

Family History Research Group

Newsletters 16-20

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Family History Research Group

Newsletter Sixteen



SHOPPING IN MY CHILDHOOD

Christine Garrity

When I think back to my childhood growing up in a small village in the 1950s, a certain degree of self-sufficiency comes to mind.

We had little need to travel to the neighbouring town other than to visit the Flat Iron Market or if Mum needed some fabric to make new clothes, as our day to day needs were catered for locally.

The main shop in the village was the Co-op where you could buy a whole range of foods from potatoes, weighed from a sack and tipped straight into Grandma's basket, or bacon which Mum would ask them to cut 'on number 7' because Dad liked his rashers thick.

The Co-op rewarded customers with a dividend (divie) a forerunner of the supermarket points. The divie was eventually replaced by green shield stamps which we would collect, stick into a book and save up for a gift from the catalogue.



This is my Grandma's plate, commemorating 50 years of Withnell Co-operative Society in 1911. Ours was the Bolton Road, Abbey Village branch

There was also a bakery where they made the most delicious custard tarts I have ever tasted and on a Saturday, Mum would sometimes treat us to a vanilla slice or chocolate éclair.

The children of the village would spend their pocket money at Lillie's. Lillie Marsden must have been well past retirement age but she ran the sweet shop in her tiny front room where she had shelf upon shelf of jars filled with a wide range of sweets - aniseed balls, mint imperials, pear drops, coltsfoot rock and torpedoes to name a few. Here you could also buy Walls ice cream or a Mivi, an ice lolly with ice cream in the centre. Dad would send me to Lillie's to buy his regular pack of Senior Service cigarettes.

Mrs Snape also sold sweets along with newspapers and magazines, at the other end of the village. She also sold knitting wool which seemed a strange combination.

The Post Office was the centre of village life as this is where residents collected their weekly pension or family allowance, paid bills, bought TV licence stamps and of course posted letters. Some residents made use of the Giro bank facility available through the post office, but generally cash was the order of the day.

Long before the invention of computers and online shopping, we had deliveries. The drinks man would come round once per week selling dandelion and burdock in stone bottles which you returned the following week. Perhaps one of the most unusual deliveryman was Alec, the grocer. He would stop his van and sound the horn to announce his arrival and customers would flock to his van. In addition to a wide range of staples such as tins of fruit, meat, jars of jam and pickles, packets of biscuits etc., he had a mystery range of tins with no labels. If Mum, a regular customer had missed his weekly visit, he would often leave several unlabelled tins on our doorstep. This resulted in a few choice words when Dad would open what he thought was a tin of soup, only to find it was Carnation milk!

MORE SHOPPING

Janice Parr

This is the grocers shop I was sent to in the 1950's/early 1960's. It was run by Leslie and Sheila Bowling and was only three shops away from ours. It was known locally as the tripe shop and yes, they still did sell tripe but just about everything else as well including milk, bread, cooked meats and bacon. Singletons, Melia's and Bentham's were other grocers close by so although Bowling's was the most convenient Mum also sent us to the three others through the week. Thinking back, she probably did that to keep harmony in what was a close-knit community of traders.



A very young Leslie Bowling with his Mother Olive, the bacon slicer is the very one that sat at the back of the counter when I was small. I didn't need to say which thickness the boiled ham or bacon was to be cut at, they knew. They also knew if I had asked for something my mum wouldn't want.

The lobby to the left of Bowling's led to the back of the fish and chip shop. I was often sent to this shop on Saturday evening for supper, I was far too small to reach the top of the counter, so had to rely on other customers to let Mrs. Davies know that I was waiting. I would be anxious to get back in time for the start of Dixon of Dock Green.

Sadly, the 1960's saw the breaking up of a stable community for what was then seen as progress. Most of the properties to the north of the Cross had compulsory purchase notices served on them so that the area could be redeveloped. My parents kept in touch with many of those who had lived there, Leslie and Sheila went to Hesketh Bank to grow tomatoes commercially and Vera and Ken Nicholson the last proprietors of the fish and chip shop continued frying in Tarleton.

Answers to the challenge in Newsletter 15

Janice

I am at the front on the left-hand side wearing the baby doll pyjamas I had made. My hair was very short and very blonde. Just before the event my mum decreed that my long tresses had to be cut so that I looked tidy. Dad was instructed to take me to a hairdresser in St Georges Road Chorley; Mum had told her what was to be



done over the phone. Little did I know what was planned, my dad wept when he came back to collect me, he said I looked like a skinned rabbit. I was only taken there once more; the hairdresser snipped my ear lobe with thinning shears so I refused to repeat the experience and decreed that I was going to grow my hair long again.



The object many of you have seen before is the little stool which I took to a meeting we had some time ago. We had been asked to take along an artefact which had an interesting story to go with it.

It was made for my dad soon after his birth in 1907 and as you can see it has three turned legs and a plain one, I suspect it was created from recycled wood. Dad probably sat on it in the very same

garden. My little brother and I didn't just use it for sitting on. Castles, forts and ships were built with our old second-hand wooden blocks using the stool as a base for our creations. John's cowboys, knights, soldiers and little working toy field gun used to act out dramas.

Mum was tiny so she stood on it so that she could reach things in cupboards. Now it is in my house, it is still put the same use. At the moment it is spattered with white emulsion as we have just decorated the kitchen, it was ideal for reaching part of the walls. The stool is going to outlive me so I will have to decide who is going to have it next, I must clean it up before it is passed on.



Family History Research Group Newsletter Seventeen



Primary School Memories

Joy Lofthouse

Did schools like my second primary school actually exist... a definite YES!

When I started school in 1961 we lived in Wiltshire went to a small private school in a house. I don't have many memories from there except lots of corridors and the garden was flagged as a playground. Huw Brocklebank fell in the playground, cracked his head open there was blood everywhere, a teacher brought out a bucket of water - not as bad as it looked because he was back at school the next day. Why do I remember his name; well shock at the time maybe. I also remember having to sit and eat my pudding (dessert in Wiltshire) of prunes... I hated them... also pumps were called daps!

In 1965, just after I was 8, we moved 200+ miles to Southport, a big move at that age. It was before the M5 existed and I remember singing Dr Foster as we drove through Gloucester! My Mum was driving, the dog was in the front seat because she might be travel sick, and I was at the back next to Perry Mason the budgie in his cage. If you remember, the back windows in an old mini had little clips to open the windows, so our two goldfish were in little plastic bags, one



hanging on each side. What a menagerie, and that's how we arrived in Southport.

Well, it was back to school and again and I went to a small private school in a house. Our parents send us to the schools they think are the best... honestly this one was a joke... if OFSTED had existed I dread to think how the report would have read! The head, Miss T, was at least 100 then, a tiny lady who always wore a grey suit and pottered around the school and gave pupils (not me) piano lessons in her private lounge which was the front room of the house.

Arriving at school we had to walk round to the back of the house into a basement room that was the hall/gym and then sit one behind the other in class lines... then walk to our classrooms in silent lines.

At break, if dry, we were allowed to walk clockwise around the garden stopping for half a currant teacake or a rich tea biscuit with a glass of milk from the kitchen on the way (whatever our parents had pre-ordered for us). If it was wet we stayed in the classroom going to the kitchen in groups.

PE – what was that? We did drill once a week in the basement hall. We also visited the hall for singing and elocution with outside teachers. We had to take elocution exams; I remember 'There were big waves and little waves, green waves and blue'!

The first class I was in was with Mrs S; this class was a nightmare for someone who had just moved from everything they knew! We had a general tables test (weights, measures, liquids, etc.) every Thursday, then on Friday we sat in the order of our results. The room was organised with three long rows of tables and benches to sit on. Top of the class sat by the door and was the 'door monitor' and then it zigzagged to the end right under Mrs S's nose. You can guess where I was for weeks and weeks - at the END! Very demoralising! The tables to learn were sent home with me, written on the back of old Christmas cards, Mum taught them... gradually... every evening... I can see all the cards now, there were so

many. Eventually, I gained my true position in the class, top of second bench or bottom of the top bench. One week I actually sat next to the door monitor.

The next year I remember was the year before the 11+ (now Y5). September to May we were in the classroom in the attic with Miss H then we moved to the 11+ class with Mrs H (no relationship to Miss H) in preparation for the 11+ (May Y5 to May Y6). I think Mrs H was the only qualified teacher on the staff! The year we were with her, her youngest child, whom she called 'baby', was in the reception class and she sent someone almost every half hour to see how 'baby' was getting on!

So, for the last few weeks in this unbelievable school we returned to Miss H. in the attic. We had to pass the stock cupboard on the landing and were convinced a ghost lived there. Miss H. had one off those high wooden teacher desks... she frequently went to sleep and actually snored... waking up with a cough and a splutter. I, as a chatter box had to sit in the front row under her nose... luckily every time she heard nattering she blamed those on the back row. We read 'As You Like It'; we had to learn a speech every week which we then had to recite individually to the class. We did Latin and had a test every week. We used to tease Miss H. ... she was certainly deaf and her sight wasn't good... she must have been at least 70. The positive was that I met my two lifelong friends here, one in my class and the other I met walking to school.

You'll be pleased to know the school no longer exists but it did continue for many years after I left. How, after all those primary school experiences I went on to be a primary teacher, I really don't

know. But when you are in that situation it appears to be the norm until later in life you learn otherwise.

Luckily I passed my 11+ and moved into state education, otherwise who knows where I would have gone next. The property dates back to the early 1900's, and was substantially extended and converted in 2006 to make eight apartments.



Family History Research Group Newsletter Eighteen



A DAY OUT IN BLACKPOOL

Anne Sheppard

Up till the age of 10 I lived in Clifton village situated half way between Preston and Blackpool, where my Dad worked at Springfield Atomic Energy factory and my Mum kept the small holding.

Days out were infrequent due to the demands of the pigs, ducks, hens and geese but every now and then Mum would take my brother and myself to Blackpool to spend the day on the beach. My brother John was 3 years younger than me and I recall a particularly memorable day out when I would be almost 5.

Even the bus journey there was exciting. We waited at the bus stop carrying our brightly coloured tin buckets and spades. I always stood on my bucket to look for the bus and would be told not to in case I broke it. We would guess which route the bus would take- one bus went via Weeton and one via Wrea Green which was much more interesting as it went round the village green which had a large duck pond and I could count the ducks.

*Photo of Wrea Green Duck Pond –
visitlancashire.com*



Then it was who could spot Blackpool Tower first and finally who could see the sea. The sea was not very blue and appealing in those days as it was usually a brownish colour due, no doubt to the sewage pipes which ran across the beach at regular intervals!

On this particular day Mum had bought us each a peach en route to the beach- quite an exotic luxury in the 1950s. Having picked our spot I decided I would go for a paddle. After warnings not to go too far out, I reached the sea and, as was inevitable, I started to walk parallel to the beach splashing as I went.

When hunger took hold I decided to return for the picnic but could not see my Mum or brother. I must have walked some distance along the beach and I started to wander around looking for them. I must have looked a bit worried as a kind looking lady with her daughter asked me if I was lost. We walked around for some time to no avail so the lady said she would take me to the Police Station as that was where lost children had to go. After almost 70 years I cannot remember what the lady looked like but I can still remember her daughter. She was about 7, olive skinned and pretty and she had a bright pink ruched swimsuit which made me very envious! She had a green rubber bathing cap and green rubber beach shoes and her mother made her put on her ordinary sandals so I could wear the beach shoes to walk to the Police Station.

Once we arrived there I gave the policeman my name and phone number and he tried phoning home but of course there was no reply. Then I was delighted to be taken to a room full of toys and settled down to play. Sometime later my Mum appeared, very relieved to have found me. I was reluctant to leave the toys and angrily pointed at my brother saying "and I bet he's eaten my peach!" I knew him well!

I don't remember going home that day but I can remember the episode clearly and thought it was quite an adventure. I spoke to my brother about it recently and he only remembers my Mum crying and searching the

beach for me and not knowing what was happening except that the day had been spoiled. Quite a different memory to mine.

IT ISN'T ONLY CHILDREN WHO GET LOST!

(A lockdown Family History story for future generations)

Janice Parr

A few weeks ago, my College friend Christine decided to drive from Manchester to Formby beach with her daughter Sarah and her six year old grandchild Elsie - they are both in her support bubble. When they got there, the queue to get on the carpark was so long they decided to carry on to Ainsdale where she parked the car. Blankets, umbrellas, a picnic, toys, buckets, spades, towels and much more were carried down to the beach and they set up camp in a spot well away from anybody else. Now, Elsie immediately wanted Chris to walk out to the sea with her – it was just a thin silver line out in the far distance. Reluctantly my friend agreed to start the journey, occasionally trying to persuade the little girl to go back but she was very determined. They walked for what seemed like miles until they found some shallow water. Elsie satisfied, the pair of them headed back but to her horror, Chris soon realised that since they set off the beach had dramatically filled up and she didn't have a clue where Sarah and all their belongings were (including Christine's handbag containing her phone!). Trying not to panic to avoid stressing Elsie, they walked up and down searching. My friend finally approached a family group who were using a very distinctive blue wind break. She told them of her predicament and asked if they would ring her mobile phone number (she couldn't remember Sarah's) in the hope that Sarah would answer it, which luckily she did. After taking instructions about how to find the pair of them, poor Sarah had to pack everything up and then stagger up down the beach looking for the blue windbreak and several people frantically waving their arms.

Over the last few months, I have spent time sorting old family photos and have started scanning them into my laptop. This has made me at long last to look at them properly and work out when and where they were taken. I have remembered so much more about holidays and family days out. Because of the number of snaps taken at different times I realised that my dad must have frequently driven us out to the Southport/Formby coast where the car was parked on the beach.

The car we are sitting next to is the one my dad mothballed in the garage at the start of ww2 by standing it on bricks, removing the wheels and draining the radiator

We were often mistaken for twins



The metal Mickey Mouse bucket in the photo survived many day trips and holidays



When we arrived at the beach, Dad would launch a WW2 Royal Navy surplus box kite, the line was then attached to the car bumper so all we had to do was look for it in the sky and then follow the string back to the car.

<https://homefrontmuseum.wordpress.com/2014/02/02/gibson-girl-box-kite/>



These kites were part of the emergency kit carried in survival dinghies used by both the Royal Navy and the RAF. Along with other things, the kit included a communication transmitter (called a Gibson Girl as it was shaped to fit between a person's thighs) when firmly secured it could be cranked to transmit an SOS signal. The kites could be sent up and stay up with very little wind.

If only Anne and Christine's family had taken one with them when they went to the beach!

I only threw ours away when I cleared out my mum's bungalow, a pity because they now seem to be selling for rather a lot of money.

Family History Research Group Newsletter Nineteen



PLAYING OUT

Christine Garrity

What did we do before technology?

We have become so dependent on our phones, laptops, iPads and tablets during these difficult months of lockdown. Technology has helped us keep in touch with friends and family, children have done lessons online and we have watched live performances of a whole range of shows from the comfort of our own homes. However, this got me thinking about how we used to amuse ourselves back in those dim and distant days when we were children.

This was long before any of us had even dreamed of having a Facebook page or an online profile and tweeting was something only birds did. Nor did we feel the need to capture every moment on camera and broadcast it to the world. Life was so simple and we found ways to amuse ourselves without giving a thought as to whether our activities would be 'liked' by others.

I grew up in a small village in the early 60s. There were a number of children of a similar age and looking back, our lives seemed relaxed and carefree.

Throughout the summer months we would play outside in an evening and in the school holidays we'd be out all day. The hub of activity was the croft, an area of grass in front of the cotton mill, where there were 3 swings and a roundabout, all of which had seen better days. The main attraction was the slope, which was perfect for bike riding and roller skating. The result was many a grazed knee or torn shirt, but you just got up, brushed yourself down and got on with it.

My brother and I playing out



I remember my auntie built us a go cart and I insisted on trying it out while I was wearing a new dress which Mum had just made for me. Needless to say, the dress was ruined.

The more adventurous amongst us would sneak behind the chapel where there were 2 metal buttresses supporting the rear wall of the building. They were only about 6 inches wide, very steep and surrounded by rubble, but we would dare each other to climb them, with no thought of health and safety. Thankfully I don't remember anyone being seriously injured, but there were one or two near misses.

My brother and I up a tree



Another favourite meeting place was a garage with no doors, situated 'down the backs' behind a row of houses. This provided us with a dry haven on the rare occasions when it rained. (Yes, I seem to remember the weather was better in those days). Here we could skip, play tig or simply sit in a circle and tell stories.

Haymaking was one of the highlights of the year and coincided with the start of the summer holidays. We could crawl through the long grass and make our own version of crop circles by lying down and swinging out our arms and legs. Dickie Robinson, the farmer, used a horse to mow his field well into the 1960s and we would take turns to feed it, but he eventually borrowed a tractor. The bales of hay were stored in yet another garage with no doors so we could use them to climb over and build dens, well into the autumn.

Other activities included picking wimberries which Auntie Nellie would bake into the most delicious pies, or blackberries to make her famous jelly. She also dabbled in wine making and as we grew older, my brother and I would be invited up into her attic to sample the fruits of her labour.



Auntie Nellie and I in the backyard

Would I swap my childhood for today's world of video games and virtual reality? Not in a million years!

Family History Research Group

Newsletter Twenty



School Memories

Janice Parr

I started school at St. Andrew's Infants in the summer term I turned five and I am sure that on the first day, Mum just told me to go to my friend Heather's who lived near the Cross. From there we walked the rest of the way together, very often jumping over the stairwells leading down to the cellars of the step houses (dangerous) and avoiding standing on the cracks in the pavement (what was that superstition all about?) I don't think any parents in their right minds would let such small children walk to school by themselves along what was even then a very busy road but we were trained to find our way about safely from being very young. Just over a year later my little brother was told that he would be starting school the following day and I was to take him.

*The building is now is private nursery
– photo from Leyland Historical Society*



My dad went to the same school; he is on the left of the photo kneeling down. The girl with the long ringlets married a Mr. Bailey and all the time I was at primary school was our lollipop lady. It looks like the children had some toys to play with in 1914; I don't think there was any playing with toys in the 1950s.

What I can remember is the entire class regularly saying the names of the alphabet as Mrs. Prendergast pointed to them with a long stick, rhyming off times tables, colouring and a lot of messing with plasticine. I



suspect that teaching little children in the 1950s was very much about reading, writing, arithmetic and crowd control. Unlike the very small class my dad seemed to be in, looking back there must have been at least forty of us in ours.

I could read before I got to school but times tables defeated me; nobody ever explained how they worked and the purpose of them. I think I decided that there were lots of other things I could do so why care about how useless I was. My attitude changed when my life became a bit more difficult at junior school, more about that later. I think the little boy sitting next to me did care, one day we were supposed to making sense of numbers with tins of cowrie shells, (I was probably making patterns with mine) when to my horror he wet himself, I was rapidly moved away from the steaming puddle.

In Miss Smith's class there was a Wendy house folded away at the front, nobody ever played in it. A major activity was desk top polishing; our mums were expected to supply a duster and little tin of Betterware lavender polish. Miss Smith often made me stay in at playtime writing out times tables on a bit of slate with chalk, when she came back after the break, I had again got them all wrong. I got into trouble with that particular teacher on another occasion for wasting blue crayon. My big brother Frank had recently told me about the horizon and pointed out that you could never see a space between the sky and where it joins the earth so I had to stop leaving one in my pictures. I don't know if we had been set a task, I rather suspect we had just been given a piece of paper, told to get our tins of crayons out, stay in our chairs and keep quiet. I drew a thin strip of grass and a low fence going across the bottom of the paper with a tiny Noddy and Big Ears sitting on it. I then used an entire blue crayon to fill the rest of the paper, Miss Smith was not pleased and I was told that it would be a very long time before the crayon was replaced. I could have explained the rotation and curvature of the Earth and the horizon if only she had asked. I still remember what that picture looked like, I was very pleased with the result but it was torn up and put in the bin.

I have a memory of spending rather a lot of time in the cloakroom, a big girl showed me how to use the brown liquid soap to blow bubbles by making a ring with my thumb and forefinger. I then taught several other children this trick, we ending up filling the cloakroom with enormous rainbow coloured bubbles. Nobody ever came to find out what we were up to, I suspect we would have been accused of misbehaviour when it could have been put down to scientific experimentation. The toilets were outside across the yard and being very agile found how to climb to the top of the entrance by leaning my back against one wall and walking my feet up the

other. I taught other girls how to do this, after all there was a complete lack of P.E.; the boys were in a different playground so I don't know what they got up to!

Apart from anything to do with numbers of which I developed a big phobia, I enjoyed school. The street door into St. Andrew's led into the girl's cloakroom and that opened up into the big room which had part of it split off by a folding screen. The reception class was in the big room; Miss Grant was at the far side behind the screen with the older children and Miss Smith through a door to the back. Every so often the screen would be pushed back, all the tables moved into the middle of the room and the children and teachers sat on chairs around the sides. Everyone was given a percussion instrument and while tunes such as the Dam Busters and the Laughing Policeman were played on an old gramophone we got up and marched round the room making as much noise as we could.

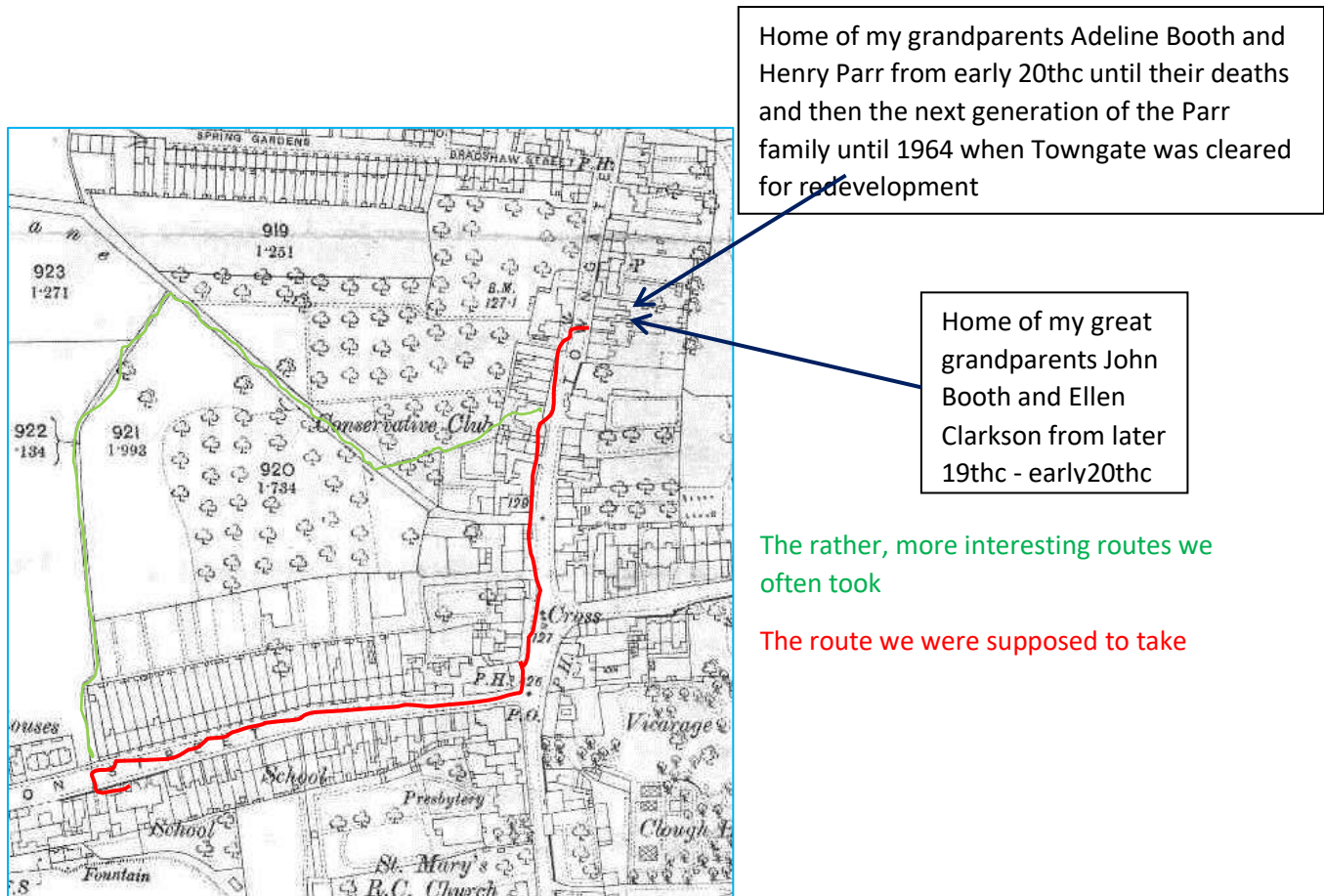
There was a beautiful rocking horse in the corner of the big room; I can't remember anyone ever going on it. In the opposite corner there was a slide which was used until I had a bit of a mishap, following which the thing was put out of commission. I was having my turn one day when I experienced a searing pain. To my mortification, the source of the injury was exposed and dealt with in full view of everyone; a large splinter had firmly embedded itself in my bottom!

Unfortunately, I missed much of my early education, I succumbed to every childhood illness there was.

Junior school was fun until I came across a teacher who took what is now called year five; she prowled round the classroom with a fist at the ready and a ruler in the other hand. She rattled off mental arithmetic and times tables and if you didn't know the answer a thumping in middle of the back would follow, if she found me trying to hide messy work, and being left handed mine often was (dip pens and left handedness simply don't go together) a rattle on the back of the hand with the ruler would follow. The witch was also responsible for convincing me that I couldn't sing - when selecting the class choir for an assembly, we all had to stand up while she walked round listening to us; I was so frightened I only managed to croak something out. This brought about a sharp tap on the shoulder indicating that I was rejected and had to sit down. She then said it was up to me to read a passage from the Bible but had on no account sing the hymn, just open and close my mouth. I was planning to run away because of her tyranny but luckily she left to take up the deputy headship of another school.

Apart from the odd incident and a couple of very odd teachers school life was fine after that, I even eventually got to understand Maths but still freeze if quick fire mental arithmetic questions are fired at me.

Some years later, I found myself teaching in the same classroom that my dad was photographed in.



An attempt to superimpose information onto a map published in 1890, up to the 1960s Towngate and Union Street (Fox Lane) changed very little. I have evidence of my ancestors living in this area since 1841 when Leyland was still a village.