I have never seen her jump quite as high before as she cleared the garden gate and disappeared up the path. I carried on past our house and went down the back by the cricket field, staying away (as I thought) long enough for the policeman to have got fed up and gone. Going back home to my dismay the policeman was having a cup of tea with my mother and I got a real ear wiggling from both of them before being told that I would not be reported this time but to behave myself in future.

The next occasion was one day when I had set off for work on my bike, somehow I had never got around to passing my test but often rode without my "L" plates. As I neared the bottom of Tong Lane a young policeman was just crossing the end of the road. He was new to the district and when he saw me he waved me down and my heart sank right down into my boots. After a few minutes general chat about bikes and girl bikers I could stand it no

longer and very brightly as I put my hand up to my top pocket said " would you like to see my driving licence then" to which he replied "oh no , I just stopped you for a chat". What a let off that was!!

Life went on relatively uneventfully for a time, but of course my mother still expected the worst from me and she got it big time!!! I did the unforgivable in the nineteen fifties; I got pregnant. In fact not only did I get pregnant but refused to marry the father or tell my parents who it was. My Dad was a fairly mild mannered man and if we ever had to be disciplined it always fell to Mother to do it, but this was one occasion when he went a bit over the top. He was definitely not amused with my decision not to get married or to name the dastardly chap who was the cause of my shameful condition and tried to make me change my mind, but I was adamant.

A few weeks before the baby was born I stopped being a bus conductress for practical reasons and stayed at home until the "happy event". At least my mother did not do what so many parents did with fallen women, chuck me out. She stood by me 'til I got a baby girl on the 28th of January 1953, and she chose her name, Linda Mary. The girl who had sold us our rations through the war years was the Linda bit and Mary was after her own mother. Of course Linda was doted on by her grandma and grandad and also by her great grandfather who called himself her "big grandad".

Terry, Linda's dad, could not understand at the time why I would not get married, but somewhere at the back of my mind a little voice was telling me it was not the right time. I had this feeling that if I was "forced" to marry it would be over in a year or two and I was not prepared to compound my first

mistake with another one. Beside which he was about to go off to do his National Service which had been deferred because of appendicitis and had signed on for an extra year so would be away for three years.



Edith and Linda on the landing of grandfather's house with Tong Lane in the background

Terry and his brother Alwyn were brought up by his mother, a widow, her husband had been killed in North Africa (blown up by a mine) when Terry was eleven. She had trained to be a nurse so was often working in the evenings and we had the house to

ourselves because Alwyn would be out with his mates. This is what led to my downfall as neither of us had any experience of sex and the inevitable happened.

I don't think my mother would ever have thought that she might be partly responsible for how things turned out, you see there was no such thing as talking about the "birds and the bees", these were taboo subjects. Also she always thought the worst of me and I am sure that is why she always got it, there was not one iota of trust, she was convinced that I never told her the truth. One evening I came home from dancing, on the top deck of the bus (with all the smokers) and when I got home got a real ear wiggling for smoking, she said she could smell it on my clothes. She more than likely could as she had a nose like a hawk, but no amount of protests on my part would convince her I had not been smoking myself, so if I was being blamed for something I had not done, I would do it, never at home of course or life would not have been worth living.

Frank Beaumont was Terry's uncle and he was in the building trade working for a national building firm Wimpey. He had taken Terry under his wing and had employed him as a trainee civil engineer when he left school which meant he spent a lot of time away from home. He was the son-in-law my mother wanted, as far as she was concerned he could do no wrong and when he came home on leave was always welcome in our house even though she did not know at the time that he was Linda's dad.

You can probably imagine that life at home was sometimes rather unpleasant especially if I wanted to go out and needed my mother to look after Linda.

Because I liked ballroom dancing the *Carlton* in Rochdale or the *Embassy* in Bacup were the places that I made for when I was let out but Terry had two left feet and did not like dancing so when he was on leave he used to call for me to get me out and leave me at the door of the ballroom, coming back for me at closing time to get me back home. I don't think my mother ever twigged how we were pulling the wool over her eyes; if she had I would never have been let out again. A month before Linda was born he called for me along with some of his mates (even though I was the size of a house end) it was Christmas Eve and they all took me out for a drink!! How was that for loyalty?

When Linda was a few months old I went back to work on the buses and for a short time things were quite uneventful until one day I was sitting in the greasy spoon café above the ticket office, where we counted and handed in our takings, having a cuppa and minding my own business when a lad sat down opposite me. I had seen him around for a couple of weeks as a new conductor, he was the brother of another conductress named Betty Walker. He introduced himself as Ernie Dodson and I got on with him straight away not least because we had something in common, he had a motor bike and sidecar. Our initial conversation was about his Norton bike and my poor old BSA.

He used to come up to see me at home and took me on his bike to see Edith at school in Wavertree; my mother was not very enamoured with him but that was not unusual with anyone I took home.

In the October of that year it was my twenty first birthday and Ernie bought me a lovely necklace from *H. Samuels* in Yorkshire Street. I also got

another necklace and card from Terry who was still away doing his National Service. Birthday parties were not common then and as I did not expect one was not surprised when I did not get one, to be honest I do not ever remember having a birthday party as a child.

Ernie taught me to drive his combination because unlike bikes which you rode, combinations had to be driven, I still remember the number plate as if it were yesterday, BEN 688.

One day I got a message, there had been an accident, Ernie had crashed his bike hitting the wall outside the bus depot and he had been taken to hospital with a fractured skull. He was in Rochdale Infirmary and very poorly, so I hot footed it down to see him. When I got there Betty and Maureen his sisters were there and another strange woman who I did not know was holding his hand. As I moved towards the bed Betty caught my hand and drew me to one side, she said "do you know who that is" indicating the woman by the bed, I shook my head and said no, "it's his wife Norma" said Betty. I was absolutely gob-smacked not only had he managed to lie to me for months, but also because his sisters had kept quiet.

At least in the end Betty had saved me the embarrassment of having to explain to this strange woman who I was. It was in September he had his accident and at Christmas he disappeared from the scene, he had done his National Service with the Royal Marines and had apparently joined the army again.

After my mother found out he had a wife she would not believe that I had not known about it all along. So I was back in the kennel once more.

I had now lost all interest in being a bus conductress and could not settle again so applied for a job in a mill higher up the valley in Brittainia. We worked two shifts each day, six o'clock in the morning until two in the afternoon one week, then the following week it was two in the afternoon until ten o'clock at night. The Ross mill was one of several mills owned by Joshua Hoyle and the cotton we produced went to make sheets and pillowcases which were in very short supply after hostilities ceased, because like clothes they could not be bought without coupons.

It was heaven to be back in the winding room but how different it was. It was a more modern mill and the old fashioned machines I had cut my teeth on had been replaced by high speed machinery from America. You no longer had to piece the cotton, just pop the cops into place with a strand dangling and a piecer whizzed around the top of the frame and did it for you. This was progress?

In 1955 Gerald married his girl friend Margaret Tyrell because she was pregnant. There was no shame attached to this of course because they did the right thing - got married. I was the only bridesmaid in a dress borrowed from Margaret Waddington, his best man was Owen Grogan, and Harry Hoyle and Margaret's brother were ushers. They were married at Facit Wesleyan's chapel and the reception was held in the upstairs room at the Cricket Field.

After a few months I was promoted to a beamer which meant my wage went up considerably and because conditions at home had deteriorated badly when my dad became too ill to work and my mother had a nervous breakdown this was the only

money we had coming in and we were seriously hard up. Edith was still away at school but my nine pounds a week had to keep the rest of the family. Mum had to visit the hospital regularly for ECT treatment and for several days afterwards her personality was completely changed and she became totally introverted. During this time I had a haven with my grandad, when things started to get on top of me I nipped round the back and sat with him for an hour or so. He always had some cigarettes in the cupboard, although he did not smoke himself, and he would usually give me one to help keep me sane.

Beams were the raw material for the weavers and when complete were like giant bobbins filled with cotton. The wooden ends of the bobbins were circular and around three feet in diameter, they were joined together by a wooden axle about five feet long, with three hundred strands of cotton thirty thousand feet long wound neatly around the axle they were seriously heavy. The beams were removed from the frame by being dropped onto a little cart before being trundled away to the weaving sheds to be woven into cloth.

It was while I was working at the Ross that Linda's dad Terence began courting me again with renewed vigour. Even though he was working in Cheltenham in the Midlands, every time he came home he arrived at the Ross to pick me up at the end of shift. Sometimes in a cream coloured convertible car, a Hudson which made me the envy of all the other girls because it was very snazzy, and at other times in a great big black Buick with a massive V8 engine which made a noise like a convoy of trucks. No, he had not come into money but he had a friend (remember the scrambles bike?) Norman Challoner

who had a father with a car repair shop in Whitworth and between them they had renovated the old cars and made them roadworthy.

Terry felt that I should know more about his life away from home and asked me if I would take Linda for a holiday in Cheltenham where he was working at the time. I agreed and we went off in his uncle's car which had been lent to him for the journey. He was living in digs on Hesters Way Estate and had got me a room with a lady up the street for a week and I must admit that we had a great time, not least because the weather was absolutely perfect. Cheltenham was very different from the grimy mill towns we were used to. Terry's landlady had a little lad the same age as Linda and they had a whale of a time playing in the garden and we got to know each other away from the pressures at home.

There was no sudden decision to get married, in the end it sort of grew on us and eventually I thought the time was right and promised Terry we would get married when things improved at home, but there did not seem to be much hope of that for sometime.

This meant that saving for the big day was even more difficult. Then my brother Jimmy left school, a little skinny lad who wanted to go down the pit so badly that when they refused to accept him because of his size, he would not take no for an answer, and the manager of an opencast mine at Deerplay near Bacup said he would take responsibility for him and gave him a job.

I stayed in the cotton mill saving as much as possible until at the age of twenty four I left Ross Mill after the afternoon shift for the last time. The previ-

ous months had still been a bit traumatic because my mother was still suffering with her nerves and when I took her to Manchester to buy her a coat you would have thought it was for a funeral instead of a wedding, she ended up with a black coat with a dark grey astrakhan collar.

But along came the 18th of January 1957 without any more mishaps and the girls put me on the bus with my coat on back to front and my hands tied together so that I could not reach the buttons at the back. They had tied clumps of white cotton waste at various points all over my dark coat and they pushed me on to the bus leaving me with all the other passengers and the conductor laughing like drains. I managed to get my hands untied but could not get my bus fare out of my pocket because my coat was on back to front so I got a free ride home. I was just grateful that they had not left me tied up at the bus stop in my underwear as it was the middle of winter.

I married Linda's father on the following day the 19th of January 1957 with Margaret Waddington and Edith as my bridesmaids. We could not afford a photographer so one of Terry's mates (Pat Hanna) from work did the honours and the photographs did not come out so we were left with only one or two snapshots that other people had taken.

Linda by this time was almost four years old and because Terry was a civil engineer he had to go where his work was and we left for Kidlington in Oxfordshire where we set up our home in a caravan.

Shortly after this my dad died. He had fought for many bitter years to get an army pension which he was eventually awarded. But it came too late to do



Marrying Terry - January 1957

him any good, by this time (1957) he was permanently disabled and died the following year. He was cremated at Rochdale crematorium and as we were moving out after the ceremony I noticed a blonde woman at the back of the chapel who I had never seen before. I asked my mother who she was and got a reply I was not expecting. It seems it was a lady friend of my dad's from the Castleton area of Rochdale who had worked with him at Castleton Moor woolen mill on Nixon Street before he had given up work because of ill health. Evidently she had a son by him, so somewhere I have a half brother. I have often wondered if he knew who his father was and that he had half brothers and sisters in Whitworth.

Chapter Eleven - JOURNEY'S END

Kidlington was the beginning of a new life for us - our caravan was one of two on a piece of land fronted by three giant trees. Kidlington at that time was known as the largest village in England and of course was much cleaner than Whitworth and as far as I can remember had no industry whatsoever, it was a mainly agricultural area. Oxford itself seemed a different world altogether and when we ventured into the city we were like tourists looking in amazement at the school children in their uniforms and straw boaters, a far cry from the clogs we were brought up with. After a time we were moved on to the American air base at Upper Heyford where Terry was helping to build houses for the American servicemen and then he was posted to Cheltenham in Gloucestershire. While we were still living in a caravan our son Gary was born and when he was about eighteen months old we bought our first house and stopped being gypsies.



Gary with Kathryn and Jenna 2004

The nature of Terry's job got us moving again when Linda was fourteen and Gary nine years old and in 1968 we ended up in a village named Woodlesford half way between Leeds and Wakefield in West Yorkshire.

Edith died quite young with a recurrence of her childhood illness and my mother died ten years later.

When this was first written my brother's Gerald and Jimmy were still living in the village with their families, as also were Margaret Ashworth (nee Waddington) and Audrey Mills (nee Tattersall). But sadly my brother Gerald has since passed away

My dear husband Terry died in 1999 soon after he had retired from work, he died from lung cancer, having been a smoker all of his adult years, unfortunately it was an inoperable condition.

Linda's son Ian by her first husband is living not very far away from me but Linda lives in the South of England with her husband Stuart. Gary married Kathryn and they have two children Charlotte and Jenna to whom this story is dedicated. For myself I still travel across the Pennines although my ties to Whitworth are getting fewer. Jimmy still lives in Shawforth and Margaret my sister-in-law in Facit. My mother Dora, brother Gerald and Terry along with my great grandfather Barker and great grandmother Sarah are all in Facit cemetery in the shadow of Brown Wardle. No doubt before too many years have passed I shall be joining them.



Brother Jimmy
- Christmas
2004



Mother

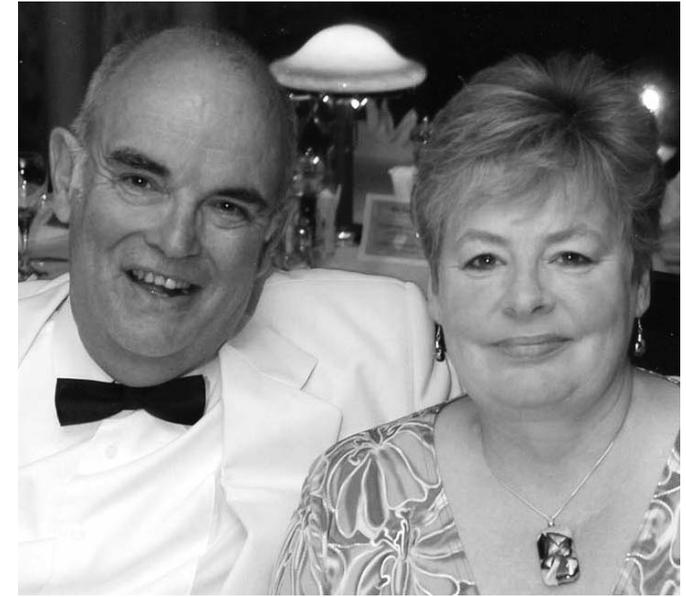
Well, my story has almost gone full circle, life has changed considerably since I was a child and later starting work in a cotton mill. Lancashire had gone from being the wealth builder of Britain in the late eighteenth century, until its eventual decline in the early twentieth century, except for a short period when it came into its own again at the commencement of the Second World War.

Whitworth itself is still nestling relatively unchanged among the foothills of the Pennines in the shadow of Brown Wardle, there is still only one main street running through the village though now much busier with traffic. Cock Hall no longer has green fields it has houses and bungalows built on it, but Cockle Brook is still there. I wonder if children still dam it up in summer and fish for sticklebacks? The valley is less polluted now because all the cotton mills with their smoky chimneys have been closed. There is no longer the continual hum which issued from the mills during the working day. Now the buildings have either been pulled down or are being used for a different purpose.

The valley may be cleaner, but somehow it is not the same.



Gerald 2004



Linda and Stuart on holiday 2006



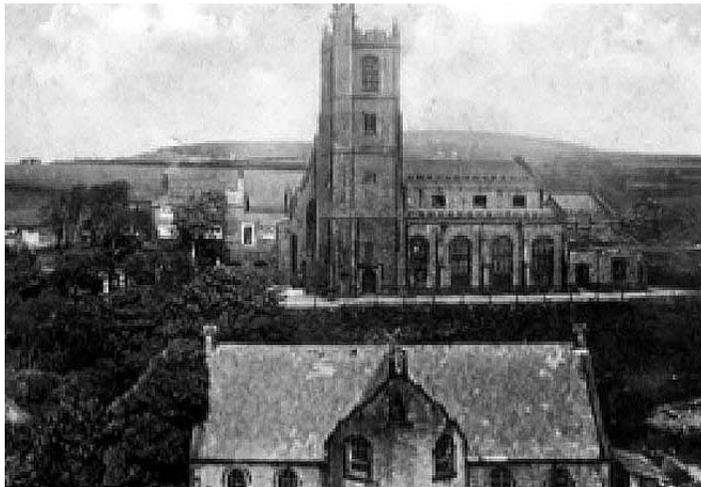
Healey Dell

LATEST PICTURES

(1) Pictures from Andrew Lord in America



Lloyd Street School Photograph - 1950s



St Bartholomews Church and Sunday School

Andrew Lord is the son of Bob Lord - a well known painter and decorator in Whitworth at the time covered by this book. Andrew now lives in America. We were delighted to hear from him soon after this book was published online and to receive from him these wonderful local pictures.



Andrew Lord and friends sitting on a wall st School Terrace



Andrew Lord and friend on a motorcycle outside Lloyd Street School

LATEST PICTURES

(2) Pictures of places mentioned in this book - summer 2007



No 8 School Terrace where Beryl lived



School Terrace today



Site of Lord Street School - now modern apartments



Chip shop at the top of North Street



The Whitworth Cricket Club - both Gerald and Beryl were born here



The Sportsman public house - formerly the Rawstron Arms



Middle Street and North Street today



The Bonk - as it appears today



Winter view of St John's Church, Facit



Back doors of homes in School Terrace



View from the cemetery at Facit



Terry's Grave at Facit Cemetary



Beryl's mother, brother and sister lie near to her husband in Facit cemetery

