

**Family History Research Group  
Newsletters 11-15**

**Contents**

11. Spam, Sunday best and Whit Walks – *Linda Mogg*

    St. Andrew's Walking Day – *Janice Parr*

12. After the War – *John Poole*

13 Rationing and Black-Market activity in Lancashire WW2 – *Martin Bryan*

14. Shopping *Anne Sheppard and Janice Parr*

15. Oh what to wear! – *Janice Parr*

## Family History Research Group Newsletter Eleven



*Linda Mogg*

### SPAM SUNDAY BEST AND WHIT WALKS

My father had four siblings so childhood memories of food in the 1950's and 60's are bound up with the Sunday tea my parents provided when they visited us. My father was very conservative in every respect, so his taste in food had been shaped by the war. We had a large pantry always filled with tins of meat, fish, fruit, cream, and carnation milk. The aunts, uncles and cousins were served salad: cucumber, tomatoes and lettuce, sliced Spam, corned beef or occasionally salmon. White bread was sliced by my mother and I was directed to "butter it carefully." Dessert was usually tinned peaches, fruit cocktail or pears with carnation milk or cream. The children were offered strawberry jelly or blancmange, Angel Delight became a feature in the 1960's. At Christmas home-made Christmas cake, mince pies and trifle were served, while on occasions sponge cake and butterfly buns made an appearance. My mother was not a very enthusiastic cook, but certainly tried to conform to the traditional housewife's role of the period. My parents' culinary tastes remained fixed in that mode for the rest of their lives, however my mother did try Ski yogurt and Vesta curries. My father refused to even consider such un-English food. Needless to say I have a lifelong dislike of all those tinned items.

Looking through my photo albums there are few from my childhood, however I do remember the annual excursion to Manchester to purchase my summer Sunday best. C&A's was the store we tended to visit, although some independent shops in the local town supplied at least three of my dresses over the years. As an eight or nine year old my Whitsun clothes consisted of a hat, coat,



dress, gloves and sandals. These were always purchased before Whitsun and worn when visiting relatives at the weekend. At least one dress ended up with a tear after being sent out to play with a cousin. Sandals were scuffed which then brought down the wrath of my shoe-cleaning father.

The Whit Walks were very special events each year in the mill towns, especially in Manchester. Once my father took me to watch the Catholic walking day (the different denominations had separate times or days) it seemed to go on for hours. During these processions church banners were carried by the men, the little girls in matching dresses and carrying flowers held the ribbons as they marched past, followed by the bands and rose queens. The girls with Polish and Ukrainian connections wore their national costumes, their headbands of flowers and ribbons and red leather knee boots appeared very exotic in the mill town landscape. As my parents were not church goers, I was only ever a spectator.

At high school needlework classes introduced me to the sewing machine. Everyone made a sewing apron, needle case, yes, I still use mine! A dark green P.E. skirt with a pleat which was repeatedly undone as Mrs. Jones pronounced it unsatisfactory, and a gingham apron and cap for domestic science. Reflecting on these projects I am amazed it didn't put me off sewing for life. Simplicity paper patterns introduced me to making my own clothes. Empire line dresses, short hemlines, man-made fabrics, A-line shift shapes. As a school girl with little money, I could now make clothes that I liked. When I was sixteen my father traded in an old Singer sewing machine for a brand new electric one which worked for over thirty years. I still have a blue flowered sleeveless cotton shift dress with a petal shaped collar, and a two-tone brown woollen one with pin tucks, long sleeves, covered buttons and rouleau loop fastenings which was an exam piece.

Marks and Spencer's provided the first trousers I had, ski style pants with under the heel elastic. Later I saved to buy a pair of vivid pink shoes to match a dress, navy patent style ones with a large buckle which looked stylish, but as they were constructed from a man-made material the colour made my toes and tights blue! Tights were the great liberator in the 60's as hemlines climbed, although their fit was often questionable. Out went the full gathered skirts of my early childhood, jeans arrived, knee high boots, fashion became really exciting.

## St Andrew's Walking Day

*Janice Parr*

Each church in Leyland had different walking days and the one for the St Andrew's was a major event in the town centre. The procession was followed by a big party for the children with beef and salmon paste sandwiches, jellies of all colours, cake and orange squash. After the food the children ran races in the church hall grounds.

Sunday school classes filled the very large church hall; it easily fits three badminton courts with plenty of room around the sides. The club room was filled with the youngest children and the Bible class took up several pews in the church so the walking day must have taken a huge amount of organising.



The photograph was taken in Church Road looking back towards the cross. The girls are making a rather better job of marching than the boys!

*St Andrew's Walking Day in the 1950's, photo taken opposite the church*

This week's challenge is to spot me in this photograph.

My good friend Heather Penman can also be found. She was a member of our U3A, belonging to the golf and the family history group; sadly, she is no longer with us.



## Family History Research Group

### Newsletter Twelve



### After the War

*John Poole*

It's not too easy to recall childhood memories completely realistically - or to reliably put them in the sequence in which they happened. These are reminiscences essentially from the late 1940s - enhanced by some subsequent happenings.

Our rented house in Huyton did have what was probably a pocket handkerchief sized garden and, with the shortages of food, that was rationed anyway, there was an incentive to grow some in the garden. I am not sure what Dad grew but suspect that potatoes featured prominently. I recall there being two regular delivery men bringing milk and also fruit and veg. The milkman (Ted?) pulled a handcart; I think helping him was the very first of several part-time jobs of the post war years. I wasn't really big enough to pull the cart myself but couldn't resist trying, much to Ted's amusement!

The fruit and veg man (Mr Johnson) came less frequently and he had a horse and cart. Dad was never one to miss an opportunity and, whilst Mum might be replenishing our fruit and veg stocks with the man, Dad made sure to get full value from the horse's rear-end for the benefit of the garden!

At the time, not only was money in short supply but many of the things we take for granted today were simply not available. So much of the traditional manufacturing capacity had been given over to munitions and other wartime essentials that no new cars, bikes or very many other non-essentials had been produced for probably a decade. Always the outdoor guy, Dad managed to track down a (pre-war) second hand bike that was very expensive in real terms; I seem to recall it costing the best

part of a week's wages. It was quite a few years later before any thought was given to the acquisition of a car.

Dad was a fireman and it was in the early fifties that a new Fire Station was built in Huyton, as well as a row of ten houses to accommodate the full-time crew. A day-manning system meant that each of the men would work five consecutive 24 hour days before having three days off. There was a loud bell at the top of the stairs so that the men on duty could be called out during the night. Surprisingly, the rest of the family slept through any alarm calls within just a couple of weeks of us moving in. Dad would leave his uniform over the rail at the top of the stairs in case of a call-out. It wasn't unusual for him to have left some coins in his trouser pocket, only for them to roll down the (uncarpeted/noisy) stairs as he hung them up!

Times must have been improving - my parents decided they could afford a car when I was 15 or 16. Dad was keen for me to learn to drive, but with the onset of the Suez crisis, petrol rationing was introduced. Administration of the coupons was taken on by driving test examiners and tests suspended. What joy for we learners who were now allowed out unaccompanied! With my tutor (Dad - no such thing as driving schools yet) tied to his job for five days out of eight, the World was mine! I seem to remember driving off with a mate into North Wales via the (first) Mersey Tunnel. I'd driven so much by the time that tests were reintroduced that I can't remember any nervousness with a first-time pass.

Dad had always been keen on the outdoors and, a few years after acquiring the car, had been driving about in Snowdonia when he saw a footpath sign for Snowdon. He persuaded me to join him and, despite neither of us having map, boots or rucksack, we set off along what we subsequently learned to be the "Miners' Track". We took our lunch in a shopping bag and, having eaten, hid the bag in a ruin. I think the weather was quite kind and, after quite a struggle, we made the summit.

Dad was obviously hooked on the whole idea and subsequently bought himself decent boots, proper clothing and a rucksack. Meanwhile, yours truly was busy with his student apprenticeship (involving much time away in London). When the course was over, he and I went off to the Lake District for two or three days. The M6 only comprised the Preston by-pass at that time so day trips to the Lakes weren't really practical.

On the last day, we'd parked at Dunmail Raise and climbed Helvellyn. As we got back to the car, Dad sneaked off with the old walking shoes that I was still using and hid them behind a phone box, casually asking when we were halfway home if I'd remembered to put them in the car. At last, he'd got his way and forced me to buy some proper gear!

*Father and son on the Isle of Skye*



At that time, he and I would jog regularly around a local school field after work. The school was a couple of miles away - so we'd drive there. He'd had all his teeth extracted when he was quite young, so was in the habit of removing his dentures before taking any significant exercise. On one occasion, he'd forgotten that he was still wearing them until we arrived at the field. Never being one to let such a trivial consideration detract from the task at hand, he removed them and left them on top of a fencepost. Having showered on return home, he sat down for the evening's repast - Mum and I were in helpless laughter when he realised that those teeth were still where he'd left them a little while earlier!



### *Newlyweds in the snowy Alps*

Joan and I met in the "Ormskirk Ramblers" - more than a little while ago! I'd already taken a few Alpine trips and here we are - young and innocent!



A few years later, I'd made the shortlist for a (UK based) job with a Swiss company - even flying to HQ for a final interview. Alas, it wasn't to be, much to my disappointment. However, as is often the case with these things, I subsequently realised that what I would really miss would be the opportunity to tack on a few days holiday to a business trip - and to take Dad with me. He never did make it outside the UK and I'm certain he would have loved it.

He could never get the hang of map-reading so would only go somewhere different if I was with him. He'd mastered the many routes on Snowdon and as he reached his eightieth birthday, he managed to climb it just once more. He'd never particularly enjoyed going downhill and that day, he grabbed a spare seat on the descending mountain train.

I'm hoping to follow in his footsteps later this year - along with some of the next two generations of Pooles. Watch this space.



*With (some of) the next generation in North Wales*



Did you manage to spot us last week?

Heather



Me

*The photo was taken in Worden Lane*

## Family History Research Group

### Newsletter Thirteen



### Mutual Back Scratching

*Martin Bryan*

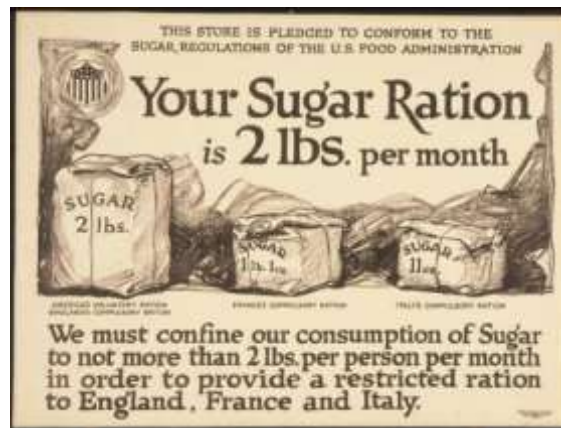
As I had stated before, my father, as a pharmacist, was classed as in an exempt occupation during the Second World War, so was excused from active duty in one of the services. Among other occupations that were also exempt were farmers, and this is where a friendship developed. We have all heard of the black-market, and I'm sorry to say my father was involved, but it was for the benefit of his little son Martin, i.e. me. The farmer who was the other half of the conspiracy was a certain Bill Hodge from Appley Bridge. Now Bill Hodge had a particularly sweet tooth, and father liked a good bit of meat, so between them an arrangement came about to each other's benefit.

Being a farmer with livestock, Bill Hodge had animals which could be slaughtered and butchered. Being a pharmacist Bill Bryan, my father, could buy any amount of sugar from which syrup could be made for the dilution of medicines, and also make them more palatable. I'm sure you can see where this is leading, and in quiet car parks, exchanges were made, I believe at the dead of night. So the outcome was that little Martin enjoyed ham, beef and lamb whilst farmer Bill had a regular supply of sweet sugar. Neither of them are alive today and therefore can't be punished, but I have often thought of how many 'arrangements' were established during the war years. Would you have accepted treats for your family?

## SWEET TREATS

Janice Parr

My mum often said that our household didn't go short of any foodstuff during the war but unfortunately, I didn't ask for the details of how that all worked. I rather suspect that it had a lot to do with living in a relatively small, community which looked after each other. The property next door was occupied by a butcher and within a short walk from where my family lived there were traders selling every commodity you could possibly wish to obtain.



I am rather mystified as to why the sugar ration was insufficient; while my dad was still at home Mum would have been allowed 8lbs per month though this was later cut to 4lbs. I can't remember when I last bought sugar though I am running out now as I did take to making the odd cake while in lockdown, something we don't normally have in the house. I also know that one of our members takes one and a half teaspoons of sugar in tea, I suppose having several brews a day would quickly eat into the supplies.



*The photo and following article can be found on the Daily Mail online newspaper*

War rationing was a way of life during World War Two, creating a national culture of austerity, but it also sparked ingenuity, such as swapping an ice-cream for a carrot on a stick.

It was the official wartime substitute for ice-cream, and some British children born just before the war didn't discover what ice-cream actually was until the fighting had finished and rationing stopped.

The carrot on a stick was offered as the alternative when supplies ran low, because sugar needed to make ice-cream was one of the first luxuries to be hit on by rationing, along with bacon and butter.

A short film clip from the British Pathe archive –

<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/easter-1941>

We always went to Blackpool on Good Friday but my mum would never let us paddle, she said the water was too polluted.

*The following is an extract from an article which appeared in the Daily Express*

### **The day Britain got its sweets back**

For a generation of wide-eyed British schoolchildren this was the day the world changed. Exactly 60 years ago today minister of food Gwilym Lloyd George (son of former Prime minister David Lloyd George) lifted the rationing on sweets that had been introduced during the Second World War in 1942.



*Fifties children make an excited dash for lemon sherbets, barley sugar twists and liquorice allsorts*

On the day in question the BBC reported:  
"Children all over

Britain have been emptying out their piggy banks and heading straight for the

nearest sweet shop. Toffee apples were the biggest sellers with sticks of nougat and liquorice strips also disappearing fast."

**"BLACK MARKET"  
SUGAR?**

---

**1,800lbs. Found On  
Roadway**

Since Monday, Ministry of Food officials and the Westmorland County Police have been searching for information which might lead to an explanation of the appearance of bags of sugar, believed to be "black market," totalling 1,800lbs., which were found scattered at intervals along 350 yards of the main Harrow-Lancaster road at Witheralack on Monday morning.

The discovery was made by James Shaw, quarryman, of Minthorpe, and Peter Chapman, haulage contractor, of Lyth, who were walking along the road. The first bag was marked "fertiliser," but on opening it they found it contained high-grade refined white sugar. Other sacks marked "Fertiliser" and "Artificial Manure," also contained sugar, and there were 18 bags in all.

One theory is that the sugar may have been intended for ice-cream merchants, but a check-up has not yet yielded any clues. It appears that the sacks were thrown off a lorry travelling towards Lancaster, and police are searching for that lorry.

"We are fairly sure it is black market sugar because of the way it has been packed," a Ministry of Food official stated.

Meanwhile the sugar is being stored at a Ministry repository in Kendal while inquiries are being continued.

Lancaster Guardian 26/8/1946

I did do a search on the Find My Past Newspaper archive for dodgy dealings nearer home but didn't come up with anything.

## Family History Research Group

### Newsletter Fourteen



### SHOPPING

*Anne Sheppard*

My very first shopping memory was Mum taking us to the village shop in Clifton to buy her daily groceries. Once a week on a Friday, we were allowed to choose some sweets. Sweets were still on ration (then it ended in 1953) and I can see her cutting out the coupons before we set off. I'm not sure what value was allowed but back then there were plenty of sweets from a farthing upwards - yes the little coins with the wren on were still around until 1960!

There was so much to choose from; blackjacks, gob stoppers, aniseed balls and later flying saucers filled with sherbet which I loved, all priced at a farthing or a halfpenny.



Penny chews, sherbet dabs, little imps and chalky lollies were more expensive and I needed to make my 3d go a long way. Liquorice root and tiger nuts were at the more exotic end of the range but we were never allowed bubble gum so I envied my friends who could blow large bubbles which often ended up over their cheeks or clothes- probably why they were banned for us!

*Photo found on Daily Express online*

During the pandemic I have been very fortunate to be invited to outdoor "Coffee Mornings" in the next road. On Wednesdays we play bingo and spot prizes are in a big bowl which has Love Hearts, Parma Violets and chalky lollies amongst the selection on offer. I've become quite addicted to Love Hearts and Parma Violets and



now need to find where I can buy them in future! Weekly food shops involved getting the bus to the Co-op in Kirkham. They sold everything, dry goods, loose biscuits (discount for broken biscuits), butter, bacon and cheese. The coupons, long strips of paper with blue printing on were carefully moistened and stuck on to our “divvy” sheet which periodically would be used to buy other goods. Meat was bought from a butchers in Preston, Marsh Lane I think. The butcher Cliff was a friend of Mum and Dad’s which is why we went there for our meat. I hated going in the shop with the enormous carcasses suspended by metal hooks from the ceiling and blood soaked sawdust on the floor. I was frightened of the noise as the butcher chopped meat on the wooden block with a large cleaver. Enough to turn you vegetarian!

A visit to Preston for the big shops was a treat. “Best clothes” were purchased here. I seem to remember going to Novello’s, an expensive shop then as now but perhaps I’m mistaken as there was not too much money to spare at home. I remember two particularly unfortunate choices of outfit. I was very strong willed about what I wanted whether it suited me or not. There was an alarmingly bright green overcoat with matching felt hat which had ridiculous streamers with small yellow felt primroses which hung over my eyes. If that wasn’t bad enough I chose a coffee coloured suit with a boxy jacket and pleated skirt. I had just recovered from pneumonia and a mud coloured outfit did nothing for my pale and washed out complexion. But I insisted and against their better judgement my parents relented. It was hardly worn before I outgrew it which was a blessing. Shoes, a regular purchase, but only one pair at a time, were bought from Lingards. They had a very old wooden x-ray machine to check that you had growing space in the shoes - probably giving out toxic doses of radiation! A special treat was to go in the Kardomah for a coffee which was never as good as the smell you got on entering the cafe. When I passed my 11+ and went to grammar school in Preston the uniform had to be purchased in Lingards (at great expense!) It was a horrible dark green.

*Lingards and Mount Street c1980*



*Image - Preston Historical Society*



*Preston Woolworths was opened in 1910, it was the second of their stores*

School rules were amongst other things, extremely snobbish. We were absolutely forbidden to go into either Woolworths or British Home Stores in school uniform as these shops were “common”. I can remember being caught by a teacher coming out of Woolworths as I needed to buy a compass for her Maths lesson having broken mine. This excuse did me no good

*Janice Parr*

From my early teens I went shopping to Preston on Saturday afternoons with my friend Linda. We would meet at the bus stop at the gas works corner and catch a Ribble or a Fishwicks bus. Like Anne, we found the pleasures of the Cedarwood coffee bar and as soon as we were old enough persuaded Margot the manager to give a Saturday job.



*Margot with the staff of the Cedarwood, photo taken in 1963*

We worked from 4p.m. till 9p.m. what more could we want, we were in heaven; an afternoon of shopping, a free toasted sandwich and coffee for our tea, easy work, and boys! We were also paid quite well for the pleasure. The Cedarwood was the place for the youth of Preston to gather so at nine pm, when the coffee bar closed, we were invited along to another venue before getting the bus home.

Fishwicks was a family bus and coach business based in Leyland. The photo shows their bus station at the bottom of Fox Street in Preston. On a Saturday afternoon, dozens of those wishing to return to Leyland would queue up under the tin shelter. There was always a bus waiting to go when the next one arrived.



*Photo found on flickr*

*Photo appears on Lancashire Evening Post online*



## Family History Research Group

### Newsletter Fifteen



### Oh What to Wear!

*Janice Parr*

In the 1950's there was no Primark to rely on and Marks and Spencer was expensive. Luckily my mum's sister Mary was a trained tailoress, her younger sister Annie was very handy with a sewing machine and my mum was an expert knitter so I was always well dressed. Between them they made almost all my coats, dresses, cardigans and whatever else I needed. This all came at a bit of a cost because it would occasionally mean discomfort, a touch of boredom and sometimes pain!

Nothing was wasted and my very favourite hooded jacket was made from old car seat covers from one of my dad's cars. The fabric was wool, of Royal Stewart pattern; it was badly faded on the right side but nothing wrong with the reverse. Auntie Mary cut the pieces from the good parts and then made it up with a bright blue lining; nobody else had a jacket quite like it. I didn't look forward to the fitting sessions at all, these involved me standing very still on a table for what seemed like a very long time while my auntie pinned, adjusted and then sliced around me with very sharp cold scissors while my mum looked on. Auntie Mary couldn't hear any ouches or protests from me as she was profoundly deaf and had been since her early twenties following an illness. I didn't dare move in case any damage was caused; by far the worst moment arrived when a pinned garment was lifted over my head so that it could be stitched. I can still remember what the prickles of the pins felt like. Joint projects were often carried out by my two aunts, the smocking of the dress in the photograph was carried out by Annie and it was all put together by Mary.



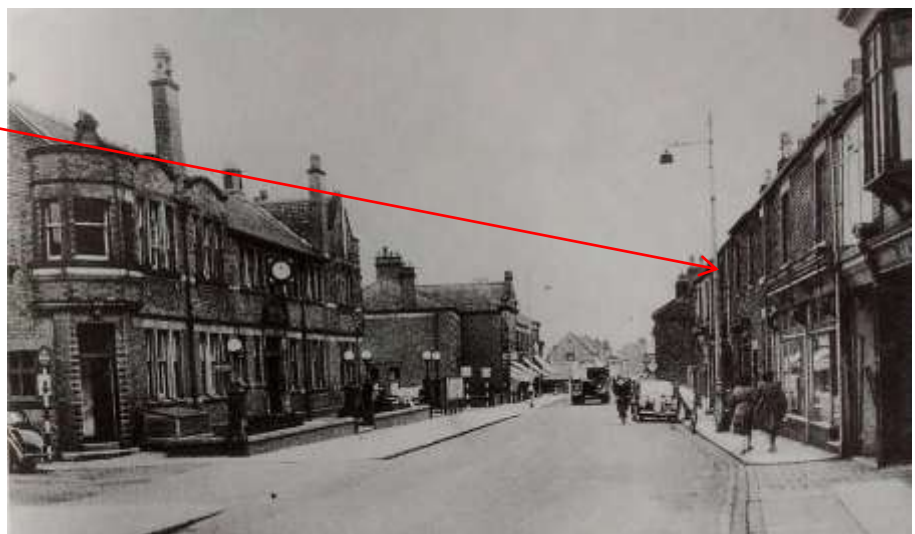
*The photo was taken at the studio of Peter Anthony 42 Fishergate Preston; I think the premises are now a Thorntons chocolate shop*

I can remember being taken into Preston to have the photo taken and I'm not sure why I look so serene, it was quite a worrying and puzzling experience. People were talking about me and peering down at me from what seemed like a great height. Very bright lights and equipment pointed at me and I couldn't understand why a strange doll had been thrust into my hands and then later thrown back into a basket in the corner of the room.

Old cardigans and jumpers were unravelled; the resulting balls of wool tied in hanks, washed to get the kinks out and then wound into balls again. This involved me sitting with my arms sticking out straight for what seemed like hours so that hanks could be held or wound round them. If there wasn't enough of one colour of wool, my little brother and I would be treated to something with stripes. Not everything was made of recycled wool, from being quite small I was sent to one of three shops along Towngate selling wool with enough money to buy some extra hanks of what had been put aside for the garment in progress. I was also sent off to do most of the day to day shopping; again just about anything could be purchased from close by.

*The room I was born in the year this photo was taken.*

*It is of Towngate Leyland in 1950. The land occupied by the Public Hall and the shops on the right is now part of Tesco's car park*



The man in the white coat is my dad's cousin John Booth Moss; he was the barber who worked in the shop next to where we lived. My very old spinster great aunt Florence lived in the accommodation and my parents looked after her.

Our shop was only open till noon on Saturdays, Mum and Auntie Annie often enjoyed trips to Preston in the afternoon with me in tow. The weekend roast was served promptly at midday (a little odd I know, but Mum justified this by claiming that it marked the end of her working week, as she ran the shop). At around 1 p.m. Auntie

Annie would arrive and we would be waiting dressed up in best clothes. Mum would set off at the trot to the bus stop at the Cross with me and my auntie Annie sauntering behind telling her to slow down as there would be another bus in ten minutes. My mum was always in a great hurry and wasn't the most relaxing person to live with.

Any purchases to be made would be planned and budgeted for; these were not the days of impulse shopping. Fabric was bought from a wonderful remnants stall on the market or from Renders on Friargate. What looked like quite a small shop from the front opened up into a large display area with a fantastic range of fabric. A staircase led up to the pattern room where books of designs were poured over, I was far too small to see what was being viewed. A long gloomy corridor led from the pattern room to another staircase leading down, I was always amazed to find myself in a haberdashery shop with a front door opening part way up Orchard Street a road running at right angles to Friargate.

*A photograph from the Lancashire Evening Post Archive it is of Friargate in 1967*



I suspect the weekly trip wasn't so much about buying things, but had a lot to do with an excuse to get dressed up, the novelty of seeing what was new in the shops post war and of course the fine afternoons teas that could be had at Booths waitress service café.



*The photo is of a lady who visited the café from 1948 when it opened until the 1980's when the store and café closed.*



*The way into the café was through a revolving door in the corner of the building and those doing so were immediately hit by the smell of coffee, Parma ham and other cured meats sold in the store on the ground floor. The queue of customers waiting to be seated in the café always stretched all the way up the mahogany staircase.*



<https://www.blogpreston.co.uk/2016/09/former-booths-offices-in-fishergate-to-become-flats/>

Now, how many of you can remember the swimming attire of the 1950's? My dad's trunks were made of black knitted wool, oh how they sagged when he went in the water; he had to make sure they were tied tightly at the waist to avoid an embarrassing moment! I think the moths finally brought about the demise of them. My swimming costume was constructed of woven cotton stitched through with shirring elastic, if worn in the sea the bobbles filled up with sand.



*The photograph was taken at Cayton Bay near Scarborough; my brother was just about to whack me with a lump of wet seaweed.*

*Auntie Mary wearing one of her creations looked on as John prepared to drench me with water using a very old brass garden sprayer.*





*Andy's Mum Margaret in an adult version of the bobble costume, she used to be over six feet tall and extremely slim.*

*The photo was probably taken on the Lincolnshire coast.*

Auntie Annie made sure I knew how to sew and needlework was a compulsory subject at school. It is a skill I used for many years to make my own clothes. If only Renders and the remnant stall on the market still existed, I would be very tempted to take up dressmaking again.

*The photo is of the school sewing department fashion show, we had to strut down the catwalk one at a time accompanied by a commentary made by Miss Morgan before we all returned to the stage to pose.*



The challenge this week is to find me in the photo, my friend Heather is also in the picture.

Can you also spot an item in one of the photos many of you have seen before?