

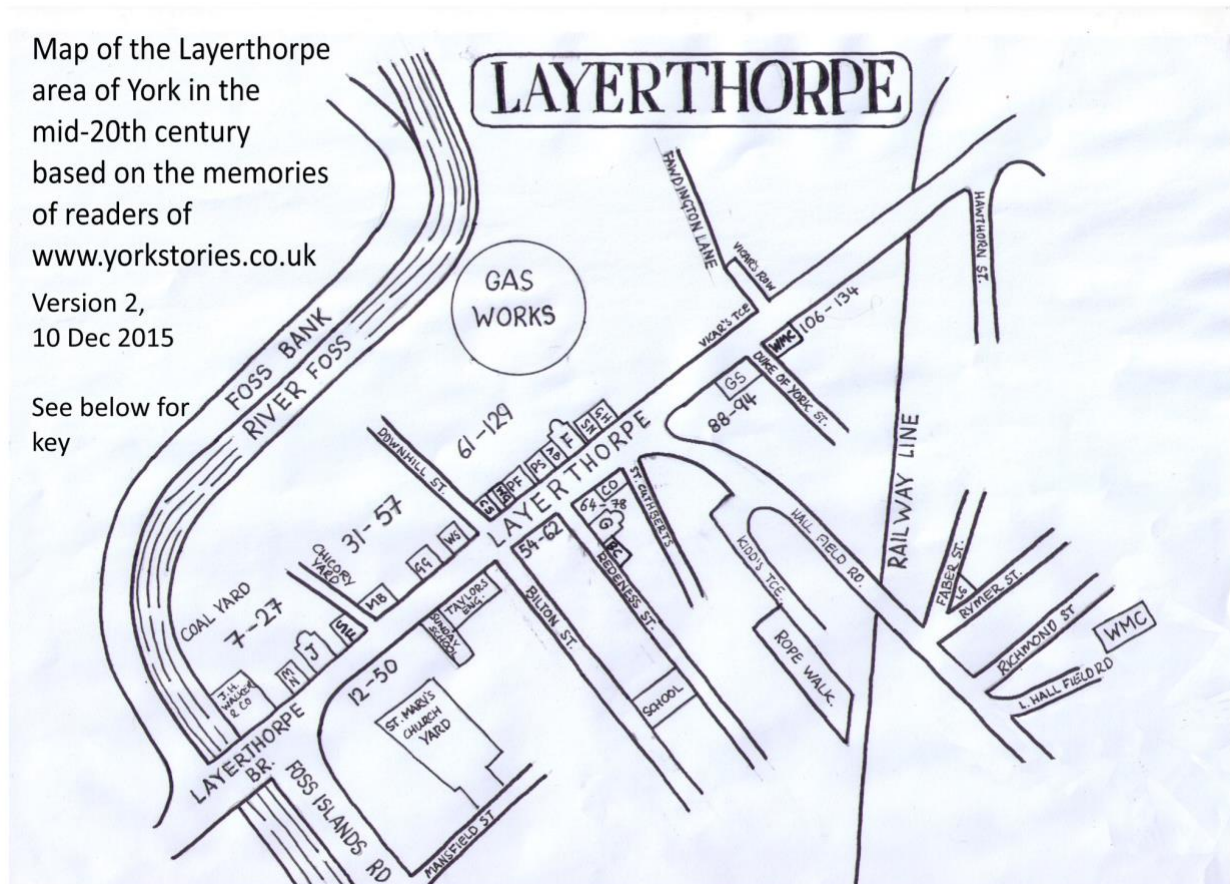
The pages in this document represent the memories of Fred Barber who lived his early years in Redness Street.

The map is to provide some assistance to readers in locating the places that Fred recalls in his notes

I have scanned his documents in full without any corrections and though you may notice a few errors it keeps his memories exactly how he recorded them

Enjoy

Trevor Pool
May 2020



LAYERTHORPE

Key to map
(version 2)

- M 9. MERCER'S NEWSAGENTS
J 11. JOHN BULL P.H.
S 21-27. STIRKS FURNISHING STORES
 ---HERE IS CHICORY GARD---
M 31. MASON'S BIKE SHOP
G 43. GLADSTONES GARAGE
W 45. WILSON'S SECOND HAND CLOTHES
 ---HERE IS DOWNHILL STREET---
S 61. CLARK'S SHOP (BOOKMAKER'S TO REAR - ENTRANCE ON
 DOWNHILL ST)
W 65. WHITING'S GROCERS
P 67. PROSSER'S FISHERIES
P 83. PASQUALE'S SHOE SHOP
A 85. AUDIN'S BUTCHER'S
F 87. FROG HALL P.H.
S 91. SKINNER'S NEWSAGENTS
S 94. GREENWOOD'S HAIRDRESSERS
 --- HERE IS VICAR'S TCE, AND VICAR'S ROW ---

- LEFT SIDE WMC 106. FORMER WORKING MEN'S CLUB
 --- HERE IS DUKE OF YORK ST ---

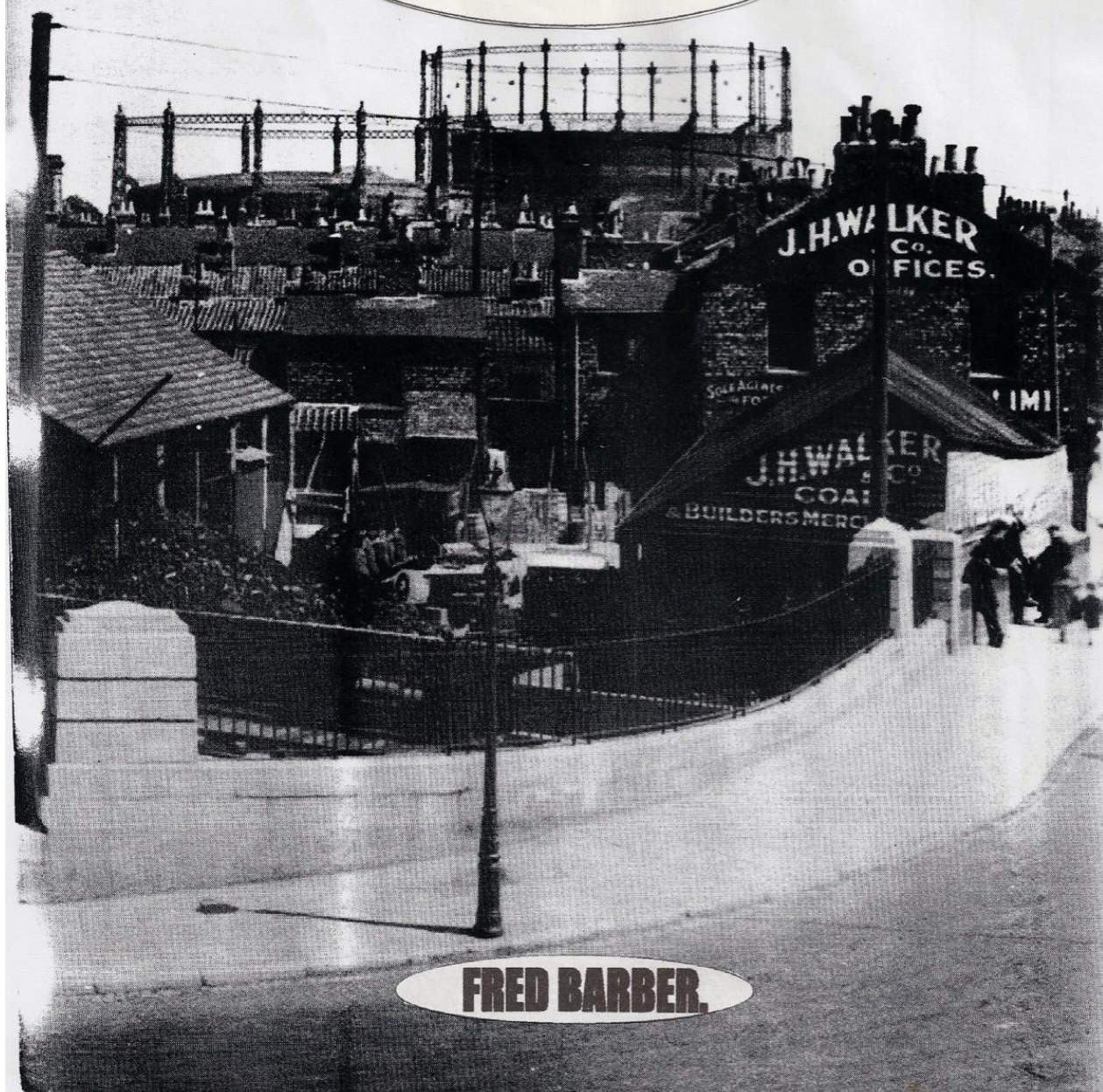
- RIGHT SIDE GS 94. GLADSTONES SHOWROOM
 --- HERE IS HALLFIELD RD --- AND ST CUTHBERTS ---

- CO 76-78 CO-OP
 REDENESS ST. G GEORGE IV P.H.
B BOYS CLUB.

- RYMER ST L LIDDEL'S SHOP
 FABER ST

- LITTLE W WORKING MEN'S CLUB
 HALLFIELD
 ROAD

**Layerthorpe
Through the eyes of
F. Barber.**



FRED BARBER.

Layerthorpe in the twenties and thirties was not an ideal place to start your way in life. The people who lived there were a friendly and close knit community and though poor, were very independent.

Layerthorpe, like Hungate, Walmgate and Navigation had to fight a constant battle against poverty and awful living standards.

I was born in nineteen fifteen in Redness street, my parents had the task of bringing up five sons and two daughters in a small terrace house. Looking back, how my mother coped and managed to live to over eighty, god knows, but in those days the mothers were the main stays of the family.

Though we had no luxuries, we were never hungry and were well shod. Though we would be wearing hand me downs we were kept tidy and clean, even though socks would be darned and the odd patch on trousers. We were all in the same boat.

We had no bathroom. A shed in the yard with a coal fire, copper provided hot water for wash days and in the summer a bath. In winter we had a tin bath in front of the fire.

We were lucky to have the luxury of a flush toilet. People in Wilson's yard, Portland Place and Chicory yard had to put up with communal lavatories and the only supply of water was from stand pipes outside.

No matter how hard people tried, they could not get rid of the pests that thrived in the area. Fleas and cockroaches were kept in check by Keatings powder and mother's small tooth comb took care of our hair. It was an uphill battle which, until the area was pulled down and people were rehoused, though it would be many years before that took place. So it became a case of grin and bear it.

Jobs were hard to get and men who were demobbed from the First World War, found that they got no help from the government that promised a land fit for heroes. No hand outs then, only something called Parish relief, which a lot of people were proud to claim. The women fared a little better, though the jobs on offer, would be low paid.

There were two laundries, one on Foss Islands owned by the Branger family and one on Peaseholme green found employment for ladies, who in a lot of cases, would be the major bread winners for the whole of the family. Most of the younger women would find jobs at Rowntrees, Terrys or Cravens.

In Latherthorpe itself, a skinyard, a light engineering firm and a chicory processing plant, provided some jobs but York Gas Company was the main employer in the area. My father worked for the company after he came out of the army but a bad accident at work, prevented him from working again. He was given a ten shilling a week compensation award, which today would have been thousands of pounds. Luck would have it, an older brother had left school and found a job. Also my oldest sister, had just started at Terrys.

There were plenty of corner shops then but the Co-op was the main grocery store, it had its own butchery department. Other butchers were Audings, Tommy Coop and Frank Wright who had his own slaughterhouse down Wilsons Yard.

Harry Holmes kept a fruit and veg shop, which was very popular with us lads, as half a penny would buy you a lot of damaged fruit. Mrs. Miller also ran a fruit shop she also sold milk by the pint or gill. Mrs. Cable had a small grocery shop and bakery at the corner of Redness Street.

In later years I worked as an errand boy.

There were several sweet shops, though they would not get rich on what our Friday's penny would buy.

Jacky Clark had a small shop in Downhill street, which was a cover for his bookies business. Across the road in Bilton street Cockney Townend ran a betting shop and Solly Walkington in hall road was also one. All the betting shops were raided often by the police but they would be back in business the following day. There was only one tobacconist in Layerthorpe, Sandy Aclamb. A lot of the men were pipe smokers. For people who could afford a packet of ten Woodbines, Park Drives or Robins, which would cost you four pence, sadly a lot of the men relied on the tab ends picked up off the streets. They would shred the tab ends up and roll into a Rizla fag paper and was known as Flag Edge Flake.

Briar Hardcastle kept a cake shop and bakery. Tommy Hall the fattest man in the area had a plumber's shop and two newsagents. Mr. skinner owned the barbershop next door. Mrs. Waites ran a sweet shop and newsagent next door to The John Bull pub. Mr. Burley had a barber's shop, his daughter who was known as Pussy was the only female lather boy in York.

In those days there were only four pubs: The Frog Hall, George the fourth, King William and The John Bull. The only one that is still there is The Frog Hall. Here the pubs only came to life at the weekends, they would be empty during the week.

My mother used to bake her own bread and how we used to look forward to the warm cakes fresh from the oven. They were covered in maggie anne, slang for margarine. We could not run to butter in those days. No one could think that such a thing, as sliced loaves would one day become a part of modern day living.

Sweets were a luxury for us kids, a toffee apple or a gob stopper, which you could buy for half a penny was regarded as a treat. Fruit was cheap and most of us were guilty of raiding orchards for apples and pears but woe betide if your parents got to know.

Vandalism and burglary was not on the scale as it is now. No story about Layerthorpe would be complete without mentioning the Parish Priest, a Mr Reginald Gaynsford Pyne. He was a big man, who lived with his sister in the vicarage in Heworth village. He was not married and was an Oxford Blue. He was unsparing in his work in the parish, always there to help and comfort when needed. In my lifetime I have never met such a person, who was so loved as Mr Pyne was by the people of Layerthorpe.

He died after twenty years and his passing left a gap that was never filled. The new vicar a Mr Bainton was not accepted by the people of Layerthorpe. He realised he was not wanted and went into politics and became the councillor for Heworth and later on took his own life.

This then was the Layerthorpe I was born in and about to start my school days, though it was just as well I was too young to know what lay ahead.

My first taste of school was a kindergarden, a large house on the corner of Millane and East Parade, now London's newsagent and toyshop. A large garden provided plots where the older boys grew vegetables, that were sold to boost the funds for Bilton street school. Too young to remember how our days went by, I know the after noon nap was a priority, it gave the teachers a treat, we must have been a lot of little horrors at times.

As most of us boys and girls lived in Layerthorpe, we made our own way home together, safe in knowledge you would never come to any harm, how different to today.

Coming of age I left the pleasant surroundings of the kindergarden, for the infants school in Hallfield road. On two floors it seemed a bleak and cheerless place and we were subjected to more discipline now, though the teachers were a little sterner, they were fair.

Like the previous school I remember very little of my time in the infants. There was a big rocking horse and a huge stuffed bear on the ground floor. Come to mind, I do remember we had a competition where our mothers had to make a fancy dress outfit for us and compete for a prize. Mother got hold of some velvet material and made me a jacket with a large collar. Velvet shorts and with a horn father brought from India, I made a pretty good little boy blue but I can not remember if I won or not.

Time to move on again, this time to Bilton Street school only a short distance from where I lived in Redness Street.

It was a large building, the boys down stairs and the girls were upstairs. Completely apart from the boys only, was one class, standard four, in it's own room. The other classes shared one large room and with three teachers teaching three different subjects at the same time it was pretty chaotic at times but we got used to it in time.

The headmaster Mr Skaife was very strict but fair and he was the only one to serve out the punishment when you stepped out of line. You did not want a second helping after you felt the weight of his lash.

Mr Potter, Jammy to us and Mr Heron known as daddy were the male teachers and Miss Dixon and Miss Marstason were the teachers in charge of standards two and three, they were both well liked and respected. MASTER

Like most schools Bilton street was the same as the rest, outside toilets damp and smelly, no hot water, small cloakroom and a yard that was used for assemblies.

In summer it was hard to keep awake but to nod off brought a clip round the ear hole from Mr Potter.

The winters were dreaded, there were two coal fires to heat such a large room. Any one that was sat at the back would be frozen. The drill was to take off your boots and sit on your feet. You would also wear mittens to try and keep warm.

Being a Church of England school religion played its part in our education. Readings from the scriptures and very often prayers taken by the Parish Priest, Mr Pyne, all of which helped us in these early stages of our lives.

When I think back what a thankless task the caretaker, Mr Allinson had, helped by his wife. They did most of the cleaning and also looked after a house turned into a place where kids could get at least one hot bath a week. Girls one day boys the next, all supervised by the caretaker and his wife. What a boon the baths were especially during the winter months.

No school uniforms then, just jersey short trousers, socks to the knees, boots in the winter and plimsolls in the summer.

Most parents liked to keep their lads hair close cropped as head lice was a problem. Girls suffered even more than boys, most wore their hair long. My family were fortunate to never have a problem, thanks to mother.

We did have head inspections for nits and a visit to the dental clinic in Piccadilly, which was a wooden hut. Lads and lasses regarded it as a torture chamber though the lady dentists treated us well. Having a tooth out was an ordeal, you would have the gums frozen and then went back into the waiting room while others were dealt with. By the time you were back in the surgery the numbness had worn off and you certainly felt the tooth being yanked out but that was nothing compared to having teeth filled. The drill was operated by a treadle worked by the dentist herself, if the pulley jerked the drill slipped off the tooth into the gum, " Sorry about that" says the dentist, " Did that hurt?". You take your leave after being given a couple of mints hoping you have seen the last of the torture chamber.

As a Church of England school Bilton Street was concerned about our leaning's towards Christian beliefs and at an early age my parents enrolled me in a Methodist mission in Layerthorpe. It was run by Mr Pickering who owned a bookshop in High Ousegate and a former missionary called Hessel Wood.

He used to tell us stories about the children in the dark continent and how lucky were we compared to them.

I attended the mission for several years every Sunday evening, you could not dodge going, as you had a card which had to be stamped by the lady organist. We were rewarded by a tea party and games laid on at Green Hammerton and what made our day was the journey by train on the Derwent valley light railway. It was the furthest I had been from home and to me it seemed like another world, so clean and fresh.

Truancy in the schools was very rare and anyone caught playing hookey would be taken by Mr Archer, the school board man, to face the wrath of the father. A belt across the backside could be expected.

No homework, only basic subjects were taught. There was no P.E, sport was only just starting to be taken up, though the school did have a very good football team, which I joined later on.

Even though the war had been over for some years, evidence of it still remained. Many men in the area had lost limbs and had to exist on a paltry pension. Many ex-service men were reduced to begging. I have seen them still wearing their ragged uniforms singing in the streets and women though hard up themselves managed to give them a copper or two or a cup of soup. If the poor did not help the poor, nobody else would.

A day I shall never forget, was the unveiling of the war memorial in memory of the old boys who were killed. No school of comparable size in the whole country lost so many old boys, over eighty I believe, some so very young.

The school was packed with pupils and parents, leading church members and the army. The service was conducted by our own parish priest Mr Pyne. The memorial was unveiled by General Sir Charles Harrington. As it was dedicated, each name was read out, only muffled sobs broke the silence. It was a moving service ending with the singing of the hymn, Abide with me and the sounding of the last post.

Politions said this was the war to end all wars, I never thought I would be taking part in the next one.

Moving up a class I was given the job of filling and cleaning the ink wells by Miss Dixon and was there after called teachers pet which did not bother me, anything to break the monotony of the class room, was more than welcome.

I think the feelings of most youngsters then, was what kind of a future had we when we saw what was taking place around us. Things were not getting any better, a feeling of frustration was evident, as our parents had to struggle more and more. Somehow the spirit of the Layerthorpe people was so strong, they would not give in to the problems of every day life and they never did. One would think living in these awful conditions that people's health would suffer but I can not remember any problems that my mother could not deal with. For coughs and colds, glycerine and lemon ipec mixture bought in penorths from Mr Neweys chemists shop, hartsorn oil for chest complaints, sloans liniment for sprains and stiff joints. A visit from a doctor would mean half a crown on the kitchen table, before you were looked at. So it's obvious such visits were very rare, most doctors relied on private patients.

There were no such thing as large surgeries, most of the doctors worked as a single practice.

Exams did not mean as much then as they do today, the subjects were limited, no maths and science classes, for older boy's woodwork classes were held at Park Grove school and cookery lessons for the older girls.

With such a limited scope of learning our school reports would not provide any problems to our parents or for that matter our teachers. When you consider the conditions they worked under, the teachers worked miracles with us, after all, we were not all angels with dirty faces.

As there was no tuition or lessons on swimming, most of us taught ourselves. A favourite spot was an area over the River Foss, hot water was pumped in to a shallow lagoon, to cool off before being pumped back into the river, it was called Pond Garth and it was a clean, warm and pleasant safe place to learn to swim.

The erection of a large cooling tower on the site later on took all the hot water from the power station on Foss Islands and was missed by the youngsters. As luck had it the beck, which crossed, Tang hall before the estate was built provided a wide sandy-bottomed pool. Ideal for kids learning to swim, we called it the Batho.

Though the Foss was banned for swimmers there was a section where the council allowed swimming. There was a wooden shelter for changing and even an attendant, an old chap we only knew as Fred.

This part of Foss was just below Yearsley Bridge apart from a wire mesh, which collected a lot of rubbish when the river was in flood. Heaven knows what seeped into the river, the Fever hospital was not far away but it was still popular, I used it myself.

Facilities for sport were not very good at school, very few of us had football boots and the nearest pitch was a long way up Stockton Lane. A kind farmer allowed us to use his field but as he also kept his cows on it there was a bit of cleaning up to be done before the kick off. As much as we enjoyed the football it was being in the fresh clean air away from Layethorpes smoke and grime that we looked forward to these games win or lose.

Though we lacked the basic equipment we did carry out sports programme. The soccer team did very well against other schools some really good teams in York Saint Denys, Poppy Road, Park Grove and Haxby Road were just a few who provided tough opposition. Also the girls had a very good hockey team but a lack of playing areas was a handicap, I can not think of one school that had its own playing fields.

Though cricket took a back seat, we did manage some friendly matches on Monk Stray, batting with one pad and one glove. There were frequent stoppages to recover the ball pinched by some dog being exercised by its owner. All good fun!!

Early on in my life and before my father retired, he used to take me for long walks in the country, which I loved and I kept it up after his accident.

Once through Heworth village and over the allotments on Hempland Lane, it was all open country with only the odd farm dotted here and there to break the landscape.

No fences barred your way, no farmer would stop you crossing his land and we never abused the trust they placed in us.

Once over the beck, crossed by large stepping stones and Apple Tree farm, you joined Bad Bargain Lane. As legend tells, a mill was once built there and the waters of the beck fed the mill wheel until the stream became too weak to power the mill and it was closed.

You could go down Outgang Lane, over what was known as the Aerodrome field, used in the first world war by night fighters to combat the German airships, which paid York a visit more than once. This way led to Elvington and the main Hull road.

Myself, I preferred carrying on up the lane to Moltby and Buttercrambe woods, which in summer was full of wild flowers and masses of banks of rhododendron. You found the best fields for mushrooms, the best thickets for brambles and as a ten year old I have been on the Aerodrome field early on a Saturday morning waiting for the mist to lift and when it did you found you were not alone, others had the same idea as you. Mushrooms gathered here would be bought by Mr Holmes from the fruit and veg shop.

In Layerthorpe you never got much for your early morning work but it all helped the family budget.

The Derwent valley rail way had lines running into Foss Island over York council distructor and tip. One line handled cattle from Murton for the Thursday cattle market. The pens stretched from Foss Islands to Barbican road. A few chaps from Layerthorpe got a job for the day and were known as cattle whollopers.

Another branch crossed Foss Island and ran to the river where Walkers Builders are now. Barges tied up there carring coal, wood, and sand and would be unloaded by a steam crane, which hung over the jetty. Railway wagons would take the goods to the station at Hall Field road to be picked up by customers. All these linked up with the main line on Wiggington road. Even York gas company had it's own branch line, they provided much needed service in two world wars.

In spite of police warnings lads were still swimming in the Foss even a drowning did not deter them. A lad from Bilton street school dived in off the bank on Foss Islands and never surfaced.

DURGIN

His name was Martin Duritin, whose father had a second hand furniture shop in Layerthorpe.

I once jumped from the iron footbridge, built for power station workers to monitor the pump houses on pond Garth and found I was up to knees in mud. I panicked, the mud was like glue, I kicked free and made it. The side of the bank was too high to climb and a couple of chaps hauled me out who were fishing near by. I learnt my lesson that day and never went in the Foss again.

School wasn't all work and no play, there was always some little chore to do, like cutting newspapers into squares and threading them onto string to hang up in the lavatories. In winter an older brother and myself would go twice a week for a bag of coke to the gas works, you paid six pence at the time office, received a ticket and took your place in the queue. There were all sorts of contraptions, mothers with prams, home made carts with bicycle wheels, which often gave way under the weight of the coke. My father made a strong box cart with iron wheels, very heavy but the old man didn't have to push it did he, no flies on father.

School had it's lighter moments, I remember the time when Layerthorpe bridge was being widened and during the dinner break the news that a diver was at the bridge, led to a mad rush to see him go down. When I got there, most of the school was crowded around the bridge. The diver all ready but for the helmet still on the barge. At last, though it was coming up to the time we were back at school, the diver was lowered into the water and vanished from view. There was a mad dash back to school and when we entered, the whole boys school was lined up with the headmaster Mr Skaife and teachers present. One by one we had to face the head who asked, are you a diver? yes sir, three whacks from his cane, next boy the same.

So it went on, until a lad called Harry Holmes, who was late back but had been no where near the bridge, was asked by the head master, "are you a diver?" he said, "no sir, I cant swim" but he got three canes just the same. A lot of titters from the boys, even the teachers found it hard to keep a straight face.

No neighbours from hell then, though next door to us, Mr and Mrs Watson and daughter Violet, never made friends with anyone in the street. Harry, her husband, was hen pecked to death, though only a labourer at Rowntrees she dressed very ladylike and flounced around like royalty, never spoke to anyone and nobody spoke to them. Layerthorpe was not the place for airs and graces, we were all in the same boat and one needed friends in those days.

Now a brother and sister had married and left home, it became a little less cramped. Three in a bed became two and the oldest brother soon to marry, things were looking up.

My mothers pride and joy was the front room, which we were only allowed in on Sundays and when we had visitors. We had no electricity and relied on gas for lighting. Only one bedroom had a gas mantle so candles provided a little bit of light in the other small bedrooms. Going upstairs to bed with a candle in one hand and a chamber pot in the other, no one wanting to spend a penny would venture to the lav in the yard in the middle of winter. You could not afford to feel that embarrassed, that was the way things were then.

A dirt playground between Redness street and Kids terrace with the infants school at one end and the council tip and destructor at the other provided some room for games, football and peggy, ducks and drakes, marbles toes what we called them.

The activities on the playground at times must have been a nuisance to the people whose yards backed on to the playground. One man, Mr Herben, a keen pigeon fancier, with birds in a race, would go bonkers trying to get his birds down after the race, so he could take rings off the birds legs, put them into a timing clock and would dash up to Layerthorpe working mens club to see how his birds had done.

By and large we got on well with the people and would pack up if they asked us to. We were not angels, having strict but fair parents we were kept on the path of good manners and had respect for our elders.

Teachers had the hardest job of all, with such a lack of resources and not very bright pupils. They did a splendid job and one left school at fourteen with no knowledge of maths or science, at least you were wiser and knew the difference between right and wrong and in the years ahead a little bit of faith and trust went a very long way.

A tarmac firm Glossops, provided welcome jobs for some of the young men from the area. Every year the firm got the contract to maintain the roads, mainly locally by tar spraying and the laying of chippings. The job meant living on the sites where they worked and slept under canvas. The work was hard, hot, dirty and they would be away for most of the summer. I saw the state they were in when they got back, faces, arms and hands burnt by the sun and the hot tar but those lads desperate for a job were only too pleased to have any kind of work, rather than be a burden on the family. A relative from our family got so fed up he joined the army and the next time we heard from him, he was in India. He was not the only one, others would lose heart and follow.

In those days, Walmgate was the roughest area in York, a warren of pubs and doss houses. A lot of Irish men lodged in the area, they came over to work on the land as navies. They were heavy drinkers and after all day sessions, by night they would be drunk and knocking the hell out of each other. One lodging house, Kilmartins was well known for trouble makers.

The police well used to these brawls, would round them up covered in blood and throw them into cells for the night and kick them out the next morning but they would probably be back the following weekend. The beat Bobbies, all six footers were strict but fair and only an idiot would want to tangle with them.

A policeman I became friends with, said in all his time in the force, he only once went on duty carrying his truncheon, that was during the war, when a thousand bomber raid was cancelled at the last minute. Hundreds of air crew would swarm into York the Canadians, well known for pranks and were likely to get a bit drunk, were liable to run a little wild. Who could blame them, the losses in aircrew was terrible, here today and gone tomorrow.

Until I was older I had never been in a cinema and the first time was when Dad took me and my older brother to the Victoria picture palace in Spen Lane. To us, used to seeing slides on a magic lantern, it seemed out of this world, even with the stoppages when they had to change the reels. Cartoons, Out of the Inkwell, Keystone cops and episodes of Pearl White, which always ended with her hanging over a pool full of crocodiles or being tied to the railway tracks by the dastardly villain. Harry Carey telling about the next episode when the red skins come swooping down on the women and children of the wagon train, we loved it. The Victoria palace later became a dance hall known as the Grand.

Two Theatres, the Empire and the Theatre Royal provided variety and drama.

Modern cinemas would be built but the ones that come to mind were, the Tower, the Electric in Fossgate now Macdonald's furniture shop, St Georges in Castlegate and Coney Street picture house. Later on some cinemas held Saturday morning matinees for school kids, parents would not begrudge the three pence it cost them to get rid for a few hours.

These shows could get a bit rowdy after the chap we called the raspberry king, managed to get in and sell a few of his blurters. Then things got hilarious and the lights would come on and the staff would try to spot the culprits but they never did. Maybe they enjoyed the fun as much as we did!

In 1924 the mood of the people was about to change, things were no better for the poor. Trouble in Wales, where miners were on strike and troops were called in. The Inver- Gordon mutiny by sections of the home fleet brought by plans to reduce the pay of the navy, it was low enough as it was. The government was in trouble all over. The events of Inver -Gordon was resolved, the sailors won the day but against public opinion the ringleaders were court-martialled and jailed. A black day for a navy, which paid such a big part in the first world war.

Things were not changing at school, though maps of the world, nearly a third of it coloured red, showed the British Empire in all it's might but it meant nothing to most people at home.

The descendants of robber barons owned most of the land and the feudal system was still with us in parts. There was a lot of jingoism in the upper classes, after all, land of hope and glory was true for them, though it meant nothing to people suffering real hardship.

By now, I had a couple of jobs, apart from working as errand boy for Mrs Cable, which meant taking orders out after school and going to the farmers stalls in the market for fresh eggs, butter, cheeses and curd every Saturday morning. I also had a little job running errands for the landlady of the George the fourth pub, Mrs Patrick, my mother did cleaning jobs for her too.

The house we rented, like many others in the street, was owned by Mr Patrick, brother of the Landlord of the George the fourth pub. He would collect the rents himself every Monday morning and he did not have to knock twice, the rents would be there.

I lived in the street for sixteen years and can not recall anyone being evicted. Its mind boggling these days, with benefits of every kind, rent arrears in some towns run into millions of pounds and very little action is taken to recover the money. As usual the poor faithful taxpayer will pick up the tab. In the event of these bad tenants being evicted, they will be put in to bed and breakfast hotels which could cost hundreds of pounds a week, what a crazy set up! While councils attract the type of people only there for an easy ride and a bit of self importance, things will never change.

At long last, the gas lamps in the city are now being changed to electric but as landlords will have to foot the bill for electricity to be installed in the houses, it's a case of wait and see and it was.

Wilson's yard, Portland place and Chicory yard at last got their piped water supply but still had to put up with the communal lavs. Progress was very slow, the nation was bankrupt, like the politicians of ideas.

Though the only council built houses were for the tram drivers, a huge council estate was to be built on Tang Hall, even though parts were subjected to flooding when the Ouse and Foss over flowed, which was quite often.

This meant the loss of our little swimming pool and we would lose that part of the beck, which provided good fishing for Rock Roach and Sticklebacks.

A large house and gardens owned by a Mrs Stark, which later became Tang Hall Hotel, was the only house in the area. Nan Stark, as we called her, was more or less a recluse, who drove around in a pony and trap. She employed a gardener but she lived on her own. The only other big house was on Bad Bargain Lane owned by a Captain Preston that became a dirt track for motorcycles and is now Burnholme working men's club. 57.

We lads still fished in the beck where it ran into Nan Stark's property, we were trespassing but we did no harm. With a cane for a rod, cotton for line and a bent pin for a hook, you could say fish stocks in the beck were never at risk from the would be anglers from Layerthorpe.

School holidays, then as now presented problems for parents, as we were not allowed to hang about on the streets, so if the weather was nice, we packed up a few sandwiches and with a penny bottle of pop, bought from Mr Stanger, who never got rich for his efforts. An older brother and myself with our youngest sister in a pushchair, made the trip to the Homestead in Clifton. A long way to walk but for us shankies ponies was the only way we knew. Can you picture the youth of today doing that, you must be joking. Another popular place was Rowntrees Park, not as nice as the Homestead and if you used the paddling pool you would need to count your toes, as there was often glass in the pool. The lake was well used by people with model boats, mostly home made but perfect in every detail. These people really got a lot of pleasure out of it and also the people who were watching it aswell. What do these idiots see tearing around the lakes in powerboats with very little respect for the people who go to the lakes for peace and quiet.

Not many kids had bikes then, a shop in Layerthorpe called Pextons, dealt with second hand bikes and you could hire a bike out for sixpence. These were referred to as Tanner Wrecks but were much in demand. He also provided a battery charging service, as we had no electricity. They powered the radios, all sorts of ariels were in use, brush and spiders web indoor as well. Sets would be earthed by a lead into a bottle of salt water. Reception was very poor and it was a blessing when radio relay piped a good service into any home in York. They operated from a hut in Haley's terrace, the fee per week, was one shilling and sixpence starting off with two channels then four though the speakers were primitive to what they are now. It was a vast improvement on the battery fed sets and we soon got used to the closing down song from radio Luxembourg, Its Time To Say Goodnight.

Saleem Chapel in St Saviorsgate, ran a club once a week for youngsters. Table tennis, small billiards table and darts. The club was run by a Miss White, whose family was in the clothing trade and she got us involved in putting on a little show. One I took part in, depicted life on a cotton plantation. Costumes were made and we all blacked up and with Miss White at the piano we sang Negro Spirituals and songs the slaves used to sing. Our parents, mainly mothers seemed to enjoy it.

We also put on a nativity play at Christmas. The stage as the stable, the cradle, Mary, Joseph, the three wise men, all dressed in costumes we had made. During a rehearsal, one of the not so wise men knocked a candle over and set fire to the straw around the crib. Apart from that, the play went well, though I didn't see any rave notices in the press.

Across the street from our house was the adult school, it was more of a community centre than a school. A large room upstairs provided billiards and games for the young men of the area.

Downstairs, a larger room with a stage, where concerts, weddings and parties were held. It was also a polling booth during elections. We use to watch the young ladies coming to the dances, looking elegant in their long gowns and carrying their dance shoes. Sometimes the doorman would let us have a peep to see the dancers moving so smoothly around the floor.

What a contrast now, bobbing up and weaving like a lot of punch-drunk boxers, whirling around like dervishes and howling like banshees. To what passes as music, one-string guitar pluckers with a mike in the mouth which you expect them to devour any time. The drummer knocking hell out of his kit, don't know if he's had a row with his girlfriend or simply trying to drown out the awful sound the band is making. No wonder they hand out drugs and drinks are all ways in demand, no accounting for taste. Why do pop singers have such a look of agony on their faces? Could it be the further you are the better it sounds. One thing for sure, with modern technology and recording techniques the voice takes second place to the back up. Just think even with this aid, Des O Connor still drives you up the wall.

The two little jobs I was doing took a lot of my time up for very little in the way of cash. Hipps the tailors in Fossgate had advertised on the window for a boy to help in the shop and I applied and got it. Though I never thought then what I was in for, just as well. First I needed a bike which my father managed to get me. The hours were from five to nine during the week and all day Saturday nine to nine with a lunch break of half an hour and a fifteen minute break, which meant I could never leave the shop. The wage was five bob a week plus an extra bob for the use of my bike. I read at school that slavery had been abolished but my boss, a Mr Jackson can not of heard about it. He was real tartar but the assistant Sid Gledhill proved a real friend and Mrs Jackson a very nice lady was kind to me.

So what with school and my job, you could say it was all work and no play but I stayed in the job till I left school and never missed a day. You would think working in a tailors would not broaden your out look on life but strangely it did. Seeing people from all walks of life, being measured for suits and ladies for costumes, you realise every one is not poor. Are we the forgotten ones in the slums of York? One could not but feel bitter at times any real ambition lads and lasses had then would be crushed for lack of education, not fair but what is? They say the world does not owe you a living but it would be nice to be given a chance.

Saturday for me in my new job started off with the washing of the shop windows, two large and two small ones, sweep the front and pick up any rubbish and litter outside. Two large brass nameplates, after being highly polished were hung outside after being inspected by Mr Jackson, who never once used my Christian name, it was always boy to him.

The next job was polishing the lino on the shop floor and workshop at the back, with the help of a large tin of Ronuk and a polisher on the end of a pole that weighed a ton. The first tasks of Saturday were completed.

I often ran errands for Mrs Jackson, mainly to Lipton's in Pavement or Meadow Dairy in Fossgate. I was only too pleased to get away from the shop for a while.

These Saturdays seemed endless, the boss finding little things for me to do, I was always glad to see him busy with customers. Some were officers and their wives from Fulford Barracks, all well to do with private incomes. The men ordering tweed coats and cavalry twill trousers, even plus fours for the golfers. The ladies went for tweed costumes and always ordered two skirts, one plain and one pleated. To see the boss fawning over these officers was sickening but I don't think it made any impression on them or me for that.

The usual queue outside the cinema on a Saturday night, you would find me going around handing out leaflets, most of which would end up in the gutter. Not many people waiting for a Tanner seat in a cinema could splash out on an Admiral Beatey Blue Serge suit costing seventy-five bob.

Nine o'clock the shop closes but for me one more job to do, a trip to York station, clothes for repair or alternations, had to catch the Leeds train and never once did the boss let me leave early, so I could get home earlier. Must have been thousands of kids like me being exploited but when the money is needed at home you just put up with it.

Sunday was no day of rest for me, chapel in the morning and the mission at night. The half-day closing on the Wednesday at least gave me one night free, should be thankful for small mercies.

The network of tram tracks in York was a nightmare for cyclists and there were a lot about then. Junctions like Nessgate, Nunnery Lane and Blossom Street, were a real hazard. Once you got your wheels in the tracks, it was hard to get out and falls were frequent. I have often looked back at the variety of little jobs I had, spud picking two bob a day and you took your own bucket, blackberry picking, at Crockey Hill, eight pence for every four pound bucket you filled, you did well to fill three.

Two bakeries, Mrs Cable and Browns Bakery and shop in Goodramgate. A spell at Gilbertsons newsagents in Church Street. Apart from earning a few bob, I don't think it would advance my prospects when I left school.

By now a new school had been built on Tang Hall and our present headmaster, Mr Scaife was the new headmaster.

Bilton Street was to close, we were not given a choice and found myself joining Heworth School for the last fifteen months of my schooling. One good thing, it was in more pleasant surroundings. A five-minute walk and you were in the country. Many of the pupils came from the farms in the area and country bumpkins they were not. What they would make of us kids from the other side of the track remained to be seen but as it turned out we mixed in very well and I made many good friends there.

Heworth, being a mixed school was strange to us at first, though we shared the same classrooms. We did not sit with each other but were kept apart and after being segregated at Bilton Street it was just as well.

Mothers at twelve and fathers at fourteen, how naïve we must have been, we were taught to respect the opposite sex. Courtship would go on for years before marriage and it was for life, how different today. Morals and scruples don't exist any more and the result is seen in broken marriages. Parents who have absolved them selves of responsibility for their children are allowed to walk away and let the taxpayer pick up the tab.

My first girlfriend at Heworth school, a lovely lass, a few months older than me, called Mary Hicks. Funny the way it came about, I had trapped a finger, it was badly swollen and was very painful. The headmaster Mr Fawcett saw it and said the pus under the fingernail must come out. He took a razor blade and nicked the nail and the swelling started going down. Mary was known as the schools Florence Nightingale who took care of all cuts and bruises and every day, for a week, I sat at the back of the class, while she bathed and bandaged my finger. I wished at times it would never get better but that was wishful thinking but Mary and I became the best of friends and I was really sorry when she left school and I never saw her again, though I have often thought about her.

Two years ago, I was in the Nags Head pub and the school faces it, its hardly changed. The police station that use to be next door had gone but nothing seemed to have changed at least from the outside. Some of the lad's names came to mind, Fred Wash, Ron and George Smith, Joe Carmichael, the Mortimors and sports master Mr Robinson. Joe and I became good friends and kept in touch while we were in the forces during the war and after being demobbed.

Most of Bilton Street football team ended up at Heworth, a god send as Heworth were a pretty bad side but when the season ended, the new team had performed much better. No soccer for me though, not even as a spectator.

Another twelve months and school days would be over and the future is sure to provide more Mr Jackson's.

Back at the shop, the assistant often had to go and act as relief manager at other branches, which left my employer no option but to involve me and after a bit of advice I found myself writing down the measurements, that were given to me by Mr Jackson. He would check them and strangely enough he seemed satisfied. It became a regular thing, entering clients statistics in the order book, I reckon I could measure a chap for a suit, even now a task made simpler because customers new exactly what they wanted but ladies were more choosy than men and patience would be required.

Round about that time there seemed to be a lot of war films showing at cinemas, Leslie Howard in a comedy film called Splinters. One called Verdun which coined the phrase, they shall not pass a battle the French won.

One I particularly remember was the Retreat From Mons shown at the Electric next door.

The film was silent but the effect wasn't. Most films had a pianist in the pit trying to fit the story line to music but this film had a drummer in the pit and a salvo from the guns, he really got carried away. The row was felt in the shop at times it was that loud, the poor pianist must have thought he was in no mans land at times. The row would have been justified if it drove the fleas out but it didn't and the Electric still retained its nickname as the Bug House or Scratching Shed.

Strange, in an area of deep poverty, crime was not a problem, the streets were safe day or night. Muggings and vandalism was unknown and when judges coming to York for the quarter sessions were given a pair of white gloves, which meant these were no cases for trial. What a contrast today when no one is safe even in your own home. Giving in to the do gooders and the permissive society led to a drop in morals and scruples. Its pathetic to hear idiots saying teenager's mug old ladies, commit vandalism and burglary because they are bored. What rubbish! They do it because they know they can get away with it. There are many organisations protecting villains but very few standing up for the rights of the victims of crime.

Weak government both Tory and Labour have allowed the state of the nation to drift, politicians only concerns are to cling on to their cushy seats, as Del would say what a lot of plonkers.

Mean while building is going ahead on Tang Hall, the first houses were in Carter Avenue, on what was to be Fourth Avenue two all steel houses were built where some families were deloused before being re-housed, not a pleasant prospect for them. At least they were saying goodbye to the awful living conditions they had endured for so long.

We, in Layerthorpe would have to wait a little longer before we moved, in fact I had left school and was working at Rowntrees when we were given a house in Pottery Lane but it wasn't all we expected.

York had a long history of military tradition, apart from being a Garrison town it was also the headquarters of northern command, Fulford Barracks housed an infantry regiment and cavalry regiment.

York provided several territorial units, the fifth west York's, the Yorkshire Hussars and a medium battery of sixty pounders based at Lumley Barracks, so it was not surprising that military Sunday became an annual event, York would be packed that day.

School children had a ringside seat in Duncombe Place, as troops converged on the Minster led by bands one after another, a wonderful sight, well organised, something the British are very good at.

Military tattoos were held on the Knavesmire, a huge area boarded off and transformed into an arena in front of the stands with a backdrop of the bar walls. When lit up by searchlights at night provided a wonderful sight, massed bands, all kinds of displays, mock battles, one event after another. A special performance for schoolchildren was held and I remember teachers from Bilton Street School marching us to the tattoo. Most of the troops taking part were living under canvas, the weather always seemed to be kind. After a really happy time, our teachers collected us up and delivered us safe and sound to our mothers, none of us had been out before at midnight.

The thing that moved me most that night, was the finale, when massed choirs a thousand strong sang Jerusalem and the hymn Abide With Me, some how you got the feeling the world was not such a bad place after all.

One ever present hazard was the smog that would hang over the city for days. Thousands of coal fires spewing out smoke and fumes with no wind to shift them, were the cause of much illness and even death. November was a really bad time for people with chest and breathing problems.

The advent of the Clean Air Act, which did away with coal fires but allowed smokeless fuel to be burned, solved one problem and created another one, much worse, the motor car.

In my last year at school, I had become resigned to the fact that with only a limited education and very little hope of an apprenticeship, my future was not very bright, some consolation, I would not be alone, most lads of my age would be in the same boat.

Living facing a pub, things were very quiet during the week but livened up at the weekends, mild beer, four pence a pint, the bars were out of bound for the ladies, who would stand in the passage or in the snug if there was one. Very few pubs had a piano but after a few drinks, renderings of Nelly Dean, Sulva Bay, Danny boy and other popular songs, the ladies joining in and they seemed to enjoy at least for a while to forget what tomorrow would bring.

It had its lighter moments, a Mr Stabler who lived not far from us would lock his wife in the bedroom while he went to the club but his wife, not to be thwarted, lowered a bucket containing a jug and her friends would be only to pleased to go to the pub for three gills of ale, which she would haul up to the bedroom. Whether she did an encore I would not know but I expect the husband would be a little bit tipsy to notice his wife was a little bit as well.

I never knew of any trouble in the pubs in Layerthorpe, though Walmgate was well known for fights after pubs turned out. The doss houses had many Irish lodgers who would knock hell in to each other and be the best of friends the next day.

Though Hipps Tailors only dealt with made to measure, they still did a fairly good trade, mainly with middle class customers who would chose the cloth from the bolts of materials on display. Burton's, a much larger shop, kept a larger selection of ready made suits but changes were on the way with the fifty bob tailors and weaver to wearer, with the mass production of ready made clothes. The same thing happened when Wigfalls cycle shop put a very cheap bike on the market called the Royal. Quality was now giving way to quantity. Hipps chain of shops later became a victim and closed down. The phase Rag Trade emerged. Leeds became full of firms with large mantle rooms full of ready made clothes. It was possible, even though you ordered and were measured for a suit, you could finish up with a ready made one, altered to your measurements.

There were high quality tailors shops in York but were not cheap but at least you would get three fittings before the suit was made up but for most people Burton's was popular and not too expensive.

Sundays in those days when Sunday best got an airing, church would be pretty full and the pubs pretty empty. Sunday dinner would have a little extra to it, beef or pork, roast spuds and veg followed by steamed pudding and white sauce afters. After dinner we would be allowed in the front room and listen to the cabinet gramophone. You could exchange records at Chalks second hand shop, so you were not stuck for choice.

A treat for us, was a tram ride to the Navesmire to listen to the army bands which gave concerts most Sunday evenings during the summer.

Cinemas were closed on Sundays then, also the Empire and the Theatre Royal but the River Ouse Provided plenty of activities. Two boat yards, Hills and Airs, ran trips to Bishopthorpe and Linton. The largest boat, a steamship called the River King and motor boats such as the Mary Gordon and Princess Mary, plus dozens of rowing boats and were busy all through the summer. A tanner got you four hours fun with a rowboat and you saw the ladies taking a spell with the oars.

Both Kings and Queens Staithe were a hive of industry, tugs towing barges from Goole and Hull arrived daily to be unloaded. All sorts of cargoes, cocoa beans for Rowntrees and Terry's, timber for Horsley Smiths, sand, cement, grain and coal. With the Ouse being dredged regularly, the river could take the largest barges and tugs. Along Queens Staithe were timber merchants, Terry's old factory, the Co-op had a bacon factory and a coal depot next door, a slipway where boats and barges would be hauled out of the water for repairs or painting. Yes, Clementhorpe was very busy at one time, across the river on Kings Staithe, it was not so busy, mostly stuff for warehouses and shops. Never the less many welcome jobs were being created in a city where work was hard to find, people had been living in hope since the end of the war but it would be a long time before things improved.

There were so many nice people in Layerthorpe, a Mr Aurthur Stirk, who lived a few doors away from us, who worked at Waudbys wet fish shop in Fossgate. Every Thursday night our front door would open and a parcel would land in the passage containing smoked haddock or cod, he would never stay to be thanked and kept it up untill he moved away, a really nice man! No one in my family smoked, a lot of young men who took up the habit during the war found it a bit too expensive when out of work.

To boost sales a lot of newsagents had machines installed outside of the shops. For two pence you got five fags and five matches, a temptation to youngsters but I never saw any lads taking advantage, not many kids had the money any way.

A charity in York took deprived kids to the seaside and when Layerthorpes turn came, I went. It was my first sight of the sea and the huge cliffs and massive sandy beach. Filey was a revelation to me, though I had no money, a packed lunch had been provided for us. I really had a most enjoyable day, you could enjoy watching the passing countryside from the bus, which ambled along, only reaching fifty going down Whitwell.

Oldest brother Alf lost his job when Ainsty Builders was destroyed by fire, about that time Leethams flour mill was gutted by fire, Leak and Thorpes was badly damaged by fire, as was the Gas Works. Jobs lost would be hard to replace, my brother Alf was lucky, he found work on the new council estate on Tang Hall. It wasn't long before he realised what was going on, shoddy workmanship, cutting corners with contractors skimping on materials. Tied up with bonus schemes which encouraged the workmen to look for short cuts to earn it. All council estates would suffer the same rackets and later on millions of pounds would have to be found to put it right, in the rush for housing, both government and councils turned a blind eye.

After working on the estate, my brother who's cottage was demolished was given a house in Hadrian Avenue and remained there until he died.

I had never been inside the York county hospital but a fall on an icy patch resulted in stitches in a cut on the forehead, which had to be replaced after a knock at school the following day.

There was no waiting room, the chapel was where you waited to be treated. I use to unwind the bandage till it came to where it was stuck to the wound but hadn't the nerve to yank it off, no such problem for the nurse.

That hospital was kept going by public funding. Many employers had coppers deducted from the workers pay packets and funds were raised by pubs, clubs, raffles, collections in the streets and football matches. All contrived to keep the hospital surviving. No help from the state then, doctors and nurses working all hours for a pittance. Making it all work was the matron who ran the hospital like clockwork. A sad day when they were replaced by managers and so called market forces. The result we see today, a health service in crisis while politicians try to score political points against each other, people are waiting for treatment. No one believes waiting lists are going down or the sums of money being trotted out by ministers is real money, the day a politician will ever be believed is a long way off.

I never ceased to wonder how really well off ladies and gents ran the missions and Sunday schools for us Layerthorpe youngsters. It must have been a nightmare for them at times but they never gave up on us and I feel sure they gave you the feeling all was not lost and you were not forgotten but somehow the future was not so black after all.

The teachers were the same, patient, caring and dedicated to the job of at least making sure we did have the best education they could give us when we left school. These teachers carried on working in to their sixty's, no early retirement for them. Now teachers can retire well before they are fifty on a very good pension, claiming stress and all sorts of excuses. The job of teachers should be a vocation but at the moment it's a political football, between unions and state.

A lot of lads found work on the electricity grid system, criss crossing the country, building the towers and sub stations. Though other jobs would be lost with the closing of local power stations but we in Redness Street, were still waiting to be converted and we waited in vain as we were re-housed before it reached Layerthorpe.

Leaving school, you have mixed emotions, though leaving Hipps Tailors after two years was no great wrench but I would miss Sidney Gledhill, the assistant who made the job easier for me, he was a real friend to me, a kind man.

Leaving school at Christmas and after an interview I found myself working at Rowntrees, in the packing and store department under the foreman Mr Fred Steele.

I had been at Rowntrees a year when we were told we were to be re-housed, we hoped to get a house in Dodsworth Avenue but it was not to be and we ended up in Pottery Lane. I think Pottery Lane was built with the bricks left over from Dodsworth Avenue. They were glorified rabbit hutches, three small bedrooms, a small front room, a kitchen which contained a bathroom, pantry sink and cooker, no room for a table or chairs and wait for it, an outside toilet. What a let down for Layerthorpe People who had waited so long for a decent home, to have to put up with second best. Millions of pounds would be spent on them in the future, bringing them up to date, what a short sighted policy.

Father never came to terms with the move and died a year later, the eight years service in India had taken toll. He never complained, he just slipped away quietly, without a fuss. He did not drink or smoke and I never heard him swear, he would have been proud his five sons followed him into the forces during the war.

After eighteen months in my under world, I said goodbye to the cellars and moved in to the Packing and store office with a new boss, a lady called Miss Rooklege and a jacket and trousers replaced my overalls.

The new job took me into every office and every department, postman, odd job man. All the phones in the offices upstairs were cleaned by me once a week.

Employer's sales orders to be collected for the directors and taken to the respective offices. Never a dull moment.

It would be another eighteen months before I got my black apron and graduated first to bogies and then to getting orders up for shops and various depots around the country. As I now was a member of the cuff and collar fraternity, my wages, plus bonuses made quite a change in my life style. No girlfriend yet but I bought my first motor bike and spent quite a lot of time rediscovering the countryside, which I saw so much of when I was at school.

As this is supposed to be a school boys story, I have rambled on a bit, so I will end by saying, though things at times were rough, I found many friends who kept in touch over the years but the one who above all, made life a lot easier for me, was my mother. All ways there, all ways true, we never appreciate them until they are not there.

Maybe just as well we can't look into the future, when we leave school but human nature being what it is, you hope for the best and pray that fate will be a little kinder in the future than its been in the past.

Fred Barber.