



Southport Pier

Southport by Ray Pearce

Before we venture to Southport I must finish last week's story about St Gabriel's church, Cockbrook, Ashton under Lyne. It was in 1940 and I had just started infant's school, the school was opposite the church and there was a busy main road between. This road lead up to Ladysmith Barracks the then depot of the Manchester Regiment. The barracks were completed in 1843 and known as Wellington Barracks, they became the home of the Manchester Regiment in 1881. During the Boer War 1898/1902 the regiment distinguished itself in the relief of the siege of Ladysmith and when they returned to England (Blighty) changed the name of the barracks. Ladysmith barracks was closed and demolished in 1958 and the site is now housing but there is a blue plaque to commemorate the army connection. So it was in 1940 that the regiment set out for manoeuvres on the moors the other side of Stalybridge. The long convoy seem to go on for ever and I could not cross the road to my school .The teacher saw my plight and when I did arrive at school I was not marked late.

It was after the war in 1945 that St. Gabriel's had a church and choir outing to Southport. We went by charabanc there. Had we gone by train on today's timetable we would have caught the 10.30 train arriving in Southport at 12.14pm.The thing I can still remember to this day that it was the first time I saw the sea. Mind you it was a long way out and the pier was closed. Until that time I had either lived in Stalybridge or for two years in the war in rural Northamptonshire. The other thing I remember was going on the Big Dipper, I will try and find a picture of it at the end of this piece.



Southport Pier in bygone days

What do we know of Southport, well it was almost on our doorstep when we moved to Crosby in May 1946, it was only a few stops there on the Liverpool to Southport electric line.

In 1798 William Sutton built a hotel near the village of North Meols and named it South Port hotel and became a popular place to stay. The town and hotel became established from 1848 when a train service took place between Liverpool and Southport and in 1855 when trains from Manchester started .The big rival to Southport was Blackpool, one can see Blackpool Tower (1894) from Southport. Lord Street is the most well-known of Southport's streets and Prince Louis Napoleon on Lord Street from 1846 to 1851 when he became Emperor of France .It is said that Lord Street was the inspiration for Baron George Haussman who redesigned the centre of Paris. Tree lined Boulevards, covered walkways and arcades.

The Southport Flowers show is largest independent flower show in the country attracting visitors from all over the world Rotton Row is famous for its borders of flowers and a picture will follow. The big park there is Hesketh Park and my brother Don worked there when he left school thus following Dad into horticulture. Don won a place at Kew gardens and trained there for several years. He ended up as Park's superintendent Wolverhampton.

One cannot leave out the pier when writing about Southport. Opened in 1860, the second longest pier after Southend. It was 4380 feet long when opened but following storm damage and fires it is now 3635 feet and a Grade 2 listed building There used to be a steam tram running the length of the pier but this has been replaced by, what I call, a Dotto train . Another attraction is the only lawnmower museum in England with over 300 exhibits covering the last 200 years. I will end now

dear readers and show you some pictures of an elegant but ageing resort. Ray Pearce 13.Jan, 2021



Lord Street, Southport



Rotton Row, Southport