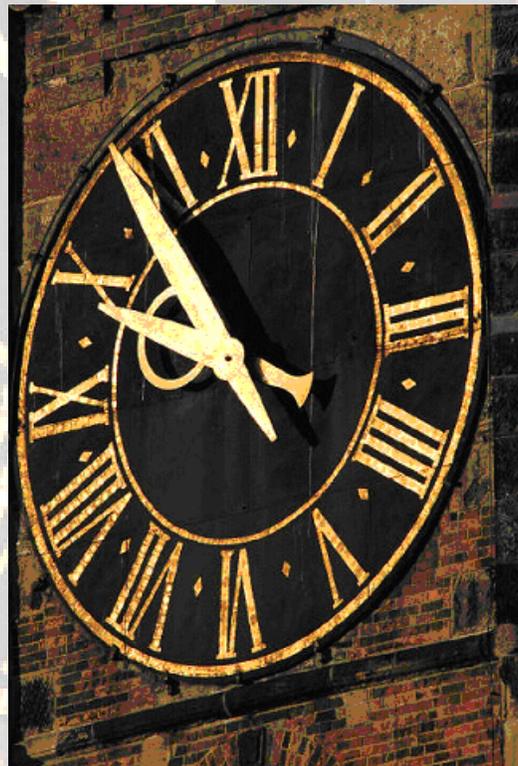


A Window of Memories

By

Edith Warburton



Editor Introduction



Edith Warburton is my gran's cousin, which makes her "I think" my First Cousin, Twice Removed. Her grandfather, George Nelson, is my great-great grandfather! Though "Auntie Edith" and I had met many years ago back in the 1970s (the photo to the left proves it ... I am the girl in the red-striped top and Auntie Edith is standing to my right), neither one of us remembers the occasion!

We renewed our acquaintance a few years ago (about 1999 which coincides with the picture of Auntie Edith to

the right) when, via one of my Aunts, I received a silk shawl from "Auntie Edith." This is the shawl worn by George's wife, Sarah Ann Torkington, when they married in 1875 (pictured to the left). With that exchange we started up a correspondence that has spanned the years since.



With no disrespect to my other correspondents over the years, Auntie Edith is my favorite. This is because she can take any topic and then write about it in such a lively manner that you feel you are there. Also, she is not shy about saying what she thought or thinks about the people in the situations so

her stories often make you laugh at human nature!



This compendium is a combination of a project that she started with her son, Martin, before he died, and tidbits that have graced her letters to me over the years. Additionally, I have added a few "family photographs," where available. I hope that you enjoy reading Auntie Edith's "A Window of Memories" as much as I have!

Diane L. Richard

10 December 2004



(Wedding Day of George Warburton and Edith Lewis)

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MEMORIES.....	6
TOMATOES.....	6
CHICKENS.....	6
HOME.....	6
NELLIE.....	7
MOVING DAY.....	7
BURNS.....	7
CYCLE PARADE.....	8
LACE CURTAINS.....	8
THE GREAT WAR.....	9
BOURNEMOUTH.....	10
DEMOBILIZATION.....	11
THE AIRSHIP.....	11
VINEGAR.....	11
GRANDMOTHER OR SHOULD IT BE NITS.....	11
BLACK VELVET.....	11
A DEVIOUS GRANDMOTHER.....	12
GRANDMA.....	12
THE CHAR-A BANC.....	12
SMELLS.....	12



MERINGUE	13
HOSPITAL BLUES	13
LITTLE TICH	13
FOXDETON HALL	13
OPENING DAY	13
THE GENERAL STRIKE	14
POM-POM DAHLIAS	14
HOLIDAYS	14
BAND OF HOPE	15
UNCLE ERNEST	15
FIREWORKS	16
CINEMA	16
SUNDAY	16
BLUE SERGE	16
THE WIRELESS	17
THE DAY PRINCE PHILLIP WAS BORN	17
THE ROYAL SHOW	18
T & R LEES'S FOUNDRY	18
ADDITIONAL MEMORIES FROM CORRESPONDENCE (1999 – 2004)	19
Wedding Blanket	19
Cherry Ripe	19
Llanfairfechan	20
Grandfather George	21

More on Grandfather George..... 21
Cauliflower and Caterpillar..... 21
Wallpaper 22



Memories

How far back does memory go? I had been reading an article about a girl allegedly taken back by hypnosis beyond her own birth and into a previous existence. This let me to reflect on my own memories and I was amazed to find that many of them went back to the time when I could not have been more than twenty months old.

Tomatoes

The very first thing I actually remember, is lying in bed beside my mother, who must have been ill at the time, as it was afternoon and she certainly wasn't one to lie around unnecessarily. The sun was shining on the red brick of the house opposite with a peculiar light, which sometimes occurs shortly before sunset. My grandmother came into the room with a meal, what else there was in it I don't know, but my memory says *TOMATOES*, thickly sliced with vinegar on them! Now, those two things are inextricably mixed in my mind. Whenever I see the sun shining in that peculiar way I am back in that bed, experiencing my first taste of tomatoes and when I eat tomatoes prepared in that way, I immediately see the sun shining on red brick.

Chickens

Another memory, which must of occurred around the same time, because of its setting. My father kept hens – not just any old hens, he was very proud of his *White Wyandottes* and *Black Leghorns*, of which he had a hundred or more, kept in a pen a short distance from the house. I didn't know that of course, that knowledge came later but what I do recall is, again lying in bed with my mother, and dada coming in with a large wicker basket. He spread an old sheet on the bed, opened the basket and out tumbled a host of fluffy yellow chicks. As in most families there were black sheep, so in this brood were two completely black chicks, which at once became my special favorites. Was this my first introduction to nature study and bird watching? Could well be.

Home

I remember very clearly the house where I was born, a four roomed cottage opening directly onto the street, the living room with its high sash-window, complete with lace shades and Venetian blinds, in front of the window a *Bradbury* treadle sewing machine with a huge aspidistra on top in an ornamental pot (they call them *jardinière* these days), a ceiling high cupboard with drawers beneath it formed the next corner, with a 'shell' rocking chair in front, joining up to the cupboard was a big Yorkshire grate, with its mantelpiece hung with a green crocheted valance with yellow pom-poms.

My mother was an expert at crocheting, hairpin and macramé work, and these mantelpiece covers were probably a specialty of hers, as I remember both of my aunts having similar ones, which she had made for them. There was also a cornet shaped taper holder in the same kind of work, hung on a nail at the side of the fireplace, another shell rocker in the next corner and then a long, high backed mahogany sofa covered in horsehair and with a bolster shaped cushion. The kitchen doorway came next, screened by a green rep curtain hung on a rod with wooden rings, in the third corner stood a plant stand made from four bamboo canes, with a leather top and another aspidistra, my grandfather had been a master saddler, and many articles in our home were made of leather, instead of more conventional materials. On the wall opposite the fireplace was a big walnut sideboard with a huge mirror, on the sideboard stood three large china vases each protected by a glass dome, the picture on one of them still remains very clear in my memory, it was of a little toddler running gaily down a wooden jetty towards a river, hovering above him was a large angel, I suppose it was meant to be a guardian angel, but I always imagined it to be taking the baby for a paddle in the water. At the side of the door was a wooden partition, with shelves for books etc, I suppose its main purpose was to act as a screen, for the room when the door was opened, for some reason I have never been able to discover, it was called the *spear*. In the center of the room a square white-wooden topped table, covered during the week by a red and white patterned damask table cloth, and on Sundays with a 'bes' cloth in red and brown alpaca type material, we never ran to a chenille cloth, such as I saw in some homes.

Nellie

On one side our neighbour was a dear old lady who I knew as Granny Walmsley and her bachelor son, they were alright, but on the other side it was a different story, they weren't "*quite as nice*" they drank a lot and often had violent rows, mostly at night, the husband used to throw his wife out and she would run around screaming "don't throw me out Jim, I'm only here in MI bare-foot feet" (I don't recall that of course, my mother told me of it in later years). They had a daughter, Nellie, now Nellie I do remember, mostly for her long lank greasy hair, she was a year or two older than myself and I learned a lot from her particularly some very interesting new words, the next time my father had reason to chastise me for something I looked him straight in the eye and remarked – *silly bugger!* The world stood still. Eventually my grandmother said in a scared whisper "*Hoo cooed some o'th hens that when I took her to t'pen yesterday*" never in my life did my father lift his hand to me but he could talk. On that occasion he sat in his chair put me on a stool in front of him and talked, I don't remember a word of what he said, but for over thirty years I never uttered another swear word, and very rarely do so now.

Moving Day

Shortly before my third birthday we moved house probably because of Nellie's noisy parents. The new house was only just around the corner and across a small croft. My father carried many of the smaller items over and I also wanted to help, so I picked up my small basket chair and set off at his side. By the time we got round the corner of the street the chair began to get me down and I complained ---- loudly! "*Well*" said Dada "*put it down and sit on it*" so I did and I sat on that chair in the middle of the croft until he had been and delivered the goods he was carrying and came back for me.



(family photo – 1915)

Burns

My father was a St John ambulance man, he held their silver medal, which he wore with pride on his watch chain, as a result of this people from all over the district came to him for help, when their children had an accident, or when a wound needed dressing. There were no district nurses in those days, and one couldn't afford to run to the doctor with every little thing. Once case I recall very vividly, a young girl, probably about eleven or twelve years old, had upset a kettle of boiling water over her arm and hand, long narrow blisters streaked down her arm, across the back of her hand, and fingers, to my young eyes they looked just like pieces of boiled onion, and for years I was convinced that my father used onions to cure burns.

Another very painful memory is of the Sunday morning, when I ran through the kitchen door, tripped over the mat and fell, with both my hands flat, on the side of the gas oven, which had been going for some time, cooking the Sunday road. Gas ovens in those days were made of plain cast iron, (not the insulated aluminum affairs they are today) and I got the full effect, after my hands had been dressed, Grandmother was deputed to walk me down to t'pen to look at th' hens and take my mind off the pain, I don't think that was the time I swore at them though.

Cycle Parade

Our back yard was quite long, and my father a very keen gardener, made a flower border all down one side, I can remember sweet peas, climbing up the brick wall, and weaving over the top of it. The only other memory I have of that yard, is of being held in my father's arms and looking over the wall to see the 'parade', there were horses covered in paper flowers, and gleaming brasses, bicycles were decorated in the same manner, with riders in fancy costumes, there was a band too, but what the occasion was I do not know, later conversation spoke of 'May day parade', was it just a one off, or was it an annual affair? Was it perhaps a forerunner of the Oldham carnival of today, but if that was the case, why did it come down Coalshaw Green Road, to Turf Lane, and up Drury Lane? Was it Chaddertons own special carnival parade? I supposed I'll never know, but I do remember the thrill of it, and throwing half-pennies to the collectors.

Lace Curtains

Window furnishings were a very important part of the early 1900's. And woe betide the housewife, who didn't measure up to her neighbours standards. '*Sham Blinds*' a width of linen with a deep hand crocheted border were a '*must*' and, they were backed by long lace curtains from floor to ceiling. These took a lot of keeping in shape and laundering them was a major operation, which very few women were able to undertake properly. My mother (pictured) had both the expertise and patience needed. My father made her a "Stretcher" a frame about seven foot wide and five foot high, it had tapes tacked all round the four sides, and to these were pinned separately every single scallop of the curtains edge. First they were carefully hand washed and rinsed, '*Dolly Creamed*' and starched, and then the stretching began. Still wet they were pinned back to back on the frame, and left overnight at the back of the house, and the warmth of the room soon dried them out. By next morning they were ready for ironing; this meant spreading them out fully, over the large square table and lightly pressing them with the iron. I loved to see the red-hot "heaters" lifted out of the fire, and popped into the "*box iron*". The smell of hot metal and damp starch made a combination that I can still recall. If the curtains were ours they were put up again immediately, but in order to earn a little extra cash, my mother "*took in*" for her neighbours, and then the curtains after ironing, were loosely rolled rather than folded, and carefully carried back to their owners without a crease. The stretcher was collapsible, and was erected by being bolted together at the corners, so it could be put away out of sight after use, but my mother did such a good job, she was in great demand, and there was scarcely a week, without the thing taking up part of the room, and at spring cleaning time, it was a permanent fixture. I believe the charge my mother made for this was six pence a pair or set of curtains. In between the curtains and the Sham Blind had to be a proper blind. This was mostly a paper one, which could be bought at the ironmongers. There was a roller at the top, with wooden pulleys, which were worked by cords. At the bottom of the blind was a hem into which went a thin wooden lath to keep the whole thing straight. Once you got the roller, cord, and lath, all the was needed when the blind got torn or discoloured, was to buy a new paper replacement blind, and tack it on in place of the old one. After a few years Venetian blinds became all the fashion. They weren't the brightly coloured light plastic ones used today, but quite heavy slats of wood, painted and varnished. Ours were a horrible milk chocolate brown, and the tape "*ladders*" were heavy white twill. I never liked them and hated having to dust them.



The Great War

We had only been in the new house, a few months when war broke out, I well remember the dinner time when dada came home from work threw down the daily paper on the table and said 'wars declared', it didn't mean a thing to me of course, but that night he went out, and when he came home mama cried, and grandmother went about with a sour look on her face, apparently he had been and enlisted, because of his St. Johns Ambulance background, he wanted to get into the medical unit, and if he waited for his official call up, he wouldn't have had a choice. A few weeks later he was called up, to join the Royal Naval Division Medical Corp, and after a few weeks training at Aldershot, he was posted to the Cottage Hospital at Blandford in Dorset, where he remained for the next three and a half years.

My memories of the first World War are completely happy ones, whilst my father was at Blandford my mother and I went down there on several occasions, staying 'in digs' for three months at a time. I became something of a camp mascot, known to the Tommies as the little Lancashire Lass. I can remember walking up to the camp, along a rough lane, lined on each side with German prisoners of war, who were employed on widening and repairing the road, they all respectfully stopped work as we passed by. I don't know if my mother was at all afraid of them, I certainly wasn't and chattered and smiled at them in glee. My father had several of the prisoners detailed to work with him the hospital, and he managed to strike up a friendship with one in particular, language was a problem, but they managed to overcome it to a large extent, and when mother and I were due, dada told him the news, ah yes! He too had a little daughter back home. It transpired that he was a silversmith by trade, and on the day we arrived, he presented my father with a tiny silver ring, with a heart in the centre for me, he had used the only German coin he had left to make it; I wore it as long as it fitted my finger and then kept it along with my treasures until, ironically, all my possessions were destroyed by a German bomb in 1942.

When we returned to Oldham, after these stays down south, I was regarded as something of an oddity, because of the strong Dorsetshire burr I had picked up from my friends at school. I was teased unmercifully, my mother on the other hand, never lost one vowel of her Lancashire dialect, and got her share of the teasing while we were down there, one thing she could never get over to them, was that her method of thickening gravy, with a thin paste of flour and water, was called, so she said a 'flour-lything' most of her friends translated this as a 'flannel lining'.

On our first journey down south, my mother was advised to take sandwiches etc. along, as no one could guarantee how long the trip would take, cups of tea were available at certain stations en route, like Crewe and Bath, but food was another matter, due I suppose to rationing etc. Mother, always willing to try out new ideas, decided to purchase one of the wonderful new Thermos Vacuum Flasks just coming onto the market, so that we could be independent, and if the train failed to stop at Crewe or Bath, we should still have a hot drink to hand. Alas, something went wrong! I don't know what, but I can still see her disgusted, disappointed face as she unscrewed the top and poured out a stone cold brew.

One shop that always fascinated me was the Pork Butchers, they made the tastiest sausage meat ever, which went into my favorite dinner, *Toad-in-the-hole*. But what most caught my fancy was the lady who served, she was a tiny bird-like person with rosy cheeks and snowy hair. At some time she'd had an operation on her vocal chords, and could only speak in a whisper. I was told that this was through talking too much, and was threatened that I also, would be like this if I didn't stop chattering.

We lived very near the Co-op shop, when at home and when consignments of scarce commodities were delivered, someone was sure to see it and the word flashed round like lightning, "*Taties at 't store*" My mother would pin a shawl round my head and order, "*Go an' tek' my place in queue*" while I run an tell Mrs Atherton. Us kids were quite adept at this game, and our mothers places were secure until they came. I don't know what happened to the poor souls, who lived several streets away and didn't get first hand news.

At the end of 1917 my father was sent overseas, and after some months in a medical station just behind the front lines he contracted Dysentery. After a spell in hospital out there, he was sent home, the first my mother knew of this was when she received two letters, from him by the same post, the first said he was



in hospital in France, and “*not to worry*” but to burn the letter in case of infection. The second came from Hope hospital Salford, to say he was now there. Apparently when the troopship carrying sick and wounded back to England docked, at Southampton, the men were lifted directly onto a train standing ready, gradually all the placed filled up and the train disappeared out of sight. As my father lay on his stretcher, he asked a porter who was standing close by “*where’s that train was going?*” “*Edinburgh*” said the man, just then another train pulled in, and the porter said “*this one is only going to Manchester.*” So he ended p at Hope hospital, less than an hour away from home. Mother and I went to visit him, and as we were standing in the entrance hall wondering which way to go we were taken in hand by a young boy in a strange uniform, short trousers, khaki shirt, cowboy hat and carrying a long stick. He politely and kindly escorted us along seemingly endless corridors, and finally deposited us at the door of the ward my father was in. After the first emotional reunion, my mother commented on the boy, saying how kind and polite he was, and how very much to her surprise, he had refused to accept the sixpenny tip, she had offered him. Father explained that he was a member of the new Boy Scout Movement and was helping at the hospital as his bit towards the war effort and that

none of them would ever accept any payment for their work. That was my introduction to the Scout and Guide Movement, and it so inspired my interest that it stayed with me for the rest of my life.

Bournemouth

While we lived in Blandford we toured the area, as far as was possible in wartime, and several times we went to Bournemouth. My chief memories of that resort are of the heavy scent of Pine Trees, which my mother claimed, gave her a headache, and of “*sitting down on a wave*” as my father described being washed off my feet by an unexpected big one. I had to travel home with a thick brown paper bag stuffed inside my bloomers, which were soaked.

Mother and I traveled by train but father always cycled and met us wherever we were going. On one occasion we missed the last train. What a do-do there was, the only other train leaving Bournemouth that night was one to Shaftsbury, no use to us, but father got into conversation with a man who was going there. When he got home he had to get out his pony and trap to take some visitors back to their home several miles away. At last it was all arranged. We all traveled on the train to Shaftsbury with the man, who then picked mother and me up at the station. As he had two people up already there wasn’t room for dad, so he go on his bike which had traveled in the guards van from Bournemouth and followed behind until the other two people were dropped off at their home, and then he joined us in the trap with the bike in the back and we finally arrived back in Blandford.

I don’t supposed it was very late after all, last trains left very early in those wartime days, but to me it seemed like the middle of the night as clip clopped along in the moonlight with trees on either side of the road and in the first part of the journey looking back anxiously to catch a glimpse of the small acetylene cycle lamp following us. I have since realized what a stiff job it must have been for that pony, all those miles with such a load. I don’t know how much it cost my father, but whatever it was, it must have worth it rather than being put on a charge, for he had to be on duty first thing next morning.

Demobilization

When my father recovered from his Dysentery, he was sent down south for a period of convalescence, and then to Aldershot for re-training before being drafted back overseas again. He was due to embark on November 9th 1918 but the sailing was cancelled, no one knew why, until the news of the armistice came on November 11th. He was kept at Aldershot and on December 21st a telegram arrived saying simply 'Home for Christmas' nothing more, but at about nine o'clock on the night of the 22nd we heard footsteps coming up the yard, a loud knock on the door, a cheery shout and there he was! He had been sent to the demob depot at Heaton Park along with hundreds of others. Because it was too late for most to get home that night, beds and a meal had been laid on, but when he told the officer how near home was, he was allowed to leave there and then. He walked all the way home and didn't in the least mind having missed the meal. What a Christmas that was.

We went shopping in Manchester and bought a Christmas Tree (the first I ever had) and my main present from Dada, which was a New Testament beautifully bound in Moroccan leather. He had to go back to Heaton Park that day to collect his demob suit etc.

The Airship

I was ill in bed and my mother came in very excitedly, wrapped me in a blanket and told me to stand up and look out the window, as I did so a huge gray shape slowly appeared above the rooftops, it glided steadily along and then gradually drifted out of line of vision. Mother told me it was an 'airship'; I believe it was the ill-fated R101.

Vinegar

My paternal grandmother kept a chip shop in Failsworth (which incidentally was only demolished in 1985). I remember the smell of it and the feel of sand on the flagged floor, scattered thickly to catch the drips of grease, and swept out each day before the flags were mopped and stoned again. On one visit my parents were busy in the shop. No one took any notice of me until, suddenly someone missed me, a hasty search in the shop, the living room, and upstairs failed to locate me. Then from under the table, I was heard to remark "*it's blooming tasty*". I was discovered, sitting in the sand drinking the vinegar from one of the bottles off the counter.

Grandmother or Should it be Nits

I didn't like my maternal grandmother, she a serious grim faced woman, who never that I can recall ever laughed. One day when I was about 4 years old, I can distinctly remember thinking, I'll play a joke on grandma, and as she came into room, I put up both my hands and started to frantically scratch at my head. Alas the joke was on me, she took one look and called my mother "Seran" (Sarah Ann) this child's got nits. Then she got to work, I was doused with mentholated spirits and small toothed combed, until my scalp was almost raw, and then shampooed with paraffin and soft soap. Ooh my eyes still sting and water at the thought of it. It cured me for all time of playing practical jokes.

Black Velvet



I didn't much like my Uncle John (pictured to the left with his wife Elizabeth) either, possibly because he was very much like grandmother, rather grim and with a preoccupied intellectual air; that had very little use for or appeal to children. What I did like at the time, passionately, was black velvet. Oh how I longed for a black velvet dress and jacket, I knew that at about the age of eight my mother would never let me have one. Unless maybe it was for a funeral, she was a great one for funerals and mourning was my mother. I was sure that in such a good cause, I could persuade her

to agree to my request. Then it occurred to me that in order to have a funeral, somebody had to die. I didn't want to lose any of my friends or family, and I settled on Uncle John. For months I willed him to die, but of course, he didn't and I had to wait many years before I got my black velvet dress.

A Devious Grandmother

Grandmother was a very determined woman and always got her own way, by fair means or foul. On one occasion my father was due home on leave, and it had been decided that we should have a family photograph taken, mama made me a new dress for the event. Navy blue velvet, with red French knots round the collar and cuffs, she favored the new fashionable shorter look, (about halfway down my legs) but grandmother objected, it should be much longer, down to the ankles; however mama took no notice and completed it in her own way.

On the appointed day, dad spruced up his uniform, blacked his boots, polished his brass buttons and blanched his webbing. Grandmother suggested that she should get me ready, while mama went upstairs to complete her toilette, this was done, it wasn't until leaving the house, with no time to spare before our appointment with the photographer, that mama discovered grandmother had let down the hem on my dress, to make it more, what she called decent. It still wasn't as long as she wanted it, it just came to the top of my button boots, but it completely ruined the effect mama had intended, the expression on her face in the resulting photographs registered, her feelings in no uncertain manner.

Grandma

I adored my father's mother, although I didn't see much of her she was a big hearty bluff sort of woman, with a ready laugh and a mane of red hair, which I inherited. Shortly after the vinegar episode in her chip shop, she left it and went to live in Huddersfield with her mother; she came to visit us one day and took me for a walk round her old neighborhood, she allowed me to carry her lovely sealskin muff. I remember the feel of it now, silky smooth and warm with a lining of satin, in which was a tiny pocket, which always held two pennies. While we were out we passed a fish and greengrocery shop and they had bloaters in the window, grandma went in and bought one as a special treat for my father.

The Char-A Banc

The end building in our street was a stable owned by the local Coal Merchant and Carrier. I can well remember lying in bed at night and hearing the huge carthorses kicking and stamping in the stalls. Shortly after the war, Mr. Guiney, the coal merchant, very daringly purchased one of the new 'Char-a-bancs' that were just becoming popular. It was a bright, vivid blue and, in honor of the recent war, was named '*victory*'. My father, always eager to try out new things immediately booked it for the Choir Trip from Hudson Street Methodist Church. As we lived so near, we were allowed to get on the coach just outside our own door and very proudly sitting in the new vehicle (I believe this was its maiden trip) we made our way to the pick up point. Unfortunately, the weather spoiled our triumphant progress – it poured down and in those days there were no glass windows, or even side curtains, just the canvas top secured by webbing straps. We ended up with everyone's open umbrellas along the sides of the '*chara*'. It must have resembled an old Roman Galleon. In this manner we made our way to Peak Cavern at Castleton. It rained all day and I remember the damp, uncomfortable, eerie, and often scary, trip through the cave. I didn't enjoy it at all and have never had the inclination to repeat the experience. But the Coach trip, now that was something worth repeating. The weather didn't dampen my enjoyment of that, after all, we were experience progress, making history. As it happened, we were really making the history of the town, since Mr. Wallace Guiney, the youngest son of the man who bought Victory, was the founder of one of the best known Travel Firms in Oldham.

Smells

Everyone knows how various scents and smells can trigger off memories, two in particular take me back immediately to my schooldays. I was a delicate child and couldn't stand the rough and tumble of ordinary schools and so I was sent to a small private school. Miss Schofield, the teacher, was a sweet middle aged spinster with endless patience and kindness, I supposed I must have learned a lot from her but I

don't actually recall any lessons, as such. One memory though is of our lunch times. We all took biscuits or cake and Miss warmed milk on the coal fire, sometimes is boiled over and the smell of the burning milk remains with me to this day. When rice pudding boils over or I spill a drop of milk on the stove the smell takes me right back to those early days. Another smell, which brings back memories, is Baked Bread. When I lived in Blandford I attended another small private school, one of my friends was the daughter of the local baker. They delivered bread all over the town each morning in a horse drawn van. If the weather was bad, or as sometimes happened the river overflowed, we were taken to school in the van, surrounded on every side by trays of still warm, fresh baked bread. Oh, what an aroma.

Meringue

Father became a Councilor for Chadderton and I remember him rushing home from work at Hollinwood Gas Works, discarding his greasy overalls, stripping to the waist at the "slopstone" have a thorough wash and change of clothing and, eating a quick tea before jumping on his bicycle and rushing off to a 7pm meeting at Chadderton Town hall. No afternoon meetings with meals laid on in those days. One big "occasion" he did attend was the cutting of the first sod, for the new "Arterial Road" (Broadway) after this everyone returned to the Town Hall for a slap up meal. When he came home he was full of wonder, about a new kind of cake that been served. It looked just like the two halves of a hard-boiled egg, sandwiched together with cream, it was hard but when broken with a fork it crumbled, and was very sweet and crunchy to eat.

Hospital Blues

Soldiers who were hospitalized because of illness or wounds, had to wear 'Hospital blues' when they became convalescent and started to go out. White shirts, red ties and bright blue suits, rather like pajamas. They were awful! I hated to see dada in them and he hated wearing them, but at least, as I learned to understand later, they saved men from being accused of cowardice, for not being 'at the front' or of being 'Conchies' (conscientious objectors). Indeed any lad in Hospital Blues was treated like Royalty, the best seats at Concerts and Theatres – free rides on the trams and endless offers of cigarettes and sweets. They really were hero worshipped.

Little Tich

One day while dad was at Hope Hospital, mama and I met him in town and we went to the Osbourne Theater in Newton Heath. The star attraction was Little Tich. I believe he was a very well known performer, rather on the scale of Today's Ken Dodd, it didn't mean much to be but I can still recall this funny little man, standing on stage, wriggling, jerking and 'shrinking' until he finally disappeared completely into his loud checked baggy suit.

Foxdenton Hall

When Foxdenton hall was first acquired by Chadderton Council, my father was on the Parks Committee, and so very much involved with its planning and preparation. We were on holiday at Rhuddlan, and went to visit a special bulb farm at St. Asaph. During the conversation with the owner, my father let drop the fact that he was on such a committee, and the result was instantaneous, we were "V.I.Ps" immediately and were taken on a guided tour of the whole place. As we reached each new variety one or two blooms were cut, and presented to my mother, and before we left both she and I had an armful of beautiful flowers. I don't know if the man ever got an order for bulbs from Chadderton Council, but he deserved full marks for trying.

Opening Day

On the day Foxdenton was officially opened to the public, all the Councilor's and their wives, and families, had seats on the paved area in front of the hall, and were afterwards taken on a tour of the building. My biggest disappointment was that, due to the steps being unsafe, we were not allowed to go own into the cellars, to see the window where one of Queen Elizabeth 1st Ladies in waiting had engraved her name on the glass with a diamond. I believe it is still there, but I have never seen it, my father did though, and his

story of it aroused my interest. After the opening ceremony the putting green was also opened, and as my mother did not want to play I partnered with my father, and at Eleven years of age became the first member of the public, to use the green.

The head gardener at the time was Mr. Walter Holland and his specialty was ten-week Stocks, he grew the most magnificent specimens, mostly mauve in colour and in our household at least, the mere mention of Mauve tocks became synonymous with Walter Holland, or vice versa.

The General Strike

My father was a Branch Secretary of the *General and Municipal Workers Union*, it was a big branch and almost all of its members were on strike but, because he worked as an engineer at the Gas Works, and it was an essential industry, he couldn't strike. My mother had to act in his place and pay out the "Ten Shillings" per week strike pay the Union provided. I went every Friday with her to the Co-op Bank in Foundry Street Oldham to cash the cheque for approx. three to four hundred pounds. Then we got back to find a queue stretching all across the croft, four or five hundred men all patiently waiting till mother opened up our front room and set out the signing sheets, before they filed in, received their money, signed for it and went off home. Not once in all those long weeks was there a single wrong word or action. No fear of being mugged in those days. Most of the men had allotments, and the strike gave them more time to work on them, and produce valuable food for their families. Often as he collected his "*Ten Shillings*" a man would quietly put on the table, a lettuce, or a bunch of turnips or beetroot or a paper bag of fresh pea pods, bunch of mint or parsley, in appreciation of mothers work for them. They were so grateful, no rioting, no demos, no stone throwing or "*demands*" in those "*deprived*" days. One day a man came with the most beautiful bunch of about thirty roses. They were gorgeous and I can smell them now.

Pom-Pom Dahlias

The man next door to us had a large pen, just across the croft from his house. Half of it was for hens and the other half was a garden. He had an apple tree, I don't recall having any apples, but he did keep us supplied with rhubarb, mint and parsley. He also grew a lot of flowers, I remember the lovely scent of '*Verbena*' and particularly his '*Pom-Pom Dahlias*' if ever I was ill he would bring me a bunch, and I was always fascinated by the stiff regularity of the petals, they always seem to be artificially made, not real growing things; they are not very popular nowadays, but one sees them occasionally at flower shows and I still marvel at them.

Holidays

My first holiday must have been when I was about two and a half years old. We went to Cleethorpe. Funnily enough I have absolutely no idea how we got there, or back. I supposed we must have gone by train, but I don't remember it. Nor do I recall any of the preparations, packing, etc. That must have gone on before hand. Few working class families could afford, to go right across the country for a whole week's holiday in 1913, so it must have been quite an event in our household. All I have are four, clear, separate little cameos of that week. The first, very brief, is of coming out of our "*digs*" walking past a few houses, turning a corner and being on the beach. Second, is being fitted with a pair of new red slippers. Third, we went to the Pieriot Show. I can feel myself sitting on the hard slatted chairs, swinging my legs and my new red slippers. The comedian was singing one of the pop songs of the day, something about my name is Captain Ginger, Gin, Gin, Gin, Ginger. Now I had a lot of red hair and had been called Ginger several times by my cousins, but my mother always insisted that it was Golden not Ginger. I must have thought that the man was getting at me and I wasn't having that, as he came to the end of his song I piped up as loud as I could "*I'm not Ginger, I'm Golden*" I got as much applause as the singer.

The only other thing about that week is going for a trip on Horse drawn Waggonette. We were seated high up on the front seat, at least my parents were, I was on a small buffet between their legs. I've no idea where we went, but wherever it was, mama bought a bunch of artificial "Sweet Peas" I can see them now, brightly coloured circles of tissue paper, backed with livid green sea-fern and rolled in a twist of white paper. I thought they were beautiful and carried them proudly, protesting vociferously when mama tried to take them off me for the return journey. In the interest of peace and quiet she finally gave in, all

be it prophesying darkly that I would loose them en route. The jingle of harness and clip clop of horses feet must have lulled me to sleep and it was only when the waggonette stopped at our destination that I woke and, the previous parcel still clutched in my fist, triumphantly announced (with a smirk) "*I got my flowers mama*", that remark became one of the "in" phrases in our house for years, used whenever I successfully got my own way, in the face of adult opposition.

My next memory connected with holidays was several years later, probably about 1922. It was Oldham Wakes and as we only got one week in the year it was important to make the most of every minute. We were going to Southport. Getting off the tram at Oldham Market Place we were walking down Clegg Street to the station when we saw, coming towards us, a small, very ordinary and to my eyes a rather scruffy man. He and my father both stopped "*Hello Arthur*" "*Hello Johnny*" hearty handshakes were followed by a long, animated conversation. I was hopping about on the edge of the group, terrified that they would go on and on until we missed the train. Finally, with more handshakes and mutual good wishes they separated, and we were able to go on our way. Reproachfully, I looked at my father "*Dad, why did you talk so long to that man, we could have missed the train*" "*That man!*" said dad in outraged tones "*That man!*" You could be proud to have missed the whole holiday for the privilege of talking to "*That man*" he could be the next Prime Minister of England. It was John Robert Clynes M.P. When the Labour Party did come into power they didn't make him Prime Minister but chose Ramsey McDonald instead, which, my father always maintained was the first major mistake the party made.

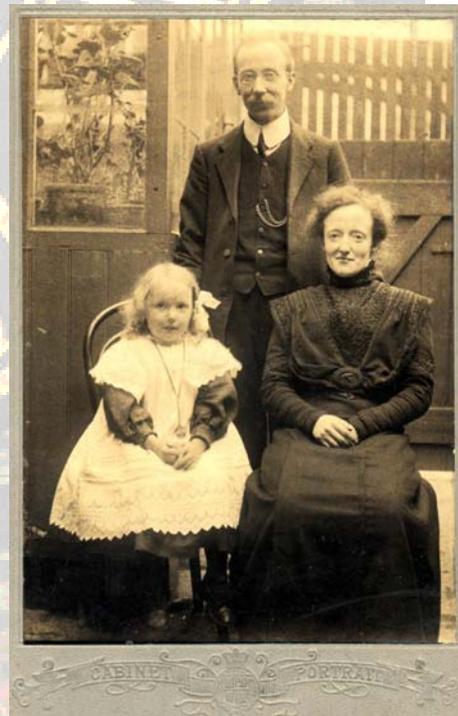
Band of Hope

I was christened and '*brought up*' at Hudson Street Methodist Chapel, but because it was quite a distance from home I was allowed to join in the week night activities at Emanuel Church which was only across the road. The one I remember best was the '*Band of Hope*'. One penny every Monday night, we played games and sang '*My drink is water bright*' and '*Dare to be'n Daniel*'. In the summer we went on trips. Long forms were brought out of the schoolroom and placed across flat '*Coal Carts*' and we sat on them and were pulled by one or sometimes two huge Shire Horses to places like Heaton Park and Boggart Hall Clough – nobody said anything about seat belts!

One year, from Hudson Street Sunday school the trustees hired a tramcar and we went all the way from Hollinwood Tram Shed to Vernon Park at Stockport. What an adventure that was. All that distance!

Uncle Ernest

"My Uncle Ernest (pictured to right with wife, Mary, and daughter, Elsie, c. 1910) was a lovely man; he was married to my mother's sister, Auntie Mary and during my father's absence in the army played a big part in my life. He was a member of the "*Strict and Particular Baptists*" at the Bethesda Church (opposite what is now the Roxy Cinema) and oh, my – were they strict and particular. They wouldn't have flowers in church, they had 'concerts' in the Sunday school room but couldn't have songs, recitations, or plays, only hymns, anthems, and bible readings. I was taken to a children's Christmas tea party there and got severely ticked off, because I laughed out loudly at some mishap that occurred, I think someone upset the jelly! Uncle Ernest wasn't a bit like that. He was a gentle, kindly and happy man with a merry twinkle in his eye. I believe he was often at odds with the Church Elders who objected to his levity. His job was Chief Cashier of Rolls Royce, at Trafford Park but he gave up all his weekends to act as the Pastor of a small Baptist Church at Slaithwaite near Huddersfield. He often bought me books, one in particular I remember was about three Dwarfs called Tick, Tack and Tock, they lived in a grandfather clock and their exploits were hilarious. Another was about a family of mice – a



kind of Beatrix Potter book, rather anxiously Uncle asked, "*you are not afraid of mice are you?*" I didn't know whether I was or not but I couldn't wait to get my hands on the book so I boldly replied "No" and I never had the slightest fear of them since."

Fireworks

My father was a great practical joker, and on the 5th November, when all the workmen at Hollinwood Gas Works, were dozing after eating their dinner in the room set aside as a canteen, he let off a "*Banger*" under the table, I believe the results were quite spectacular, but he certainly wasn't popular, and received a ticking off from his manager.



One year at bonfire time my father was on shift work and couldn't go to buy my fireworks so he gave me two half crowns and told me to go and give one to my cousin George (pictured at left in 1937 with A.E. Clouston) and ask him to go with me and we could both choose our own. Cousin George was two years older than me, about ten and so considered to be responsible enough for the task. We went to the newsagents on Manchester Road at the corner of Fishwick Street and had a splendid time choosing a whole five shillings worth (25p) of real fireworks. Mine were mostly 'pretty ones' Catherine Wheels, Fountains and Roman Candles etc. But Cousin George had Rockets, Jumping Jacks, Whizzers and Rip-Raps. We were as proud as peacocks, I don't remember who let them off but we never came to any harm.

Cinema

Our local Cinema was the 'Queens' on Hudson Street, Hollinwood. It later became a Bingo Hall, but is now closed due to the new road works. Every Saturday afternoon we used to queue up there.

Hundreds of kids almost all armed with apples, oranges, sweets or monkey nuts and of course our entrance money. I and several of my friends always had three pence and so could afford the best seats and didn't we look down our noses at those in the '*two-pennies*' we didn't even acknowledge the poor '*pennies*'. I saw all the Charlie Chaplin films there and Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks in the weekly thriller serials, with a lady sat at the side playing '*mood music*' on a piano. I am almost sure that I saw '*Ben Hur*' and the '*Ten Commandments*' around that time although reflection suggests it may have been later.

Sunday

The recent controversy about Sunday Shop opening reminds me of a day when I must have been about four and a half to five years old. As I mentioned before, my mother was a very proficient crocheter and a piece of her unfinished work was on top of a high chest of drawers in our living room. On this particular Sunday afternoon she was entertaining some of her Chapel friends, in the front room and I got very bored with the adult conversation. I slipped out into the back room, climbed upon a chair and managed to reach down the crocheting and its hook, after a lot of struggling I made what looked to me like a proper stitch, and full of pride I rushed into the gathering, yelling at the top of my voice whilst trailing my Mother's lovely work behind me, "*Mama look! I've made a stitch!*" Oh dear, what a wiggling I got, not because I'd probably ruined hours of patient work, not because I had risked breaking a limb by climbing upon the chair, no – the crime lay in the fact that it was Sunday, and one simply didn't knit, sew or crochet on a Sunday and I had shown her up in front of the Chapel members.

Blue Serge

My father always wore suits of Navy Blue Serge; none of your lightweight washable jobs either. These were heavy woolen, lined and stiffened with strong canvas in the lapels and pocket flaps etc. Because he was such a big man (six foot in his stocking feet and sixteen stone on this sixteenth birthday) ready made

clothes, which were only just coming into fashion, were no use to him, everything had to be individually tailored and he always went to King Street Stores. Dry cleaning wasn't as easy and popular as it is today either, and keeping him smart and well "turned out" was a big job for my mother. Every so often she would get busy on one of his two suits, first it would be well brushed and shaken, and then sponged with a cloth dipped in hot water to which Ammonia had been added. Then another sponging with clean water, finally a good pressing with a hot iron over a dry cloth, it hadn't to be ironed till dry, the steam must be rising from it as the cloth was lifted, otherwise there would be a shine on it and that would never do. It was then placed very carefully on hangers, making sure the creases in the trousers were just right, and no creases anywhere else, and then hung up to dry in the garden if the weather was good, and if not on the rack in the kitchen. He always appeared smart and well dressed, but a lot of the credit was due to my mother's hard work.

The Wireless

My father always had to try out every new idea and invention, and when "wireless" came he was in his element. Every article and journal he could lay his hands on was studied, and compared, and then he started to build his own set. Crystals, Cats whiskers, pieces of 'Ebonite' and things called terminals, and condensers, and coils of wire began to accumulate. The one big snag was earphones. They were not yet for sale on the general market. Our next door neighbor had a tinsmiths business, and in one of their trade catalogues there appeared an advert for these very articles. They were made by Kolster Brand and cost "Six Pounds" per pair, a colossal sum in those days. My mother was appalled at such a flagrant waste of money on "something that wouldn't work anyway" but my father had to have them, the order was sent off and very soon he was the proud owner of the first set of earphones in Chadderton, and possibly in the whole of the North West. For all their cost they were very primitive by today's standards, but they had one big advantage, they could be separated and dad and I sat by side each holding an earphone to our ear, listening enthralled to whatever came over the air waves. I don't recall what programs there were, apart from a lady playing a Cello in a Surrey wood, as she tried to persuade a nightingale to sing and it did! We heard it!

One other thing I vividly remember is the first transatlantic link-up. It had been in the papers for days that Marconi was going to attempt to get in touch with America via wireless. It was very late at night and I as in bed, but dad brought the set upstairs and we sat, each glued to our earphone. At last it came --- a faint voice, saying "This is America calling" or something like that, we were so excited I didn't really register the exact words, but I did hear the voice. Mother was disgusted, we ought to be in bed and asleep at that time. "Anyway" she said "we had been kidded, it couldn't possibly be true, somebody had been pulling our leg". Another thing she couldn't understand was why it was called a wireless, when there was so much wire involved. Having your own set became one of the "in" things, just as walkmans are today, and every magazine or comic carried diagrams and instructions for making them. They were very primitive but they worked reasonably well, I made mine from the top of a cigar box, begged from our local Newsagent and Tobacconist, with lots of fine copper wire wrapped around it, a tie clip did as the tuner, moved along the wire until maximum volume was obtained. Crystals and Cats Whiskers, were by that time being sold in little glass tubes, which could be mounted by paper-clips on the board; it was great fun.

The Day Prince Phillip Was Born

I remember very clearly the day H.R.H. Prince Phillip was born. Not of course, because of that illustrious event, but it happened to be my "Tenth Birthday". I was happily skipping outside our backyard, when our next door but one neighbor came out to her gate. "I'm Ten Today". I proudly told her. "Are you really, Edith, then stay there a minute, I have something for you". She came back with a tiny tissue wrapped parcel, which held a beautiful brooch, an oval mother of pearl set in silver filigree. It was gorgeous and I treasured it dearly, until it too vanished in the German bombing of 1942.

They were lovely people those neighbors of ours. They were originally quite wealthy, with a large house in the Saddleworth area, but unfortunately they lost all their money, when Oldham Equitable Co-op Society failed. After everything had been sold up, they retained just enough furniture, to fill the cottage next but one to us and move in. Mr. Hutchinson bought a flat cart and a pony called Dolly, and managed

to eke out a living, by peddling Greengrocery and fresh fish. They had been very successful breeders of pedigree Pomeranian dogs, most of their stud had to be sold, but they did keep three favorites, Roy, a proud handsome male who had sired many winners. He had a most unusual foxy red coat, with a ruff like a lion. Lady, the stately old matriarch of the line, she was fawn with black tips to her fur, and one of her daughters, Dot, a tiny miniature scrap of a thing with a most affectionate nature. Sadly, due to an accident, Dot had lost an eye, so from time to time the socket needed bathing and cleaning. Up to that time, I had been terrified of all dogs, but the sight of poor little Dot, sitting so patiently roused my sympathy. So much so that I became her absolute slave, and I have been an inveterate dog lover ever since.

Further down the street lived a family called Pritchard. Mr. P. was a great Pigeon Fancier, and had a large loft in the backyard with lots of racing and homing birds. Any bird that failed to come up to expectations, got its neck wrung, and was sold for about sixpence, and many a good dinner did we have from that source.

Next door to them lived the Speak family, Mr. Speak kept pigs, in a pen near to my fathers hen pen and any edible waste from the neighbors was boiled in a huge iron pan for 'swill'. *What a smell!* We children were always eager to take potato peelings, fruit or vegetable skins and bread crusts etc, none of them ever went into the "midden" because we got two, three or four sugared almonds according to the size of our newspaper wrapped parcels. 'Funny,' no one ever got Salmonella or food poisoning and recycling hadn't even been heard of.

The Royal Show

One year the "Royal Lancashire Show" was held in Oldham, or rather Hollinwood for it occupied the land that is now the Limeside Estate. It was a great time for us youngsters as all the cattle were brought to Hollinwood Goods Yard and disembarked via the gates on Drury Lane, then they were driven along School Road and Byrom Street, up Hollins Road and over Limeside Road to the showground. No palatial horse boxes or cattle vans in those days, instead, Drovers with hefty staves and dogs. We spent hours watching as the long trains arrived and the animals were driven out. I bet there was more truancy at Stanly Road and Hollinwood Schools over those three days than at any other time in their history.

We went to the show but I do not remember a lot about it, apart from the big tents and a stall selling "Water Melons", big moon shaped slices with green rind, it cost I think sixpence a slice, dad bought one and he, mother and I took bites in turn, we didn't think much of it, but after all you have to try out new things haven't you?

T & R Lees's Foundry

Almost at the top of Drury Lane was "Lee's Foundry". The foundry floor itself was way down below ground level but just above pavement height there were square unglazed windows, at night they were covered by shutters, but during working hours they were open to let out the smoke and fumes from the furnaces. I found that if I hurried on my way home from school, I could get there in time to see them "pour". I used to squat on the low sills, my head almost inside the smelly, smoky cavern, watching enthralled as two brawny men, bare to the waist but with leather aprons from neck to feet, opened up the furnace and with huge tongs pulled out the crucible filled with glowing molten metal. They fitted a sort of rim with extended handles round the crucible and carried it to the waiting moulds and then tipped it over for the metal to pour out. Oh what a sight it was, liquid fire pouring into the moulds, steam, smoke, drops of molten metal splashing around like sparklers on bonfire night, smelly, hot and primitive and I loved every minute of it.

Additional Memories from Correspondence (1999 – 2004)

These memories were not part of the original compendium by Auntie Edith. These have been pulled from letters exchanged and like the above are memories of a time and place that only exists in such memories. For the most part, these memories are from later years.

Wedding Blanket

Referring to Herbert and Lucy Taylor (pictured to the right and Uncle and Aunt of Elsie Taylor) ... "It was always their custom when any of the family married, to give them a pair of Yorkshire Woolen Blankets. When your gran (cousin Elsie Taylor) & I were getting our "Bottom Drawer" prepared, ready for marriage I bought a pair of Blankets at a Church Bazaar, they were one of the most expensive items in a household (but they were expected to last a lifetime) and I was very pleased to have got that expense off my mind. Elsie said "Well, at least that's one thing we don't have to worry about, uncle Herbert and Aunt Lucy will see to that." As Elsie & Jacks' wedding day approached we asked what they would like for a present and they chose a rather lovely mirror they had seen in a shop, we went along to buy it but it had been sold. The shopkeeper promised to get another in time for the wedding. O.K. A few days later, only a week or so before the big day they were invited to go to Uncle Herberts for supper and pick up their present. When they arrived home they looked slightly dazed, stunned even and exhibited their present! Not a pair of Yorkshire Woolen Blankets, oh no – a lovely Cut Glass Reading Lamp!! Beautiful, yes, and expensive but not much use for making up a marriage bed! In the end we had to cancel the mirror and weigh in with the blankets."



Cherry Ripe



"I remember the day Elsie (on right, pictured c. 1934 with Edith, on the left) first came (to live with them at Garden Suburb), she had been to work in Manchester and at tea time she breezed in saying 'Hello, here's your new lodger, complete with hot water bottle.' ... 'Elsie's real "Best Friend" was Hilda Lancaster, married to Sam Healing. She was a confectioner and had a shop in Moston. He was the son of a family who had a coach firm. When the firm closed down he and Hilda bought a Café and Bed & Breakfast, called the "Olive Branch" at Broadway in the Cotswolds.' ... "One thing did worry her, she had a rather sallow complexion and white satin and net and lace wedding dresses didn't do a thing for it. But, that was the proper thing in those days, white signified purity, virginity and goodness knows what else and when Elsie opted for a Blue outfit eyebrows rose to amazing heights. Her Mum & Dad were very disturbed and so very relieved when Margaret, your mum, didn't proclaim her arrival till well after the "respectable" date." ... "Elsie & Jack were very fond of the East Coast and often went there for holidays, especially a little place called Sandsend near Whitby and they spent their honeymoon at Filey in the same area. For a while Jack had a small car, a two-seater, open top, turquoise blue run about, the bonnet was held in place with a leather belt and it made the most appalling noise when the starting handled was turned." ... "Elsie had a rather nice singing

voice (as had most of the family except me) she was in the Choir at the Bethesda Chapel and one

occasion had to sing a solo. It was "Cherry Ripe" I don't know how on earth it came about, they didn't allow "songs" only Hymns (perhaps they got a special dispensation because it wasn't really a song – more like a "Cries of Old London") anyway Elsie was to sing it and for weeks she drove us daft practicing it, everyone in the house was singing, humming, whistling Cherry Ripe at last the concert took place and we all heaved a sigh of relieve. But – it was so successful they were asked to repeat it and we had to go through it all again."

Llanfairfechan



"Apparently my Mum & Dad & Uncle John & Aunt Lizzie, in their salad days, had spent a holiday together at Llanfairfechan in North Wales & were keen to go there again, but family raising, the war, employment problems etc. etc. etc., meant that it was 1925 before time (& funds) were available & by then of course families had grown older & acquired boy & girl friends so in the end we made a party of 12 & went off for the week (you only got 1 week holiday in those days). We took over the whole of a guest house, whose owner, funnily enough, was called Mrs. Lewis (there was quite a bit of confusion between her & my mum). George Nelson cycled down on his bike, Jessie & Ken went on their motor bike & side car & the rest of us went by train. Who were we? Left to right. Back. George Nelson, Olive Laycock, Lisbeth Nelson, Gwen Laycock, me (Edith Lewis), J.W. Nelson, Front. Auntie Lizzie, Mrs. Lewis, Clarice Pinder, me mum (Sarah Ann Lewis). Olive & Gwen Laycock were the sisters of Kenneth Laycock who married Jessie Nelson. Lisbeth of course, was the middle one of J.W.Ns children. Mrs. Lewis was the landlady. Clarice Pinder was Jessie's friend before she started going out with Ken, but was also a great family friend of us all. My Dad took the photo & Ken & Jessie had gone off on their motor-bike... We had a great holiday, climbing mountains, visiting Druids Circles & eating the local food but I don't think any of us ever went back there again... You will notice that Auntie Mary & Uncle Ernest didn't figure in the party, they never did mix in with us all, I rather think that Aunt Mary & Uncle John didn't get on together."

Grandfather George

Grandfather George at one time was a bit of a “wrong’un.” When he first came to Oldham and lived at the Lee St. address it was as a lodger and eventually he married his landlady’s daughter Sarah Ann. He was a very heavy drinker and lost all his money and their home and all their belongings were taken to pay his debts. Their next address was a very small cottage on Manchester Road, Hollinwood where my mother was born. Apparently he was so ashamed about this he became converted and a somewhat bigoted “teatotaler” he joined the Lodge of Good Templars and later my mother was the Secretary of the Junior branch of the Lodge. He obviously worked very hard to redeem himself and provide good home and living for the family and finally became a “Master” Saddler with a good business in much larger premises. When he died the business was sold and grandmother lived on the



proceeds for over 6 years and when she died she left all three of her children 100 pounds each, which was pretty good in those days.



More on Grandfather George

He was very strict, the children all went to Hudson Street Methodist Chapel and Sunday School but he was a member of the Scottish Presbyterian Church in Oldham and went regularly every Sunday morning, walking the four miles there and four back, because it was “sinful” to ride on a tram on the Sabbath, whatever the weather. No games, books (except the bible) newspapers or music were allowed in the house on Sunday.

Grandfather would not go to any of the weddings and when asked to “give the Bride away” refused, saying “he hadn’t done with them yet.”

Seemingly when a young apprentice completed his years of training, he was sent out into the world for a couple of years to find work with a variety of other employers, so that he had a good all around experience of the different types of work he might be asked to do. Before he went he was expected to make his own “chest” to carry all his tools, clothes and personal belongings.

Cauliflower and Caterpillar

Early in the war, Ian’s birth was imminent and Margaret, your mother, was sent to stay with her gran and grandad at Derby. I had been ill and Aunt Mary invited me to go for a couple of weeks to recuperate and also help to entertain Margaret at the time. I guess Margaret was feeling a bit sore at being sent away and possibly a bit scared too.

Anyway, she was a real pain in the neck and led us a right dance. Her favourite way of getting attention was to refuse her meals and there was a row every time we sat down to the table. I told Auntie to ignore it, when she was hungry she’d eat! But no, Auntie was a great cook and proud of it, she made gorgeous meals and no way was she going to have them wasted! And so the vicious circle went on, day after day. One morning I went into the kitchen to find Auntie preparing lunch, she had just cut a huge cauliflower

from the garden and I, not wanting to set a bad example to Margaret, said oh, Auntie, when you are serving, don't give me any cauliflower please. "Why not?" "Well, it's not that I don't like it, but on the last two occasions I've had it there has been a caterpillar on it." She went scarlet and bridled up like a little Bantam Cock saying icily "There are no caterpillars when I serve cauliflower." Came lunch time and on my plate was an enormous helping of cauliflower. I avoided it as long as I could but in the end I had to give it a try, I gingerly lifted a floret with my fork and there underneath was the biggest, fattest, juiciest, well boiled caterpillar you ever saw!!! I froze, my blood, as they say, went cold and my stomach turned over. I just managed to gasp "Oh, Auntie, look." She took one look, glared at me, grabbed the plate, stalked into the kitchen and emptied the lot into the waste bin and that was that, not a word and she hardly spoke to me again all day. I'm sure she thought I'd put it there for spite. And I still don't eat cauliflower!

Wallpaper

Thinking about this (pulling off heart monitoring connectors) reminded me of an incident during World War 2. Elsie had taken Margaret (pictured a few years earlier) to stay with her Mum & Dad in Derby for a few weeks. They went on a shopping spree in town and decided to have "elevenses". Auntie Mary was a very particular person and nothing but the best would do for her and so they ended up in Derby's poshest (and most expensive) restaurant. Elsie and her mum were chatting and eating their toasted tea cakes and drinking coffee quite happily, when it was suddenly brought to their notice that Margaret, tucked away (safely, as they thought) in her pushchair, had been doing a bit of exploring and having found a loose corner, had happily stripped off several large pieces of very expensive flock wallpaper! (a girl after my own heart). I don't know how much it cost Auntie Mary to get out of that one but I bet she never went in that shop again.

