

Rossendale memoirs of Edmund Whittaker

Early Days

'Greenhill' was my birthplace. My mother came back to live with her parents and her brother Harry after the death of my father on 11th November 1921. The day of my birth, Sunday 21st May 1922, was 'Choir Sunday' at Sion Baptist Chapel. It was usual for children to be born at home, with a midwife in attendance. My birth weight was said to be 13lb. I cannot be sure of this: the weighting method was a 'spring' balance.

Greenhill was a block of four back to back houses, with two inner dwellings underneath. Upstairs were two bedrooms and I shared my mother's bedroom until we moved to 11 St James' Street, Waterfoot, in 1938. Downstairs were two rooms.

Recreational and Holiday Activities

In the early 1920's motor-coaches ('char-a-bancs') increased the opportunities for day-trips. Immediately prior to the advent of coaches, horse-drawn waggonettes were used for short day-trips. A photograph in a family album shows a family trip: included in the group are Richard and Ellen Taylor.

Before motor coaches were developed, some motor lorries were adapted for passengers. My father Edmund did some conversions: benches were fixed to the lorries, but there was no protection from the rain.

My father Edmund was a principal shareholder in the Waterfoot Motor Company, a private limited company formed to develop coach travel. Another principal shareholder was George Hitchen Lumpton, a businessman whose interests included Billiard Halls. My father worked for Mr Lumpton in various parts of the country in 1919. Included in the family archives is a box-wood billiard cue 'leveller' belonging to my father at this time. This share-holding was still held on my father's death in 1921, as can be seen from the letters of administration taken out following his death, which record, on the reverse, the disposal date of the shares. I digress!

Before Sunday School trips by motor coach became an annual event, the Sunday School 'Field Day' was the recreational event of the year. Games were organised and tea and buns provided. Sion Baptist Sunday School's Field Day was usually held in the field opposite 406 Newchurch Road, Cloughfold, Donkey rides were also available. This was a risky activity, not primarily from the risk of falling off the animal, but from the near-certainty of catching fleas. The donkey's day-to-day activity was pulling a cart used by a 'rag and bone' dealer (these dealers gave soft sandstone blocks ('donkey stones') for rags, iron and the like: these stones were used on window sills after the weekly scrub). The field day ended with wrapped sweets being thrown down for the children: the strongest collected the most!

Pastimes

These were simple. There were seasons for various activities. Thus 'top and whip' had its season, then 'bully-bowls'. These were a circle of steel, with a closed steel bar on the hoop. One ran with the hoop, and sought to keep it going as long as possible. Later, as motor cars became more common, car tyres were used instead of hoops. These tended to get out of control.

In winter, I used to sledge, home made by my Uncle Fred. Snow was not a problem in North Country winters! Mostly we sledged in fields but on occasion down streets, particularly Peel Street, Cloughfold. On one occasion I could not stop at the bottom of the street, and went straight across Bacup Road. Fortunately there was little traffic at the time. My mother, who had just got off a bus from Waterfoot at the time, showed some concern at the 'near miss'. When sledging palled, then sliding on pavements or in the school yard was a dangerous but exciting pastime. Ice formed on packed snow, and, since footwear were clogs with steel 'irons', speeds were considerable.

'Pal segging' was another periodic activity, I believe at Easter. Faces were blackened, and one went round the district. This activity died out in the early 1930s. Another seasonal activity was going round with the Maypole. A group activity was to make a may-pole. First borrow a brush 'steel' (a wooden pole) and then attach coloured ribbon. Then go round to various local groups of houses, singing the Maypole song.

"Can you dance the Maypole?
Yes I canwith my young man' (and so on)

Boys, as they started school., thought of the activity as 'cissy'. Their part was marginal: carrying the May Queen's stool and collecting money (never more than a few old pennies). 'duck-stones' was a competitive event. Stones were piled on each other, the aim being to throw stones at the pile to knock them down. Marbles was another seasonal activity. These were made either of clay or coloured glass. A hole was made in the ground and they were thrown or rolled as a competitive activity.

An event eagerly looked forward to was '5th November'. For weeks before, wood and other combustible material was assiduously collected and guarded against theft by other gangs. (The 'Hollow lot' based near Cawl Terrace were our main 'enemies'. Raids were frequent, and fought off, stones being resorted to on occasion. On one occasion I was hit in the back (our gang was retreating) and quickly ran home for attention). Collecting combustables (many Victorian arm-chairs and other collectables were given) was mainly in the evening, aided by lights. Illumination was by a candle in a jam-jar, string round the top providing a handle.

As funds allowed, fireworks were bought. Mostly these were 'Little Deamons' at 1/2d each. For greater effect these were often placed in tins, the fuse lit and the tin would rise sky-wards. On occasion some naughty boys attached string to a

cat's tail and to the tin before lighting the fuse! November 4th was 'Humber Night' (getting into humber – getting into mischief). Our gang's efforts were wholly to retain our bonfire, whilst some sneaked round for last minute combustibles. Other 'humber' was to place newspapers in downspouts, then set fire to them, a very-un-neighbourly activity!

On November 5th I was usually given a box of fireworks. These have little changed over the years, although 'Bengal matches' (coloured matches) and 'pin-wheels' seem to have disappeared. Our bonfire was lit by the gang-leader as soon as it was dark. It would be about 20 feet high, and burned fiercely, and neighbours in Back Peel Street and Back Dobbin Lane were usually apprehensive of damage. As the fire died down, potatoes were placed in the embers: it was rare that they were edible, since mostly they were not cooked through, and fire-blackened on the outside. Treacle toffee (home0made) was a traditional sweet enjoyed on bonfire Night. A traditional poem 'sung' at the Bonfire was:

'Pleased to remember the fifth of November
Gunpowder, treason and plot
I know of no reason
Why gunpowder treason.....
Should ever be forgot'

Another game was 'Tag'. First a group of children 'ip dipped' to see who would be 'it'. One of the other 'ip dip' rhymes would be recited eg:

'One potato, two potato, three potato, four
Five potato, six potato, seven potato, more
You're out'

Or

'Each peach pear plumb
Out goes Tom Thumb.'

The child who was 'it' then ran around the others in the group, and when he or she managed to touch another child then that child was 'it'. And so on. Another group game was hiding'. One child shut his or her eyes in a corner and counted to ten/ The others hid themselves whilst the one child ('it') sought to find the group. When successful, the found child became 'it'. And so on. Another pastime, usually played indoors, was 'Doctors and Nurses'. Boys, either doctors or patients, and girls nurses, playacting their respective roles. 'Hop-skotch' was another group game, where numbers were chalked on the flag stones which formed pavements, then one jumped them in sequence, the requirement being to keep one's feet within the flag stones.

Cigarette cards were avidly collected. First introduced as a stiffening card for the cigarette packets, cards were issued on such subjects as motor-cars, aircraft, footballers and film stars. A popular cry of the day was 'Any fag cards mister?' To

make up collections, as well as a game in its own right, was 'skimming on'. A card was held between the index and middle finger and skimmed on to the others on the ground. The skimmer who skimmed a card that touched one other collected the whole group.

Education in the 1920s and 1930s.

Compulsory primary education was introduced in 1880, and subsequently 'Board' schools were established to provide primary education. Concurrently Church Schools, such as St Mary's Church of England School at Rawtenstall, which I later attended, were enabled, by grant aid, to expand their role.

My first school was Cloughfold Council School in Peel Street. This was formerly a 'Board' School established by an 'ad hoc' Board until Boards were abolished and their functions taken over by local authorities in the early 1990s. The Infant's School was separate from the 'big' or Junior school, although the playing yard was shared with the Junior Girls. My mother elected to enrol me in the Infant School before compulsory attendance was required. I did not like school. So after the first day I did not attend until the next term when attendance became compulsory. The Infants School was divided into two classes. The desks were arranged in tired rows. Instruction was mostly formal, consisting of learning mathematical tables and the alphabet by rote.

Communal activities were few. 'Drill' was physical exercise in the school yard, whilst on occasion country dances were held in the school hall. Dress was universally simple. Those children whose parents could afford it had a jersey jumper and serge short trousers and all the children wore clogs.

Special events were few. One was when an itinerant trader waited outside school when it ended, when rags were exchanged for goldfish (supply your own jam jar). Many parents found clothing missing on their return home from work, exchanged for goldfish!

Christmas was also special since all children got presents. These were advertising gimmicks given by manufacturers such as 'crackers'. Crackers were specially folded paper which 'cracked' when moved.

In 1929 I was 'moved up' into the Junior School. My first teacher was a Mrs Turner, an uncertified teacher. In my next class the teacher was a Miss Ashworth, an inspiring teacher. The top class was taught by the head-teacher, a Mr Foizey. Unfortunately he was addicted to whisky, which he sent out for in school hours. The standard of achievement was thus very low. This can be measured by the complete lack of scholarships awarded to the local Grammar School.

In September 1932 my mother asked me what 'composition' was. I did not know. So, along with children from like-minded parents, I was taken away and started at St Mary's C of E School.

Lessons in the Junior school were very formal. The main emphasis was on the '3Rs', craft activities being limited to making things from coloured paper and drawing. Before classes started, children assembled in the main hall. Remembrance Day on the 11th November in each year was especially memorable, appropriate hymns being sung. Many children cried, having lost close relatives in the World War. The children attending were in two groups: those from respectable families (who lived on the Peel Street side of Bacup Road) and those who lived on the other side of the Railway tracks, in an area known as "Ov'd Co" (over the Co.) The Co referred to the 'Rawtenstall Company' the owners of the mill in whose shadow rows of back-to-back houses were built by the mill-owners. Most children from these homes did not have a good start in life. For example, handkerchiefs were few: some children had rags instead, in some cases pinned to their jerseys to prevent loss.

Occasionally we had visits. A great occasion was the visit of the school inspector, a Board of Education Official, whose main duty was to ensure that minimal standards of tuition were being given. Another periodic visitor was the 'Temperance Man'. He gave a lecture on the evils of strong drink. Enlivened by alcohol being placed on a saucer and set fire to with a match.

The Boy's Yard was a tough playground, older boys delighting in teasing younger boys. On one occasion I was mercilessly teased because I was wearing 'combs' (a one piece vest and underpants) which showed below the level of my short trousers. The 'combs' were pulled even lower. (Perhaps they were jealous because they did not have 'combs').

Discipline was strict. The headmaster administered the cane. I was occasionally caned (not daily as some boys were). One bent over whilst the headmaster administered the blows to one's rear.

When my mother realised that my chances of passing the scholarship examination at the Cloughfold Council School were non-existent, she arranged for me to be transferred to St Mary's C of E School at Rawtenstall. Fortunately Mr Chambers, the Headmaster, whom my mother visited in Haslingden Old Road one evening after work agreed to accept me, and in September 1932 I started in Mr. Crawshaw's class. Mr Crawshaw was an excellent teacher, an inspiration to his pupils. Homework was given and required to be done.

This Church School lacked most of the basic amenities. Mr Crawshaw's Class, along with another, was in the School Hall, with another class on the platform. Curtains separated the classes. Discipline was strict: one teacher had a practical method of preventing talking in class: the lips were stuck together with sticking plaster. Mr Crawshaw gave special tuition on the examination subjects for the scholarship examination (later superseded by the '11 plus') which decided whether a scholar was transferred to a grammar school, or to a secondary school the examination included General Knowledge tests, and Intelligence tests, such as seeking to determine the odd character out in a sequence of apparently similar figures. The test was held in the hall of the Bacup and Rawtenstall

Grammar School and I was over-awed by the facilities of the school” each scholar had a separate locker for his PT and other school requisites.

The exam was in February 1933. Before the results were announced I was called to an oral examination at the School, to be interviewed by the Headmaster, Mr Holden. The ‘oral’ was for boarder line cases. One question I was asked was what kept an aeroplane in the sky. I said the wings (was I right?). The results were published in the Rossendale Free Press. I was told that I had passed when walking near my grandparents’ farm. The exact spot I heard was outside the Misses Bownesses’ house near Carr Farm.

I left St Mary’s School in mid July 1933. Although I was a pupil there only for some nine months, but for this period I would have never obtained a Grammar School Scholarship and without doubt the whole of my subsequent life pattern would have been substantially different. The employment opportunities for non-grammar school children in the Valley were primarily in the cotton and slipper mills, unless one was fortunate enough to get a craft apprentice.

Approximately twelve scholars got grammar school scholarships in 1933 and all their names are inscribed on an Honours Board in the Hall. Except for those killed in the Second World War, all subsequently carved out satisfying careers.

I started at the Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School, Waterfoot, in September 1933. This was a purpose-built Grammar School, built around 1913 and was the successor to the much earlier Newchurch Grammar School. The Lancashire county Council was responsible for the School Other secondary schools in Rossendale Valley were the responsibility of the Rawtenstall Education Authority. Its facilities were good: there was a whole range of specialised laboratories, an Art Room, and hockey and cricket/football pitches. It was a mixed school, with three or four form annual entry. The staff were honours graduates and apart from one French master (who concentrated on individual assistance to the girls to the detriment of the boys) were good teachers.

The change from previous schools was substantial. Uniforms were worn, the cap being yellow bands on blue. Due to this cap ‘banana stripes’ was a term of derision shouted by non-grammar school boys, who delighted in seeking to confiscate (sometimes roughly) this cap. Shoes were required to be worn, not the ubiquitous clogs of the junior schools. And a grammar school tie. On one occasion in my first term I was not wearing my tie. Miss Nuness, my geography teacher, brought me out to the front of the class to admonish me. I never subsequently failed to wear a tie.

Also in my first term I told the PT instructor Mr Jenkins, that I was unable to do PT as I had the ‘flu. I sought to be excluded as I did not relish changing into sports gear. My mother had cut off my shirt flap to make a new shirt collar and replaced the flap with a fancy coloured dress fabric. The excuse was to no avail: I was informed that had I got ‘flu I would not have been at school. I got changed quickly.

My forms were LIII alpha, UIII alpha, LIV alpha and upper V. It would be nice to record that I did well at school My form results were usually about 10th out of a class of 28. I could have 'done better'.

In retrospect I should have done more homework. Whilst my mother asked me if I had done my homework, she accepted my assurance that I had. It must be admitted that when I wanted to 'play out' on occasion it was done somewhat skimpily. I could plead (I will plead) that conditions at Green Hill were not conducive to doing homework. In such a small house there was not a suitably quiet place

There were many extra curricular activities at the Grammar School Most were sporting. Each year we had School Plays. I was in one School Play: 'The man in the street'. I was not selected for the lead (although I was auditioned for it), being allocated the part of the golfer whose words were 'Catch a train! Catch a train!"

Outside activities

These were primarily based on Sion Baptist Chapel and Sunday School, Higher Cloughfold. Sion Baptist was founded about 1672. It was licensed as a place of worship for 'Ana-baptists' in 1672 in the 'barn of John Piccope'. By reputation this barn was part of the farm opposite the 'Red Lion'. The present building (demolished since this text was written) dates from approximately 1840. Underneath the chapel the basement was initially used at the Secondary School until about 1907, when the new Secondary School was built. After that date the basement was used primarily as a 'Young Men's Institute' ('the tute").

The primary department of the Sunday School accepted children from about two years old. At that age we were told bible stories in the 'beginners', later joining the older children for the closing hymns and prayers. Sunday School was an occasion for dressing in 'Sunday best'. I was particularly fond of my leather leggings (buttons fastened with a button hook) and my sailor suit. At the age of seven we passed to the Junior department, and at the age of eleven to the Senior Department.

Social activities were primarily based on the Sunday School. Events such as the Spring 'At-Home' and the Christmas 'Entertainment' were eagerly anticipated. Occasionally there was fund-raising Bazaars. Each child was expected to take a part in the entertainment at these events. On one occasion I was a clown. The clown's outfit was made by my mother on her treadle sewing machine. These occasions were make more special by having 'carpets' (thick felt from the local mills) in the 'Big School". Teas were supplied by the 'Ladies Aid' in the downstairs cellar. Lighting was by gas lights until about 1933, on occasions there were 'potato pie suppers', the pie being cooked in enamel washing up basins, and served with red cabbage. At other times there were 'tripe suppers', served in one of the classrooms.

Camping in the 1930s.

Carey Redman introduced me to camping. Carey was the oldest brother in the Redman family. The Redmans were close friends of my mother and to me. Especially after we moved to no 11 St James Street in 1938, and the Redmans lived at no. 10, the Redmans took me 'under their wing'. They tried (and I think they succeeded) to 'bring me out a bit'. Ruth, the youngest daughter, was in many ways a surrogate sister. She was practical, always cheerful, and somewhat worldly wise. She was in her younger days described as a 'scamp'. (Quotes: 'if a boy was about to become difficult I'd tell him I was on my 'period' and that I'd see him on Saturday night – but I never did' and 'I wouldn't blame a boy for trying but he must be able to take no for an answer'). Ruth later married the prim Harry Wakeham [*actually Wakelin*], and soon after the war went to live in Bangor, Northern Ireland, where Harry became an employee of the Norwich Union Insurance.

Next up in the Redman family was Stephen, a happy-go-lucky lad . He was employed as a counter-hand (I later inherited his white apron) at R.B. Seville Limited, well-regarded bakers and grocers in Bacup Road, Waterfoot. The Sevilles were Plymouth Brethren, strict in both family and business dealings, though well regarded. Stephen found life in Waterfoot unadventurous and somewhat repressive, and one day in the late 1930s left home. It was not until considerably later that the family discovered he had joined the army.

His parting caused distress particularly to his father, a gentle man, kind, indeed a gentleman. Stephen's father, George, a tailor, was a pacifist and a conscientious objector in World War I (and a friend of my father, sharing some of his experiences). There was a strong family bond in the Redman family and Stephen and his family were quickly reconciled. Stephen married after the war (a girl from Ramsbottom, a Roman Catholic). Whilst there was strong prejudice at the time against inter-faith marriages, none such existed in the Redman family and his wife quickly became one of the family. Ever adventurous, Stephen and his wife emigrated to Australia soon after World War II. Sadly he died early.

Barbara, the eldest Redman sister, was several years older than me. She married late in life near Ruth in Northern Ireland.

'Nellie' Redman, George's wife, was the 'king-pin' (or should it be 'queen-pin?') of the family. Her younger sister was Alice Mary Hargreaves, who was later to become my maternal aunt when she married my Uncle Harry Taylor. Nellie was 'motherly' in the nicest possible way, keeping open house at No. 10 (the doors were never locked: one was expected to 'bounce in'). they had the only telephone within my family acquaintance (useful particularly to me to ring home when in the Services). Additionally they had a bath, a useful amenity lacking at No.11, which my mother and I used frequently. Nellie's open house extended to relatives and friends. One distant relative from America, 'Rose', a young lady in her early 20s, stayed a few months on a 'world tour'. She relied on hospitality almost completely. When a young man offered her a Players cigarette she said she smoked 'Senior Service': this resulted in a gift of a packet of cigarettes. Rose later sent stencilled letters covering all eventualities eg: I am well/ill and the like,

ticked as appropriate. She later went to Africa' She regretfully, on second thoughts, declined an offer for a safari in the bush. She was pleased later to be told that she would have ended up a 'white slave'!

Back to Carey. He was a keen Boy Scout, and as a scout went camping. Keeness for camping led to expeditions with friends. I took him up on his promise to initiate me into the joys of camping and one weekend, travelling by Ribble bus, joined him at a farm near Chatburn in the shadow of Pendle Hill (later the location of a film starring Hayley Mills called 'Whistle down the Wind').

Cooking was by primus stove, flapjacks (flour, currants and water) fried being an enjoyable 'delicacy'. Lighting was by candlelight.

Later expeditions were usually with school friends from the Grammar School. One such was to Sawley Abbey, near Clitheroe with 'Bugs' Heyworth, from Bacup. We travelled by cycle, using the camp as a base for explorations in the surrounding countryside. A visit to the site of Sawley Abbey itself resulted in a cycle ride to Clitheroe dripping blood from an injured finger. Having been told that a stone coffin could be seen under an ancient stone, Bugs and I lifted the stone. No coffin was visible. But in replacing the stone my right index finger was trapped, shortening it somewhat.

Whitewell, on the witch's route from Clitheroe to Lancaster, was another favourite venue. One potential visit was particularly unfortunate. An accompanying friend Albert Shaw knocked down a pedestrian, killing the pedestrian, on a steep hill between Accrington and Whalley. My first association with the law resulted. The surviving relatives proposed to sue Albert for negligence. I went to see Harry Asherwood, the Rawtenstall Town Clerk (who was later to offer me articles) who decided on the facts that the pedestrian was contributorily negligent, and drafted the reply which ended the potential legal action.

Other camping expeditions included one to Hest Bank near Morecambe. Heavy equipment such as the borrowed tent were sent in advance by train. The last occasion was in 1939 shortly before the outbreak of war. The kindly farmer loaned hay for the palliass mattress. All for 2 old pence per night. At times there was one caravan. On a later post war visit the farm had become a permanent caravan site.

The Second World War

In the 1930s there were few signs of the likelihood of impending war, although the prospects of one were increasingly discussed from 1938 onwards. Outside events such as the rise in power of Hitler entered little if at all into the consciousness of the average Rossendalian. He was more concerned with the ability to get or keep a job, and earn a living. The only event which caused a stir was a door to door campaign by the Peace Pledge Union: millions signed promising never to take part in any future war.

In 1938 I started work for the local authority, initially as Junior clerk and Telephone Attendant at a salary of £45 per annum.

In 1938 too, the Rawtenstall local authority commenced its Air Raid Precautions, from the time of Chamberlain's visit to Munich. Air Raid shelters were built, and sensitivity as to location was over-looked: thus shelters were constructed in the Queen's Square Gardens ('Sparrow Park') in proximity to the World War I Memorial. Concurrently all the Town Hall staff 'volunteered' to form the Control Room Staff. This Room was constructed in the 'Back Office' of the Town Hall, the floors, side and roof being reinforced by steel girders. At one stage the floor was removed. But I did not know, I walked into that office, and disappeared between the girders. Fortunately, to save myself, I was able to put out my arms. But unfortunately a nail in a floor board pierced my left hand, which bled profusely. But help was at hand. A senior colleague Fred King, sent a junior clerk for a tonic water, to help revive me. No tonic water being available, I was bought a 'dandelion and burdock' a local health drink. No serious injury was done: the scar only remains.

The A.R.P. Staff (the pre-runner of Civil Defence) engaged in exercises. On one occasion this was a demonstration of evacuation from a top floor building following a fire. I volunteered to jump from a top floor window into a blanket below. This exercise was in the Queen's Arms Hotel in Queens Square.

Then came conscription. All 20 year old males were required in 1939 (before the war started) to register for service in one or other of the armed services. From this time on there was a general consensus that another War was coming.

Outwardly Sunday September 3rd 1939 was just like any other Sunday. I went to Sion Baptist Chapel at 10.30 am for morning service. As I passed the junction of Paul Street [sic] and Dobbin Lane I heard of the Chamberlain radio broadcast that we were now at war with Germany.

Immediately 'black-out' precautions were brought into force. All windows had to be screened so that no light emerged. There were no street lights. Cars and other road vehicles could not use their lights: a fitment ensured that only a small slit of light emerged. The black-out and other precautions continued until the end of the war.

Rumours abounded. 'Do not light a match. It can be seen by a German aircraft from two miles high'.

The black-out reduced social activities. Some remained. Thus 'the run' continued. This was the practice of young boys and girls walking the length of Bank Street, Rawtenstall, to chat with friends and (the main purpose) to seek a friend of the opposite sex. It flourished even on dark nights, moonlight nights were a bonus.

There were some social activities connected with the Church and Sunday School: these were most notably 'socials'. But the socials excluded dancing. Teenagers

tried to persuade the Deacon to allow dancing. But we were told that the 'Trust Deed' forbade it. Did it? We just accepted it.

But dancing was a prime social activity. I started going to dances in 1940. My first dance was at the Astoria Ballroom, now demolished, in Bank Street, Rawtenstall. The Astoria was converted in the mid 1930s from a Mysercough Car Showroom. The Astoria was on the site of my Grandma Taylor's 'Dance School'.

The first dance was for the spitfire fund. Such fund events were regularly held during the war, primarily to assist the sale of 'War Savings Certificates' issued by the Government (rate of interest approximately 2½d).

I could not dance. It did not matter. I was taken in hand by girls I had known at the Grammar School. I had never had lessons. But I soon picked up enough dancing skills to ask a girl to dance. This was quite formal. "Could I have the next dance please?" I enjoyed (and still enjoy) dancing. The dances were mostly fox-trots, waltzes and quicksteps. In quick-steps those who could 'swing' it a little (or more than a little). Later in the war this developed the 'jitter-bugging'.

The Astoria was looked at by some in the Church and Chapel circles as being almost a den of iniquity. The Ball-room was completely 'dry'. Those who wished to drink used to go to the Queen's Hotel or one of the pubs in 'the Fold' by David Whitehead's Lower Mill, a cotton mill (it was in 'the Fold' that one of my ancestors had a 'model' lodging house).

I did not drink at that time. I'd signed 'the pledge'. I'd attended whilst at Junior School the Band of Hope at Sion Baptist Sunday School. Held on Monday evenings, we sang temperance songs eg 'My drink is water bright, water bright, from the crystal spring'. We also had lectures on the evils of alcohol. Those who were so minded signed 'the pledge' never to touch intoxicating liquor. Regular attendance at the Band of Hope was rewarded once a month by a pie and peas supper.

I digress. Back to the Astoria. Dances finished relatively early at 10.30 or 10.45 pm. Last 'buses were about that time. Travelling by 'bus was slow. Head lights were shaded, light filtering through a narrow slit. Inside bulbs were painted and of low intensity.

During the period of the 'phoney war', I continued working at the town Hall, having by now been transferred to the Passenger Transport Department. My work was of a clerical nature, and included 'adding-up' all done, in those pre-calculator days by mental arithmetic. Then, as now, my mathematical ability was not my No. 1 talent.

After recruitment as a junior by the local authority it was usual to commence as the telephone attendant, then be transferred when a vacancy occurred in one of the many departments to that department. It was a matter of luck (good or bad) whether the transfer was to a department one liked or not. I did not want to be transferred to the Transport Department. It would have been wisest when the

vacancy occurred to seek not to be transferred. I would have liked to have worked in the Town Clerk's Department. There were no vacancies at that time, since the department had three 'articled' clerks who paid a premium of £500 to the Town Clerk (approximately ten times my salary). The articled clerks did not receive any pay during articles.

However in the Transport Department I continued in these routine clerical tasks. I was not dissatisfied. I regarded myself as being lucky to have a secure job at the Town Hall.

I attended 'night-school' at the Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School. The subjects were short-hand and book-keeping and other clerical subjects for examinations of the 'Lancashire Institute'. At that time I had removed to 11, St James Street, and travelled to work by pedal cycle.

Fighting in France started in 1940, and was quickly over after the evacuation from Dunkirk. There were few volunteers for the Services, most young men (and women) awaited their call-up according to designated groups. Many who did volunteer did so shortly before their conscripted call-up, to enable them to join a service of their choice. I sought to join the Royal Navy under an officer-cadet (the 'Y' scheme). I believed that I had been accepted but was subsequently informed that I had not. It remains a mystery as to why I was not accepted. But in retrospect it was for the best: I do not think that Navy life would have suited me. So in the late summer of 1941 I volunteered for the Royal Air Force shortly before my official call up.

(The document continues with his experiences in WWII which have little reference to Rossendale).