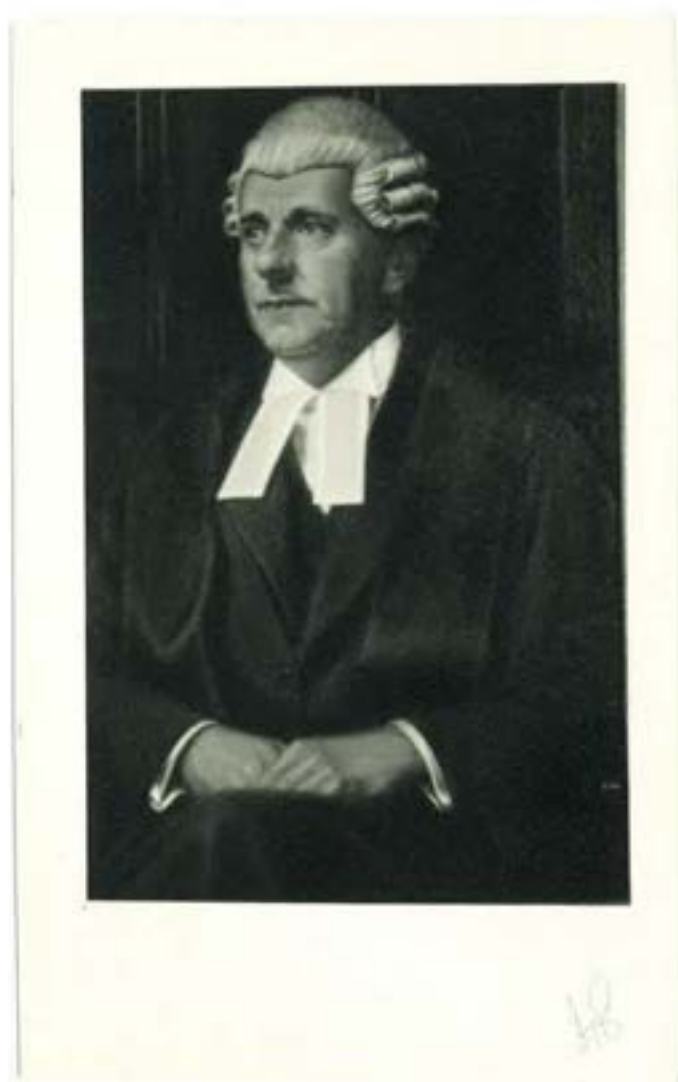


REMEMBRANCES



FROM PORTRAIT PAINTED BY
JOHN DAVIS



THE TOWN HALL, ST. LEONARDS, DESIGNED BY SIR BRUNNELL THURNEY



ROCHDALE FAIR HALL (NEAR ORIGINAL TOWER) ARCHITECT
W.H. CROSSLAND F.R.I.B.A.

REMEMBRANCES

'When to the Sessions of
Sweet Silent thought
I summon up remembrance
of things past'

(Shakespeare.)



Waltham Road from Heathrow Road, Heathrow Chapel

CHAPTER I

As I was born in Stockport it is fitting that I should give some details of its history and development. If you look at the map of Stockport c. 1680 you will see Hillgate as the principal access to the town. In the 1824 map the Hillgate (like Gaul) is divided into three parts; Upper Hillgate, Middle Hillgate and Lower Hillgate, and one can see on this map the growth of the town. The present official Guide refers "to the change from a picturesque market town" (which it had been in the 18th. century, with a population of not more than two thousand) to a population of 23,000 by 1821. The cotton industry had developed and by 1875 the population was 44,666 and the town's acreage had been increased to 2,200. The 1824 map shows a new road running parallel with; although some distance away from, the Hillgate, which was the Wellington Road opened in 1826.

These two roads are the principal thoroughfares of old Stockport. The Hillgate was the only way to the Market and Castle of the ancient town and Wellington Road (a product of the early 19th. Century), involved in its construction, difficult engineering works over and near the River Mersey and largely superceded the old road.

In the series "Regions of the British Isles" Vol. dealing with Lancashire & Cheshire, Stockport is described in these words, "Stockport has an even finer site than Chester with its market and Church on a sandstone bluff sloping steeply to the Mersey... a town on two levels, it's main east-west road runs beside the river and above it runs the north-south road constructed from Heaton Norris in the North in 1824-6 with a bridge 40 feet above the water level and an embankment to reach the upper surface in the south. As an engineering ^{works} ~~work~~... the road is overshadowed by the railway viaduct of the line from Manchester to Crewe".

How many memories I have of both those ways!... As a child about 2 years old I strayed from home one afternoon and was traced and "picked up" (he slung me on his shoulder) by my brother-in-law Willie, on the Wellington Road running along the side walk and trying to keep pace with the horse trams! This incident is one of the abiding memories on my very early childhood. The house where I was born was in a quiet secluded cul-de-sac

by the Churchyard of St. Thomas's and St. Thomas's Place leads on to the Wellington Road. It would not take long for a straying child to reach the main road. I also remember that not far from the house there was a billy goat and I used to visit this animal with my two younger sisters who were the close companions of my childhood. I had a brother-in-law as soon as I was born and was also born an uncle! This was because I was the youngest child of a family of ten and my two elder sisters were both married before I was born.

When I was old enough to go to school I had to pass a Smithy which was situated at the junction of Higher Hillgate and Wellington Road and spent much time watching the horses being shod. It was a fascinating spectacle - especially when the nearly red-hot shoe was applied to the hoof and the smoke began to rise and the whole smithy was pervaded with the acrid smell of burning hoof. If a horse was restive the younger smith swore at times and sometimes, if sufficiently provoked he would strike the offending horse on the back with his hammer! There was a horse trough on the other side of the road from the Smithy and this was also a source of much interest to me. I loved to hear the horses sucking water into their mouths. I remember dipping my face into its cooling waters more than once and even taking a sip of the water. A few days after this drink a yellowish tinge developed round my eyes and when I confessed to my mother the probable cause I was severely reprimanded.

It is not surprising that my childhood and boyhood contain many memories connected with horses. I was born in the year 1902 and for quite a number of years after that there were precious few motor cars on the roads of the town and for that matter anywhere in the country. In those days it was a normal every-day sight to see the horse-drawn vehicle. A common sight were the cart horses (as they were called) pulling heavy two-wheeled carts, the carters walking alongside with their whips hanging round their shoulders. If the horse began to lag they would crack the whips furiously making a sound like rifle fire and startling the horse into greater activity. I never remember seeing a carter actually whip his horse. At one part of my boyhood I lived at the top of a hill and in the valley there was a large brewery. The carts loaded with barrels of beer left the brewery at intervals throughout

the day and had to ascend the hill to get into the town. The normal complement of two cart horses was unable to do this owing to the steep gradient and the brewery kept an additional horse, known as a chain horse, which was attached to the front of the cart and by this means the top of the hill was reached without any undue strain on the other horses. At the top of the hill the chain horse was unfastened and taken downhill ready for the next load. All the horses used were strong Shire horses and I can see now in my mind's eye the beautiful light brown chain horse which I never tired of watching from the front garden which was on the side of the hill. When the Great War started in 1914 all the horses were shipped over to France to work with the Armies and we never saw them again.

Another memory connected with horses which is part of my childhood is of the milk floats which in those days did not bring the milk to the doorstep in convenient bottles. The milk was in a large churn strapped to the milk float and the milkman rang his bell and customers went to the float with their jugs. The milkman in my neighbourhood always used Welsh ponies to draw his float and on many occasions I was privileged to have a ride with him. It was like riding in a Roman Chariot!

What enormous changes have occurred over the years in the streets of the cities and towns everywhere. I remember as a young law student staying in London for a few nights in a Bloomsbury boarding house. I was up for an examination at the Law Society's Hall in Chancery Lane. The boarding house was in Tavistock Square and as I lay awake in bed I could hear the clop, clop of horses' hooves in the roadway outside.

As a small boy I accompanied my mother to my eldest brother's wedding (1913) and we went in a hansom cab. The cabby on these vehicles is perched overhead at the back and if he wishes to speak to the occupants he lifts the small flap in the roof.

One consequence of the busy horse traffic everywhere was that the streets were plentifully besprinkled with horse droppings and it was quite an accepted custom to go round collecting these in a bucket if one wished to enrich the garden. There was no difficulty in building up a manure heap for the same purpose knowing full well that its constant replenishment was assured.

This state of affairs would have admirably suited those individuals who today are bemoaning the lack of animal manures and dislike the chemical era which has taken their place.

It was a not uncommon sight to see a horse fall and then the accepted ritual was for someone to sit on the horse's head as quickly as possible to prevent it from breaking or injuring its legs on the cart shafts in its frenzied efforts to stand up again. Another cause of excitement was a bolting horse which could be a source of many dangers in those days of sauntering pedestrians and playing children on the roads. I suppose a horse could take fright for many reasons; I remember being told on my first visit to Bergen in Norway (a notoriously rainy part of the world) that if a horse saw a man without an umbrella it would take fright! One school holiday I was standing at the bottom of the garden watching a bricklayer working at the top of a ladder pointing the brickwork on the other side of the passage. Suddenly in the distance came the sound of galloping hooves. Instantly the man ran down his ladder and up the passage to the street and I followed as quickly as I could and was just in time to see him hanging on to the neck of a horse which was drawing a cart. He had just been in time to prevent the horse and cart from running into the main road. It was one of the smartest responses to an emergency that I have ever seen.

I regret that I have no memories of riding a horse and must confess that I have never been on horseback. The nearest I can approach to this is to go back to my childhood days on holiday at Blackpool. It was then always understood that an important part of a beach holiday for the children was a donkey ride for which the charge was threepence a time. I always thought that the donkeys were 'knowing' little beasts and knew to the last inch the exact distance they intended to take you on your ride before turning back to resume standing sulkily in their appointed place waiting for the next customers.

What did my favourite poet G.K.C. write about the donkey?

Fools! for I also had my hour
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears
And palms before my feet

As for horses on the beach they drew the bathing machines into the sea and drew them back at the turn of the tide. So one's memories of the years before the First World War remind one that horses were part of the every-day scene performing the many functions which are so indispensable to a community and which are now carried out by the motor car. I can recall quite well the excitement of seeing the first "Tin Lizzie" (as those early Fords were called) in our neighbourhood and the gradual change to motor transport and the sad decline of the horse in the streets. It soon became unsafe to play in the streets without a great deal more vigilance than one had been accustomed to practise. I remember crossing the Wellington Road on a day in June 1914 along with two companions; we strolled across quite leisurely and without any particular need to look right or left. This was at a spot which today (1983!) is literally teeming with fast moving motor traffic in both directions and requires a pedestrian crossing device "to see one over to" the other side. In parentheses, I know that the first date was June 1914 because we were discussing as we strolled across the road the possibility of a War being started as a result of the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria. Little did we realise what was to follow and the vast changes in the world which would spring from that event.

In the area where I lived as a small boy one could whip a top across the road and this was by no means a side street but one of the main thoroughfares. As children, we did this quite often (in the whip and top season) as a test of skill in keeping the top spinning on an uneven surface. It should be borne in mind that in those days the streets were all paved with square stone blocks and some streets were more uneven than others.

I have used the expression "the whip and top season" and I should explain that in my boyhood there was a mysterious change of patterns and styles of play which occurred throughout the year proceeding from I know not where but nevertheless a very real phenomenon. At certain times everyone played "top and whip" and this game was then the chief pastime of all the children in the neighbourhood. Then there would come a period when "marbles" were all the rage. This would be followed by bowling "hoops" - iron hoops for the boys and wooden ones for the girls. Other games which had their turns were "hop scotch" and "skipping ropes,"

Looking back I wonder whether the changes were influenced in some way by the shops because it is a fact that in the marble season the shop windows were full of displays of marbles and "glassies" (as we then called them) and during the skipping rope season there would be displays of skipping ropes.

I remember my iron hoop was hung on the wall in the back yard for most of the year waiting to be brought out at the appropriate time. It would have rusted considerably in the meantime and would have to be cleaned with emery paper and then rubbed with grease. The hoops were trundled along by means of an iron hook whereas the girls propelled their wooden hoops with a short stick. Certain games were considered to be only suitable for girls and were usually shunned by the boys. "Skipping rope" was one of these although occasionally a "pepper" might be considered sufficiently venturesome to warrant joining in a game of skipping rope. A "pepper" was so called because the rope held at both ends was turned so swiftly that one had to jump at an incredibly fast pace to clear it.

When one looks back on childhood it is amazing how memories come thick and fast to one's mind. I remember one event which took place on what was always known as the Star Inn - a large open space almost like a square at the junction of Higher Hillgate and Middle Hillgate. It was called the Star Inn from the Star & Garter Inn which was in the square. It was a favourite playing area for children and on one occasion I saw my first air balloon sailing across the sky from there and I also remember standing to watch and listen to a German Band playing in the centre of the Square. Another memory is of watching young Bullock, the barber's son playing a game called Diabolo which was fascinating to watch. He spun the wooden bobbin on a line held on two rods - one in each hand and then threw it in the air and caught it again on a taut string.

But to return to the outstanding event which occurred on the Star Inn and which prompted my mention of it, I go to the year 1910 when there was a carters' strike in the town. There were some ugly incidents during this strike and the one I witnessed happened when a number of strikers tried to upset a coal cart and a fight developed which rapidly took on the proportions of a riot. The square was packed with a swaying, jostling mass of people. At an opportune moment, whether by accident or design I shall never know, a cart came along loaded with long staves of wood.

These were plucked off the cart by the rioters and used to intensify the fighting. It was not long before a posse of mounted police galloped on to the scene and their marvellous well-trained horses charged the rioters. Then bricks began to fly through the air and I saw one hit a mounted policeman squarely on the back of the head and he immediately slumped unconscious on his horse's neck. I ran home after this as things were getting too hot for spectators.

I lived very near to the Star Inn in those days. My friend at that time, Tom, was an accomplished "Dogger" and consequently was always the victor in any game which required "dogging" as for instance "Piggy". Dogging is a form of leaping or striding from one point to another, or in other words going from A to B in the least number of strides or leaps. In the game of "Piggy" a piece of wood, sharpened at both ends to give it clearance from the ground, is struck at one end by the piggy stick and as it springs into the air the player strikes it with the stick and sends it as far away as he can. The game is then to "dog" from the point of striking to where the piggy lies and the one who can do this in the lowest number of "dogs" wins the point. Of course one requires plenty of space for a game of this kind and so it was often played on what was called the Top Rec. This was a large area of underdeveloped land lying at the end of Shawcross Street which was full of sand hills making it an ideal playground for children with their buckets and spades for building sand castles and making sand pies.

But the event I now recall took place on the Star Inn again. Tom and I were both going to barber Bullock's for a haircut and his shop was on the far side of the Star Inn from where we approached as we were coming from Hindley Street and as we turned the corner of the street we had the whole width of the Star Inn in front of us and barber Bullock's shop on the far side. Tom suggested that we should "dog" the distance and he immediately began to do this and I followed and was not very far behind him. Tom, I should say, was wearing clogs (a favourite form of footwear in those days) and he landed with a noisy swoop on the wire mat in the shop doorway. In a split second after he landed there was a savage growling and two fierce bull-dogs shot from out of the salon entrance and attacked Tom and myself. We should certainly have been badly

bitten had not young Bullock rushed out behind the dogs and saved the situation. He told us afterwards that we were fortunate he had been there.

Another memory of horses in those far away days is of the wonderful animals used for drawing the fire engines and ambulances. It was truly an inspiring sight to see these at work.

At the Fire Station in the centre of the town one could see through the windows in the great swing doors fronting the station, the polished horse collars and harness hanging up in position before each vehicle in readiness for slipping on to the horses when an alarm sounded and the fire engine or ambulance was needed. I have so many memories of seeing the horses, with dilated nostrils, galloping limbs and flying manes as they almost flew along the streets with the fire bells clanging on their way to a fire.

Regarding clogs which my friend Tom often wore, there was near to where I lived, a clog shop which belonged to clogger Horrocks, as he was generally known. I have watched him make a clog many times. On the floor of his shop there was a pile of rectangular wooden blocks about the size of the average shoe and about three inches in thickness. He would select one of these and then, with a sharp knife, fashion the sole of the clog giving it that upward curl at the toe end and narrowing this end of the sole in a most skilful way. After this operation and when he had trimmed the sole to his satisfaction he would select the leather top piece and nail it to the sole. In doing this part of the job he took a mouthful of tacks and as he worked round the sole he would rapidly spit a tack into his waiting hand and so on until the whole job of fastening the top of the clog to the sole was completed. After this he had to do the same operation with a strip of shiny leather to cover and protect the leather top. This was done with shiny brass-headed nails placed at close intervals round the clog. Finally the irons were fitted, heel and sole. The irons on the clogs were popular with some boys for making "sparks"! This was done by striking the clog sharply on the flags in a sideways motion and could not have been very good for the clog! One of my friends of those days, Harold, had the shiniest clogs I have ever seen. You could

almost have seen your face in them; but Harold was neat and tidy always. His white rubber collar was washed under the cold water tap each morning and was always spotless. One of his feats which I recall, in order to show how quickly he could eat, was to swallow a whole half round of bread in one gulp. By the way, a round of bread was known as a shive of bread and the word "butty" was also much in use to signify a round or shive of bread containing butter and/or jam or marmalade or some other tasty confection. It was quite a usual occurrence for a playmate to announce that he was going home for a butty.

Still on the subject of clogs I should mention that they were noisy in use as one can imagine and they were extensively worn by working people in those days. At that time people went to work in the mills and factories at six o'clock in the morning and the noisy clatter of clogs was a familiar sound in the streets of a town, as also was the sound of the "knocker-up" with his long rod which bounced on the upstairs windows of his clients as he announced the time and then went on his way. For this service he was paid four pence a week by his customers...

Before leaving this part of the Hillgate where I lived near to the Star Inn, I should mention the shops opposite my home and the cottage which adjoined them because they are part of my earliest recollections as a child of three or four years of age. In the cottage lived Mrs. Walker. She was an elderly lady who kept a constant watch on the events of the street and was always going in and out of her front doorway. The fact which impressed her memory on my mind was that she always wore a man's flat cap secured to her hair by two projecting hat pins. I never saw her without her cap. She was very tidy in her dress and she washed and cleaned her doorsteps regularly. In those days this was a certain sign of a good housewife but Mrs. Walker lived alone and was no doubt a widow.

Next door to Mrs. Walker was Fisher's newspaper shop from where I used to buy a comic known as "Chips". It cost one half penny and in it I revelled in the adventures of the characters known as "Weary Willie and Tired Tim." There were also stories of a blood and thunder type. Two which I recall were "George Gale and the Flying Detective" and "Jasper Todd - The Rascally Innkeeper." In later years I used to get "The Gem" (Tom Merry & Co.) and "The Magnet" (Harry Wharton & Co.) but the

comic paper "Chips" was interesting for me before I could read these magazines because of the pictures which did not require an ability to read in order to follow the adventures of the characters.

I remember one occasion when I had gone out with my two sisters to play in what was known as the stable yard, a favourite spot near Fisher's shop, for the children of the neighbourhood. I suppose I was about 3 years of age and I had with me a rubber doll which whistled when one squeezed it. The small metal whistle came loose and I enjoyed myself by putting the metal button between my lips and alternately blowing through the hole and sucking in the air to produce the whistle. I made an exceptionally vigorous sucking-in of the breath and instantly the whistle disappeared down my throat. I began to cry and told my elder sister what had happened and she at once rushed me home and all the way I vividly recall my anguished cry, "Shall I die?" "Shall I die?" The rest of the episode is only faintly in my memory but it did involve some doses of a particularly loathsome medicine of my childhood, namely castor oil.

Next door to Fisher's and beside the entrance to the Stable Yard was Sumner's Fish & Chip shop. Here one could buy a fried fish for a half-penny and chips for the same amount and they did a very good trade. On the wall opposite the counter was a notice which said "PLEASE DO NOT ASK FOR CREDIT AS A REFUSAL OFTEN OFFENDS." On the other side of the stable yard entrance there was a sweet shop kept by Mrs. Deakin. Her daughter, Jessie, was one of our playmates. She was at the time of which I am writing about my own age. Underneath the small shop window there was a wide iron grating which covered a cellar window opening and immoveably fixed in the adjoining pavements. This is engraved in my memory because one day, I bought a bar of chocolate from Mrs. Deakin with my weekly penny and was enjoying this standing over the grating and looking avidly into the shop window at the display of chocolates and sweets; I must have been a little careless in holding my bar because I dropped it and it fell through the wide grating and could be seen some four feet down in the dim light. I rushed into the shop and tearfully asked for my bar of chocolate to be rescued only to be told that the cellar window had not been opened for years and was quite immoveable.

Next to Mrs. Deakin's shop was Mother Dodd's. She was something of a character; she sold a mixture of articles of food, bread, green grocery and household requisites. There are two things I particularly remember about her shop; the first was that she had a canary which sang delightfully. It was, I believe, what is called a Yorkshire roller canary and it filled the shop with song. She also had a special inducement for children in the shape of lucky bags. I forget how much they were, probably a half-penny or a penny, but the attraction was that you never knew what you would get in your bag. I remember being acutely disappointed once because the only object in the bag, apart from a few sweets was a rotten apple! Next to Mother Dodd's, which was really the end of the street, was a large advertisement hoarding and it was on this hoarding, which I passed frequently in later years on my way to work, that I first saw the striking figure of Kitchener with his pointing finger, "KITCHENER WANTS YOU." This was, of course, in the early days of the First World War.

CHAPTER II

Although Kitchener pointed at me (and such was the artistry of the placard that I can even now feel the urgency of his demand), I know I was too young for his purposes.

I should like to think I was in other ways suitable and I am sure I felt in me the outburst of patriotic feeling which swept over the country in those days. W. S. Gilbert wrote of "A very delectable, highly respectable - threepenny bus young man." I hope I qualified for one of those descriptions at least but modesty prevents me from making any claim at all. The last description cannot apply because in those days we had no buses - only trams and trains.

To reach the office where I was employed the most convenient approach from where I lived and indeed the most attractive, was to follow the Hillgate and this I did on foot for quite a long period until I acquired a bicycle. The office was on the far side of the Market Place so that each morning I walked the whole length of the Hillgate from the Star Inn and knew intimately each shop and side street which I passed on my journey. I was not seeing them for the first time when I started work but I was seeing them each day of the working week and they are all part of my boyhood memories. Napoleon was surely right when he said the English were a nation of shopkeepers! The shops on the Hillgate stretched in a never-ending line and I remember them all with a certain nostalgic affection and also recall happy contacts with many of them in those early years. Many times I have gone on errands for my mother to the Maypole Dairy Shop, to Hervey Banks the Chemist, to Whites the draper, to Potts the herbalist and I must not forget Maben's sweet shop and Joseph Blackshaw the bakers. There was a sad story connected with Hervey Banks shop which concerned my brother Richard in his childhood. He was suffering from acute toothache and he was taken by my mother to the Chemist who apparently dealt with dental problems. He was told that the affected tooth would have to be "drawn" and he apparently understood by this term that the tooth would be sketched on paper! Great was his surprise and shock when the tooth was quickly plucked from his mouth. Further along from Hervey Banks' shop and at the corner of Hillgate and what was known as Waterloo, stood the fruiterer's shop of

Jackie Handforth. He was a famous character and his shop window was always full of copious supplies of fish which he sprayed with water from time to time with a hose pipe. He also had long lines of rabbits hanging outside at the weekend which were sold for 4d. or 6d. each. He was not content to sit idly inside his shop but quite often he would stand outside and harangue the passers by in an effort to sell his wares

I should mention that on the opposite side of Waterloo at this time of the commencement of the second year of the War there was a small engineering works which was busily engaged in turning shell cases for the Army in France and the lathes were operated by girls and one saw them in their leisure moments taking the air outside the factory.

At this point the Hillgate went downhill past the Friends' Meeting House and Smith's Bookshop, the Socialist headquarters and other small shops until it reached a large men's outfitting shop at the corner of Wellington Street. Beyond it changed its name to the Underbanks and levelled out into a busy town centre shopping street which further on passed under the bridge leading into the Market Place. The Market Place could be reached also from the Underbank by going up Mealhouse Brow or by climbing the stone steps near the bridge by Turner's Wine Vaults.

As a child I liked the Underbank at the spot where one could stand opposite Winter's jewellers shop and look up at the figures by the side of the huge clock which projected from the wall above the shop. These figures appeared to be operating the clock bell on the chiming of the hours.

It was opposite Winter's shop where I nearly sustained serious injury whilst riding my bicycle. A cabby had stopped his hansom cab in front of the shop and at the very moment I was about to pass him he suddenly pulled his horse into the middle of the road and I had to swerve on the instant and I crashed into a lamp post on the opposite side of the road which I struck full in the face.

The Market Place had a large covered market but on Market days there were stalls in the streets on all sides and there was also the Hen Market which formed the ground floor of the Public Library in those early days before the new library was built. I remember well the cheese stall kept by Tom. He had a card over his stall which read, "Come taste and try before you buy - And tell your neighbour Mrs. Breeze - That Tom's is the Stall to buy your cheese!" Then on Saturdays you could hear old Burgon extolling his herbs and patent medicines to a wrapt audience. One of his spiels which I often heard went something after this style:- "I can tell you how you get consumption in your own homes and by your own neglect." He would tell the crowd also of his early days when he was building up his business and his reputation as a quack doctor. He spoke of people wanting to see him when he came home from work - "Me in my factory clothes and folks calling me doctor!"

Then there was the black pudding stall at the end of the market and at the top of Vernon Street and near the Castle Yard. The stall was covered with shiny black puddings, curly ones and large ones, and the proprietor was a stout man who wore a striped blue and white bibbed apron. Before him on a wooden tray he had a basin of salt and a basin of thick yellow mustard and he held a short sharp knife. When you asked for a pudding and had indicated the type he would say "MASTADON?" and when you nodded he would make a quick gash in the pudding, dash on some salt and a big blob of mustard. I know the mastadon was an unpleasant animal (a sabre-toothed tiger according to the books) but the black puddings were delicious! What strange fancies one has when one is young! But it is time I went into the office which was in Vernon Street before I mention black puddings again!

I spent some happy years in 6a Vernon Street. In that part of the street there was a small enclave of offices which consisted of five solicitors' offices and an accountant's office and on the other side of the street the Police Station and also the Magistrates Court (then always called the Police Court) where in later years I appeared in a prosecuting role on many occasions.

At the time of my joining the staff at 6a there were two juniors - myself and Stanley - three senior clerks and two partners or bosses - Russell & Edward. It was a typical country office and practice busily engaged in looking after the affairs of numerous clients and two small building societies. The practice was concerned largely with conveyancing and probate matters and common law claims of all kinds and Edward was an advocate of considerable skill and went into Court regularly. Stanley and I were the juniors looking after the enquiry office and the post and the dispatch of letters and any other duties given to us by the principals. I cannot refrain from quoting W. S. Gilbert again:-

"When I was a lad I served a term,
"As office boy to an attorney's firm,
"I cleaned the windows and I swept the floor,
"And polished up the handle of the big front door,
"I polished up that handle so successfuller,
"That now I am the Ruler of the Queen's Navee!"

Well I never became that but as boys in the office Stanley and I did all kinds of clerical work and we dutifully signed the office diary each morning with the legend "H.B. arrived at 9.0" and "G.S.G. arrived at 9.0"

Strangely enough the other members of the staff arrived at 9.0 also! I never remember any queue forming to sign the book!

Russell, the senior partner, was a tall handsome man who always appeared at the office in a tall hat and frock coat carrying his black leather bag from which occasionally one could see a small piece of red tape protruding. He was positively the last of his kind. He used to send me regularly to Turner's Wine Vaults for his whisky - White Horse. Each time I took back an empty bottle and brought a new bottle. I gathered from this that he drank the bottle half-way at lunch which he had in his room, the remaining half at dinner at home, thus having an empty to return the following morning. I remember that the cost of a bottle at that time, a pint bottle bear in mind, was 7/6d! He was fond of asking me why I chose a solicitors office for my employment - why did I not try to get a job with the local authority. He would have been pleased, I feel sure, years later

when that was exactly what I did. He had a large number of black boxes in his room containing papers belonging to old clients and one day I helped him to dispose of some of them. From one of the boxes he presented me with a number of old envelopes stamped with penny blacks. I think they were valuable even in those days but years later they were much sought after by stamp collectors and had increased in value. Unfortunately, I gave mine away to Percy, a new boy who came to the office some years later. Russell was a Major in the local Volunteers in his younger days and had stories to tell about his experiences. The funniest one I remember concerned a Sgt. Ryan - an Irishman, who for a number of years acted as Drill Instructor in the Boys Club in the town. He was a strict disciplinarian and his commands at exercises in the Gymnasium, given in a quick rasping voice, obtained instant obedience. Russell had taken a platoon of men along with the Sergt. and some tent erecting gear to a field near the main camp where it was intended to put up some additional tents. Sergt. Ryan had to leave them to bring some further items of equipment and as he was leaving Russell noticed that they had not got a mall with them and he shouted to the Sergt. who was then some distance away, "Bring the mall." He was astonished a short time later to see the Sergt returning with a large body of men from the main camp!

Edward, the junior partner, was in those days the mainstay of the office as Russell was approaching seventy. I had much contact with him because he dictated to me each day all his correspondence and also as time went on he handed to me much of the conveyancing and building society mortgage work of the office which was quite considerable. He was a Notary Public and I assisted him in this part of his work also. I had the task of presenting foreign bills of exchange to the parties liable for their payment when a dispute had arisen in another country. On the wall just behind Edward's chair there was a large framed parchment bearing the seal of the Archbishop of Canterbury at the foot and beginning with the words "To our beloved in Christ" etc. It was his appointment as a Notary and many times I would look at this awesome document when sitting on the other side of Edward's desk as he paused in his dictation.

Edward did a great deal of advocacy in the Police Court. His cases concerned defence in motoring offences, marriage separations and bastardy. The latter cases were never the concern of Stanley or me but were prepared by one of the senior clerks, although I regret to say that sometimes Stanley and I would look in the drawer containing old cases and read the evidence!

Edward was a great lover of Charles Dickens and was a leading member of the local Dickens Society. I remember hearing him deliver Sergt. Buzfuz's address to the Jury which is contained in "Pickwick Papers." It was a truly masterly performance! Edward endured much pain from a crippled leg which prevented him from walking without the aid of two sticks. With the sticks he could walk quite quickly but I fear he suffered a lot in the efforts. A handicap of this kind would have made many men touchy and irritable and difficult to work with but I never found him to be like that and indeed he was a truly kind person. He was prominent in the religious life of the town. One could see him each Sunday morning walking along the Wellington Road with his friends after service at the Congregational Church ...

Edward's kindness and interest concerning both Stanley and myself were apparent right from the beginning of our employment and one of the things he did for our advancement in a clerical capacity was to engage a writing instructor from whom we both had lessons once a week at different times. The instructor (George) was an elderly man with a large white beard and he had prepared for each of us a large exercise book and on each page there was a sentence written in a beautiful copper plate hand and we had to re-write this on the spare lines of the page. When this had been done George would criticise the result. I fear that sometimes George fell asleep whilst one was writing and had to be gently disturbed from his slumber by a discreet cough or other noise to remind him of his responsibilities!

I may add that Russell was distinctly amused by the whole business and did not think it was at all necessary.

It should be borne in mind, however, that writing and the ability to write clearly and with a good style was far more important in those days in a lawyers's office than it is today. Documents of all kinds were then engrossed by hand and I became sufficiently expert to do that kind of work myself. Parchment was used for deeds and the commencement of the deed, usually the words "This Indenture" was texted in old English lettering and each clause was also made to stand out by the same method and began with the word "Whereas" for the first clause and then "and whereas" in subsequent clauses. The seals at the end of the document opposite the signatures of the parties were impressed in sealing wax on green tape threaded through the page by slitting the page. For texting goose quills were provided in the office and one had to trim the point in order to get a sufficiently broad stroke when writing the various words which had to stand out in the deed. We also had a large sheet showing all the letters of the alphabet in old English text.

All this was changed shortly after the termination of the War and with the great conveyancing boom of the Twenties parchment substitute became of general use and documents were typed and stick-on seals became the rule. In addition, many drafts were sent to Law Stationers for engrossing and it became the general rule to do this and not to write them in the office.

Stanley and I became proficient in the art of "typing" although we did not use many fingers! The machine we had in the general office was a Yost and it had a double keyboard - one for ordinary letters and a top one for capitals.

I used to dislike typing bills of costs. Conveyancing bills were simple because the costs were regulated by Statutory Order and depended upon the amount of the considerations, i.e. the purchase price so that the bill was only a few lines in length. In the case of other bills one had to type a complete diary of the matter setting out the attendances and the principal letters. An attendance was usually charged 6/8d. and a letter 3/6d. Today it seems incredible that the charges were so low but I suppose one has to take into consideration the changes in the value of money.

The firm's bank account was with the Williams Deacons Bank in the Underbank and I periodically took the accumulated cash there - the gold sovereigns in a special brown leather bag....

It was a great day for me when Edward offered me articles of Clerkship to enable me to be admitted as a Solicitor when I had passed the various examinations. The examinations were three in number, the preliminary (or an exempting examination), the intermediate and then the final. One could not take the intermediate until after two years articles. The whole length of articles was 5 years.

Before the Articles of Clerkship could be registered with the Law Society it was necessary to pass the preliminary examination or produce a certificate from another examining body which would be accepted by the Society in lieu. I decided to study for the Senior Certificate of the College of Preceptors and was successful in obtaining a First Class Certificate.

I look back, however, with much pleasure on those months of preparation and special study which led to that result and also I shall always remember those persons who assisted me in my studies and be grateful to them.

Professor Lodge taught Latin and with him I traversed the Via Latina and Caesar's Helvetian War. From the latter book I learned that "Gallia omnis in tres partes divisa est", or to put it another way, "All gaul is divided into three parts" and I have pointed out in the first chapter that this is also true of Hillgate which is also divided into three parts! But, joking apart, Professor Lodge was a great teacher. He was an elderly man with a short beard and he always wore, in class, a black skull cap and looked every inch what he was, a University professor. I imagine he had retired from academic life and was spending some of his spare time teaching one or two nights a week. The classes were in Manchester and I journeyed there by train one night each week. I should add that he was a member of the famous Lodge family and related to Sir Oliver Lodge, the scientist. He may even have been a brother but I am not sure of this. His method of

teaching was most persuasive as he stood in front of the class, book in hand. Every now and again he had an impish gleam in his eye as he illustrated some grammatical point and I recall vividly how he showed me that the verb 'amare' could be recited at record speed in all its tenses. Another habit of his which made his classes a real delight was his tendency to branch off onto some literary topic quite apart from the latin. He was fond of reciting on these literary excursions and I remember his recital of the "Green Eye of the Little Yellow God." Occasionally we even argued about religion and after one of these sessions and following what must have been a strong contribution which I had made (I have entirely forgotten what the point was now!) he later came to my desk and placed upon it a slip of paper containing the words "Nemo hominum eodem sapit" meaning, of course, that no-one holds the same views at every stage of his life. How right he was!

It was a mixed class and it was held in the Lower Mosley Street School. Behind us on the wall was a framed piece of tapestry which bore the legend "Labor omnia vincit." We worked hard and I have no doubt some of us remembered another legend which goes "Amor omnia vincit." After the class had finished for the night I had 6 miles to go home which I usually did by getting the tram in Piccadilly Square but once only I even walked home!

Two other subjects which I had to take were History and English Literature and with these subjects I was fortunate to have the assistance and encouragement of a School Teacher friend, Walter, who acted as my guide and critic. The history covered the period from the Saxon Kings to Henry II and the English Literature comprised a play of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice" and Milton, Comus and Lycidas and the Sonnets.

I still have all the old books which I used and much of the literature is stored in my mind. This comprises many parts of "The Merchant of Venice" and Milton's Sonnets are a great delight.

But Walter continued with his friendship and interest long after the examination which I have mentioned and it is largely due to his influence and guidance that I owe my love of and interest in the poetry and literature of our country.

When my Articles of Clerkship had been registered I commenced my studies for the Intermediate Examination and for this a period of two years was allowed. The books comprised three volumes of Stephen's Commentaries on the Laws of England and some accounting.

I studied these volumes principally at home and I took the examination in London in June 1922. Imagine my surprise and delight when I was informed by the Law Society that I had obtained a first class along with eight other entrants in the whole of England. Edward, my principal, was delighted and I remember him telling me it was a feather in my cap. He wrote to my father in these words: "It was a great pleasure to me to hear that your son had passed his Intermediate Examination so well and I am sure you are very proud of his success. It is no easy task to satisfy the examiners and to be with 10 others in the First Class means that considerable ability has been shown. I am very well satisfied with your son's progress and work. He is an excellent clerk and I am sure he will continue to be a credit not only to you but to himself and the office." Actually the figure in the letter was wrong as there were only nine of us in the first class!

Some of my memories connected with the Intermediate are bound up with London because when I sat for the examination it was in the Law Society's Hall in Chancery Lane and this was my first visit to London. I stayed in Tavistock Square at a boarding house kept by some maiden ladies connected with my native town and I have already referred to hearing the clop, clop of horses' hooves at night on the roadway outside the house. I had a companion who was also taking the examination and he was articled to a firm of solicitors in Vernon Street. He lived in Hazel Grove which is what one might call a village of Stockport. He was a little older than me and an interesting and agreeable companion. We went to the examination

room together and we dined together at the Grand Hotel at the junction of The Strand and Trafalgar Square. In a poem in which I parodied the style of T. S. Elliot, I included the lines:-

"Many years ago there was apple tart and cream
And Ignorantia legis:
Requiescat in pace!"

These lines recall the sweet course at the dinner we had after the examination and which were written thirty years or so after the event. They also recall that my companion did not live very long after he became a qualified Solicitor.

I had now 3 years ahead of me in which to study for and take my Final Examination. The syllabus for the Final Examination covered the whole field of English Law, Real Property and Conveyancing, Equity and the Common Law, Family Law, Company Law, Court Procedure, Wills and Intestacy, everything in fact on which one was likely to be called upon to advise a client in the course of practice.

I took a correspondence course with a London firm of Law Tutors so that I might have the opportunity of answering test papers from time to time and I also attended lectures in the evening in Manchester which were arranged by the Law Faculty of Manchester University.

Some of the books I read and studied were classics of their kind - Snell's Equity - Williams on Real Property - Palmer's Company Law, Smith's Leading Cases in the Common Law - are the ones which come to mind today. I also remember Mr. R. J. Walker who lectured in Manchester and had an astonishing repertoire of leading cases which he would quote to illustrate a point.

As regards real property and conveyancing, the law which all articulated clerks were reading for the Final Examinations of 1925 had been rendered obsolete by Act of Parliament and as from the

FROM: THE PRESIDENT OF THE LAW SOCIETY



TELEPHONE 01 242 1222

PRESIDENT'S ROOM
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H Bann Esq OBE
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AZ

10th February 1986

Dear Mr Bann,

The records of the Society show that you have now completed no less than sixty years on the Roll of Solicitors. This is a remarkable achievement and I send you my warmest congratulations and good wishes.

In your years in the profession you will have witnessed many changes. You may have welcomed some of these more than others. In a changing world the profession has to hold fast to the best of its traditions and, in this context, relies on its more senior members to guide and counsel.

I am sure you will have gained much happiness and friendship from your membership of the profession and I hope this will long continue.

Yours sincerely,

C A B Leslie
President

1st January 1926 new laws affecting these matters were to come into operation.

I took the examination in November 1925 which was the last Final under the old laws and was successful.

On the 2nd February 1926 I was admitted to the Roll of Solicitors and my years of apprenticeship in the law were at an end and my full professional life had begun.

In order to illustrate further the changes in real property and conveyancing which took place in 1926 I must refer to a letter which was sent to me in July 1976 by the then President of the Law Society in which he said that the records of the Society showed that I had been admitted to the Roll of Solicitors 50 years ago and after sending me his greetings and congratulations on attaining that anniversary he went on to say, "you belong to the select elder brethren who served their articles under the shadow of the radical changes in property law that were to come on to the Statute Book from the 18th January 1926. These must have caused your generation one or two problems at the time."

This was indeed the case, but in practice it only meant that one had to get down to the study of the new law immediately the examinations were out of the way.

CHAPTER III

I was looking at an old newspaper cutting the other day; it was one of a number which I had kept in a scrap book which contains many mementoes of events in the early 1930's. It made me realise how interesting these old records are in later years and, indeed, I have always been a hoarder of old photographs and postcards and letters and find them engrossing reading in the days of my retirement from active professional life. Unfortunately, some of them are doomed to destruction from time to time when the mood for "tidying-up" drawers and bookshelves descends upon the household which it is apt to do about the spring of each year!

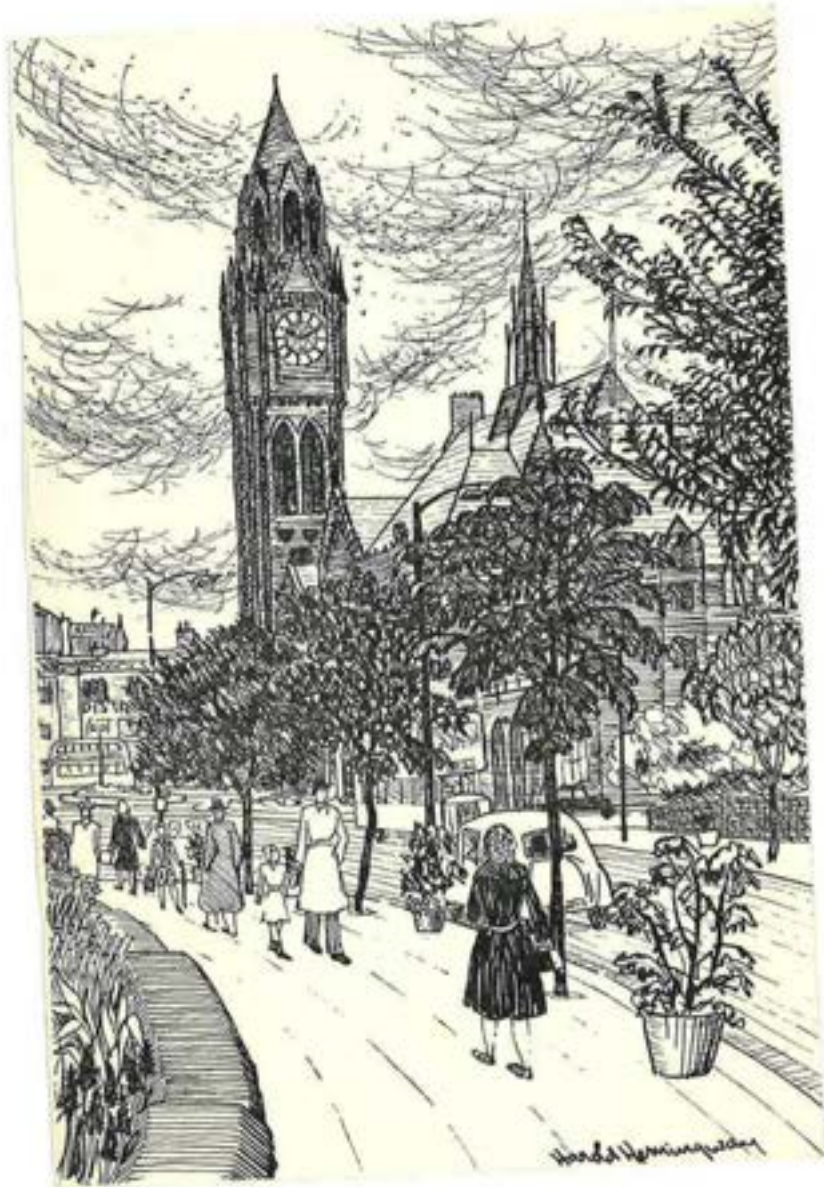
The newspaper cutting to which I have referred is from the year 1932 and it records the appointment of a new Assistant Town Clerk of Rochdale. It states that he is 29 years of age and "had held his present appointment as Assistant Solicitor to the Stockport Corporation for the last 3 years. After being admitted a Solicitor in February 1926 he remained with the firm where he was articled as Assistant Solicitor and Managing Clerk until July 1928, when he entered private practice on his own account. He had always been strongly attracted to municipal work, however, and in July 1929 he accepted an invitation to enter the service of the Stockport Corporation as Assistant Solicitor. In that capacity he had an all round experience of local government work - including advocacy, conveyancing, the conduct of municipal and parliamentary elections and committee work."

This brief paragraph records my professional career from the year 1926 to the year 1932. When I left Vernon Street in 1928 Edward had died some twelve months before and his passing was a great blow to the practice. I was given the opportunity of entering into a partnership with the successor but did not accept the proposal. The decision to remain in private practice on my own account was taken to enable me to have an opportunity to look around for a time and particularly in the direction of local government. In addition it was influenced by the fact that I had been offered free accommodation for a time in an office in the Underbank by an elderly solicitor who was on

the point of retirement. He was a great friend to me and I have on my desk at the present time a handsome desk lamp in carved oak which he gave to me over 50 years ago. Like Russell he was one of the old Victorian school but he did not wear a tall hat. His Victorianism was outwardly expressed by his mutton-chop whiskers! I had a spacious room in his office and also the use of his staff for dictation and typing. At the office entrance in Underbank a brass plate indicated my presence in the building but, alas, the rules governing the profession did not allow me to entice clients by any external sign whatever! At the end of the period of 12 months for which I occupied the rooms I had earned the sum of five hundred pounds which was for those days in the late 1920's quite a tidy sum. I had to take into account, however, the fact that I had been relieved of all expense in connection with the occupation of the premises and also in respect of staff and if this had not been so I should have made a loss.

It was towards the end of this period that I was asked by the Town Clerk of Stockport to call and see him at the Town Hall and this interview led ultimately to my being appointed an Assistant Solicitor with that Corporation. Robert, my chief, was a confirmed bachelor and he along with his lady secretary presided over the department with dignity and a certain amount of detachment. He arrived at the office each morning round about 11 o'clock from Yorkington and travelled by tram along the Wellington Road. His entry into the Town Hall was near my room and if I looked out into the corridor I would see him striding along in his bowler hat and carrying a walking stick on his way to his own office which adjoined the Mayor's Parlour.

After my engagement I had no direct dealings with Robert and was under the control of Frank, the Deputy Town Clerk. Frank was a tall thin man with rather handsome aquiline features and well known in the Masonic World in the Town and the Golf Club. He was reported to be an accomplished reciter of Stanley Holloway's works and although I never heard it myself I was reliably informed that his rendering of "Sam, Sam, pick up thy musket" was absolutely hilarious. He did a lot of advocacy in the Police Court and I took every opportunity of listening to his cases. One of his mannerisms in cross-examination amused me and I always



watched for it. From time to time he would look pointedly at the Bench when asking a crucial question. He managed to convey in that look the most profound anticipatory disbelief in the witness's reply and a mute appeal to the Bench to support him in that disbelief! He started to give me a generous number of cases to take myself and soon I was appearing in Court two or three days a week. The cases were mostly offences under the Road Traffic Act, the Food & Drugs Act and also preliminary hearings before a Magistrate in criminal cases where the Court had to decide if there was a prima facie case to go for trial at the Quarter Sessions or Assizes. I grew familiar with Archbold's Pleading and Stones Justices' Manual and even grew expert in the drafting of informations and indictments. It was all interesting work and an exciting enlargement of my legal education. I even had the experience of attending with an indictment for the Grand Jury at the Manchester Assizes just before they were abolished by an Act of 1933.

I was appointed the Assistant Town Clerk of Rochdale in June 1932 and I learned later that the Town Clerk (Mr. Hickson) was intending to retire in three years' time and I assumed from this that the Council were seeking to appoint a candidate who would in all probability prove to be a worthy successor.

William Henry (as I shall call him) was a man well liked and respected by every one in the town which he had served for thirty years in the office of Town Clerk. He came from Bootle and his favourite city was Liverpool. He never tired of talking about his municipal life in Bootle but there is no doubt that his great love was for Rochdale and its town hall and imposing Civic Centre. During the course of his years of office he had built up a civic authority with a high reputation in the north and he was also esteemed greatly in the Association of Municipal Corporations in London where he was a valued member of the Law Committee. He was a deeply religious man and even in his later years continued his association with a men's Sunday class at the Church which he attended. He would on no account accept any engagements at the weekend which would interfere with church attendance.

When I became his Assistant he loved to call me into his room and to talk about his career in Rochdale. From his office window one

could look over the town centre and see the Cenotaph and the gardens adjoining. The Cenotaph, by the way, was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and was modelled on the Cenotaph in Whitehall. He would take me into the large hall where the stained glass windows showed the Kings and Queens of England from the time of William the Conqueror and high up above at one end was a rose window showing Queen Victoria. He would tell me privately that these windows were the finest examples of modern stained glass in the country. I know that later during my own Town Clerkship and at the beginning of the Second World War, the windows were removed and carefully stored in case they should be damaged in air raids. The Town Hall itself was a beautiful and imposing building in local stone and over the main entrance at the front of the building there was a long balcony on which the Mayor and his retinue could survey the crowds in the centre on ceremonial occasions. I stood on that balcony in later years and listened to Gracie Fields singing to her own townsfolk who stood in the town centre and listened to her in silent wonder and admiration. Not far from the Town Hall in Broadfield Park above the Esplanade stood the Dialect Writers' Memorial which bears the words "...the strength and tenderness, the gravity and humours of the folk of our days have been preserved for our children in verse and prose that will not die." My favourite among the dialect poets is Edwin Waugh who wrote the tender poem, "Come Whoam To Thi Childer & Me", a poem I heard frequently as a child.

William Henry retired in September 1935 and I was appointed by the Town Council to succeed him as from the date of his retirement. I think it is as well, for the sake of recording the local views of the appointment, if I quote the local newspaper which contained the following:-

"When he came to Rochdale in August 1932 he did so with excellent recommendations and it is not too much to say that he has justified them all."

I was particularly pleased about the statement concerning advocacy to the effect that I had the gift of lucid presentation of a case and skill in cross-examination! It certainly looked as if some



Amen Corner,
1906.

of Frank's cleverness in Court had "rubbed off" on me!

The writer of the newspaper paragraphs to which I have just referred also mentions public Government enquiries regarding slum clearance which he was good enough to state I had handled with "tact and ability." This brings to my mind a phase of local government in England which arose under the Housing Act of 1930. Under this Act local authorities everywhere were submitting for Government approval vast slum clearance schemes in the years before the outbreak of the Second World War. The slums of all industrial towns and cities were particularly affected and Rochdale was no exception. Under the provisions of the Act of 1930 large areas of slum dwellings in the centre of the town were cleared and new housing estates on the outskirts were laid out and developed. I was extensively engaged in the local inquiries which had to be held in order that property owners could submit their views to the Government Inspector who would then submit his report to the Ministry for the confirmation or otherwise of the necessary Slum Clearance Order. The objectors were often represented by solicitors or barristers and the inquiries had all the atmosphere of a case in Court. There is no doubt that the clearance of slums was proceeding successfully under the 1930 Act and I have always thought that had it not been for the outbreak of War in 1939 it would have been possible in a few more years to have cleared the whole of the slum dwellings from the towns and cities of the country.

To return to William Henry, after his retirement he left the Town and went to live in Southport. I saw him from time to time and he was always welcome in his beloved Town Hall. He lived to the ripe old age of 92...

So on the 1st October, 1935, I took over William Henry's room and enjoyed for myself the view from those front windows overlooking the Cenotaph and gardens which I had so often seen when talking to him in the past years. I have not, so far, referred to other members of the staff in the office but they were a competent and agreeable company and I have the pleasantest memories of them all. Bertram (or Bert), the Chief Clerk, was a person of the utmost reliability and supervised the Committee work and ensured that each month all minutes of Committees were duly printed and bound up for distribution to members of the Council for use at the



1875

1875

Council meetings. He had a tall desk with a flap lid and if one asked him for information on any point he would lift up the lid and search diligently among his papers and eventually find what one wanted on a small scrap of paper. He seemed to record everything in this way and I never knew him to be wrong. Jack, another senior committee clerk, attended the Public Assistance Committee as well as other committees and his work in connection with Public Assistance was later recognised by his appointment as Public Assistance Officer when that post became vacant some years later.

The Council appointed Charles, a young solicitor from the West Riding, as Assistant Town Clerk and he and I worked together until he was appointed Deputy Town Clerk of Coventry during the War years. In fact I think it was not long after the air raid on that city. He eventually became Town Clerk and his work there was so highly esteemed that shortly after the War he received a Knighthood and became Sir Charles!

I could not have been more fortunate in my brother Chief Officers and they were without exception always friendly and helpful. Naturally, in the course of my duties I came very much in contact with each one of them. It makes me sad to think that they have all passed away by this time, as indeed have all the outstanding people on the Town Council. This is due to the fact that I was only in my early thirties when I was appointed and my colleagues were much older than me.

I hardly know where to begin when I recall each one; Sydney the Borough Engineer & Surveyor was a great personality. He and his staff occupied the rooms above my department and we were always in and out of our respective offices when we had to consult one another. There is no doubt that he was responsible for and inspired much of the re-development which was proceeding in the 1930's prior to the outbreak of War. I remember one amusing incident - the road through the centre was being widened and re-shaped and the particular section which led into the Town Hall Square had been closed for traffic for a considerable time: then one morning Sydney looked into my room and said with a great show of excitement, "Come along, I want to show you something in the Square." I followed him to his car and driver and we set off to the portion of road which had been closed. At a signal from Sydney the

barrier was removed and we drove back into the Square along the renovated road. Sydney then said, "Mr. Town Clerk, you and I are the first to use this new portion of road!" During the War years he was a tower of strength but I will refer to those years later.

Henry, the Chief Constable had his offices at the opposite end of the Town Hall to mine and from his room one could look over Broadfield Park. I remember that there was a sloping grassy bank right opposite and in Spring it was covered with daffodils. Henry was a great tea drinker and every time on those numerous occasions when I crossed the large hall to see him and as soon as I put my head through the door he would 'phone down to an orderly to bring up tea for two. To reach Henry's room from the large hall one had to pass through a handsomely furnished room where the Watch Committee met each month. The walls and ceiling were panelled in oak and there was a large table surrounded with leather upholstered chairs. On the ceiling and round the walls there were painted shields - one for each of the Mayors of the town since incorporation. One was prepared each year for the new Mayor. They were getting to the end of available space when I left Rochdale so I do not know what happened in later years to the interesting custom. To return to Henry, we had many discussions about police matters and the powers and duties of Watch Committees in relation to a Town Council. It was always made clear that the Committee could not interfere with criminal matters and was only subject in its financial aspects to Council control. I never had any difficulties in regard to these questions and Henry was a strict and efficient Chief Constable. He told me about his early days as a plain clothes detective officer in Liverpool. I believe he was one of two detectives who were detailed to assist in bringing ashore the notorious Doctor Crippen who was hanged for murdering his wife and had fled to America.

Another Henry was my great friend, the Waterworks Engineer. He and I had much business to deal with together because at that time Rochdale was busily engaged in the construction of the Watergrove Reservoir for which statutory powers had been obtained by an Act of 1930 before I came to the town. It is a curious coincidence that each town with which I was associated in the course of my career in local government

was building or constructing a new reservoir so that I came to have a great deal of knowledge of the legal and other problems involved. The reservoir at Stockport was the Goyt Reservoir but I cannot honestly say that I had much to do with this apart from going up into Derbyshire from time to time with the Waterworks Committee and seeing the magnificent show of rhododendrons when in season round the hall and in the Goyt Valley. The legal side was entirely in Robert's hands. I did, however, get much of the atmosphere of reservoir construction and met for the first time the famous Consultant Engineer, Sir Harry Hill, who turned up for each of the subsequent reservoirs!

Watergrove is Rochdale's largest and deepest reservoir and the filter house is reckoned to be one of the most up-to-date in England. Henry and I went to London on many occasions to see the Ministry on different points. He was a great travelling companion and it was especially delightful to have dinner with him in the evenings when the day's work was done because he was something of a gourmet and also a wine connoisseur. I remember one evening in London when Henry suggested that we should have a light dinner and then go to the theatre. In those days the shows or plays began at 8.30 p.m. so that one could easily dine beforehand. We went to the Trocadero Restaurant in Shaftesbury Avenue and Henry ordered a bottle of Chablis and two dozen oysters each. We had decided to go to the Globe Theatre afterwards but neither of us knew where the theatre was so we asked the waiter for directions. It seems incredible but the waiter was as ignorant as we were and we asked him to order a taxi for us after we had finished our meal. In due course the taxi arrived and we climbed in and said 'Globe Theatre' to the driver. I do not recollect that the driver showed any surprise or, indeed, any reaction whatever to our destination but he waited until the traffic allowed him to make a U-turn to the opposite side of the road, he then travelled about twenty or thirty yards and stopped. Why? Because we were then outside the Globe Theatre!

I enjoyed my work with the Waterworks Committee and especially when the Committee travelled over the open moorland visiting the various reservoirs. What quaint names these reservoirs had! Buckley Wood, Hamer Pasture, Brown House Wham, Spring Mill, Coum, Light Hazzles. It is said that these reservoirs give the sweetest



Fred (80) & his father (80) !!

and softest water supplies in the Country.

Whenever I visited Henry in his office I always read with much amusement a framed letter which hung on the wall over the fireplace. It was written in fiendishly bad handwriting and I wish I could remember the actual wording but, alas I cannot. However, the purport of the letter addressed to Henry as Waterworks Engineer was to the effect that drinking water was bad for you, it was much better to drink beer, and as for the writer, he found that drinking water rotted the soles of his clogs! I am sure the letter was a hoax and had been written by a certain individual who was well known both to Henry and myself. This person had an impish sense of humour, was well-known in the town, wealthy and connected with one of the leading textile mills. He was getting on in years, as they say, and he showed me one day a photograph of himself on the porch outside his house on his 80th. birthday and beside him his father stood, also on his 80th birthday. He had got a photographer to join two negatives and it was done so skilfully that one could not detect the joint. If you visited him for a chat in the evening he would give you a small bottle of whisky with the statement that that was your ration for the night!

A few more words about Henry. He was a Roman Catholic and belonged to a devout family living in Stockport. He was born in the same town as myself and his family and mine attended the same Anglican Church many years ago. The Church was of the High Anglican Persuasion and the priest in charge, Father Crowder, was a curate under the control of the Rector of St. Thomas's Parish. Father Crowder left when there was a change of Rector. The new Rector was an evangelical Churchman and he handed over the small Mission Church to the Church Army. This caused many of the congregation to leave and the Braddock family went over to Rome.

When I left Rochdale he gave me a beautiful silver tankard with the parting injunction this I should always make much use of it. I attended his funeral not many years afterwards....

The Council meetings at Rochdale were models of their kind and I attribute this largely to the long years of skill of my predecessor when he must have worked hard to obtain this result. The Standing Orders governing procedure were strictly observed and the first of these stated that the chair

shall be taken precisely at the time for which the meeting is called and business immediately proceeded with.

I quote the following paragraph from the local newspaper:-
"Just as the Town Hall clock begins to chime the Mace Bearer enters the Council Chamber from the Mayor's Parlour and announces "The Mayor!" How many times have I waited with the Mayor, both of us fully robed, until these chimes commenced! The simple ceremony when the Mayor had reached the Chair and faced the Members of the Council, all standing, was for him to say "Good Morning, Members of the Council" and then there would be the reply in unison "Good Morning, Mr. Mayor" I should say that Council meetings were held at 10.0 am on the first Thursday in the month. I know that this description seems to record nothing much out of the ordinary but the atmosphere of that Council Chamber and the exchange of these simple greetings at each Council meeting made a lasting impression in my mind and one which I cannot forget.

Although Members of the Council were in different political parties this was never or very rarely apparent from the Council proceedings and chairmanships and promotion to the Mayoral office were open to all Members irrespective of party. I believe there was a formula governing these matters which had been agreed between the parties but this was something which did not concern me as an official. One got the impression that every Member was intent on doing his best for the welfare of the town and that politics took second place. This is so different from the position which for so many places operates today where a party in numerical strength takes every chairmanship and every Mayoral vacancy thus placing party politics high above any other consideration.

Constant attendance at Council meetings soon enables one to pick out the best speakers and the men of influence. As regards chairmen of committees I had to meet them from time to time in connection with the work of their departments and their chief officers and, of course, I was always available to attend a committee meeting when my assistance was required on legal matters. Charles, the leader of the Council for most of my years in Rochdale was an excellent speaker, a man of ^{outstanding} almost aggressive sincerity and he had a flourishing printing works and stationery business. In his leisure he was fond of horses and a good rider. He told me that once when he was out riding his horse fell down dead with him in the saddle! I can

imagine this because Charles was no light weight! I used to go across to see him in his office on occasions, if something particularly important occurred, and much appreciated his almost paternal advice. He lived to be in his nineties.

Another Charles (it is amazing how often this name occurs!) was the principal representative of the Labour party on the Council (although I must again state that this fact was not apparent from his work on the Council) and he was later in my term of office ^{elector} ~~elective~~ Mayor of the Town, ~~of~~ Chairman of the Education Committee. We went together to London on several occasions to see the Ministry and once I accompanied him ^{on} ~~in~~ a visit to the Soviet Embassy when he ^{wished} ~~wished~~ to pay his respects to M. Maisky, who was then the Soviet Ambassador. I can vouch for the fact that Charles never discussed politics with me! I can say this about him, however, that his favourite fish course at dinner was Sole Walevska and very nice it was too! We had dinner at the Trocadero a number of times and he never failed to order this fish course. My outstanding memory of him however is watching him dancing with the Mayoress, his wife, on the Town Hall Square when the wonderful news came through that the war was over ^{of} the Country simply went wild with joy! The Square was full of dancing couples like a ball room; Charles and his wife led them all. Charles was rather small in stature and wore a bowler hat.

Lyon was Chairman of the Electricity Committee and he and his Engineer, Rudd and myself were busily engaged during my early years in Rochdale on behalf of the Corporation in a dispute with the Power Company from whom the town was receiving a bulk supply of electricity. I cannot after the lapse of nearly forty years, remember all the details about this matter but it was of great importance to the town and we went up to London on many occasions to consult the Electricity Commission ^{ers} and in the end there was an arbitration hearing. The town's electricity ^{er} Generating Station was not capable of supplying sufficient current for the needs of the town and, therefore, the Bulk Supply arrangements with the Power Company were necessary and 11,000 volt cables had been laid down along the Bury Road to bring in the supply.

Lyon was a Solicitor with a well-known practice in the town, and he belonged to one of the leading families. Both being in the legal profession meant that we had much to talk about apart from Corporation affairs and

we used to walk home together from the Town Hall on the Wednesday evening after the conclusion of the Electricity meeting. We both lived in Bamford and our walk was along the Bury Road with the 11,000 volt cable buried safely underground beneath our feet! Another thing in common was that we both wore black Homburgs and waisted overcoats as was the fashion for professional men in those days. Lyon was an inveterate pipe smoker and one seldom saw him without his pipe when walking along the street. I saw him many times after I had left Rochdale at London meetings of the Association of Municipal Corporations and I remember the last time I saw him how tired and old he looked, quite unlike his usual smart appearance, and not long afterwards I heard of his death. Rudd, our Electrical Engineer was, of course, our essential witness in all Technical aspects and I met him at the Generating Station and was shown all the mysterious looking equipment there. I saw an 11,000 volt cable and Rudd touched it with a pen knife and made a blue spark emerge for my benefit. I think he called it static electricity! He was well versed in the Lancashire dialect and asked me once what this phrase meant "Cover thi ^{down} dower an' ahl pow thee". He explained that it meant "Sit down and I'll cut your hair":

Rudd had grand new electricity show rooms in the Town Centre which had been designed by him in conjunction with Sydney the Borough Engineer.

.....

As the years 1938 - 1939 come on to the scene I look back to the professional changes which occurred in local government and the arrangements which had to be made ~~at~~ ⁱⁿ the orders of the Central Government ~~in order~~ to cope with, ⁱⁿ 1938 the menace of War, and in 1939, with the war itself.

But all that is another story!

CHAPTER IV

The outbreak of War in 1939 brought to an end for the time being all the normal working of local government and prior to the actual declaration of a state of war the Council in March 1939, had appointed me as Air Raid Precautions Controller. They also formed an Emergency Committee of four members (The Mayor and three members of the Council) to come into being from such time as the emergency machinery of the Country might be put into operation. It will be recalled that the Country was divided into Regions and each region had a Regional Controller. Wide powers were vested in the Emergency Committee and its decisions were not subject to the confirmation of the Council.

In addition to the Emergency Committee for Civil Defence they also appointed a local Food Control Committee and a local Fuel Advisory Committee. I was not only A.R.P. Controller but also the Food Executive Officer and Fuel Executive Officer. In other words the responsibility for executive action in these three vital spheres throughout the period of the War so far as my local authority was concerned rested upon me. I quote the following from the local newspaper which appeared at that time commenting upon the wide powers vested in Emergency Committees nor needing Council confirmation. "In some towns, particularly in the first month or two of the War, this led to a rather unhealthy position owing to the fact that the monthly meetings of the Council were abandoned with the result that many members lost interest in the work. In Rochdale the emergency machinery has been wisely and carefully grafted on to the normal procedure of local Government Administration. Although the Council has delegated its powers to the Emergency Committee and their instructions are carried out by the A.R.P. Controller, reports of their work are presented to the Council each month and opportunity is given for a full discussion and exchange of views, with the happy result that every member of the Council can feel that he is playing his part in this vital work. It has thrown an enormous amount of extra duties on to the Town Clerk and the ability and efficiency with which he has carried on all this work has earned him general admiration."

I hope I may be forgiven for including the final sentence from this newspaper quotation because I do not wish to conceal the fact that I had some valuable and, indeed, vitally necessary assistance from my colleagues on the staff of the Corporation and from my own department.

Concerning Civil Defence, Sydney, the Borough Engineer constructed a Control Room in the basement of the Town Hall which was linked up by telephone to the Regional National Control systems. The Control Room had to be manned twenty four hours a day throughout the period of the war. Tours of duty were drawn up on a one in six days basis and five fellow - Chief Officers and myself did a 24 hour tour of duty on one day in every six. By this arrangement one's tour of duty did not fall on the same day every week and weekend duty was not too frequent. Persons in charge of the Control room or on the staff of the room for a twenty four hour period slept in the Town Hall at night and were awakened by an alarm bell when needed in the event of enemy action.

Sydney was also in charge of the important section of Civil Defence known as the Rescue Service and he had a depot near to the Town Hall with a contingent on 24 hour duty at all times. These were the men who were trained to dig out the victims of an air raid and frequently they were sent out to neighbouring towns where they had casualties as a result of such a raid. Breakfast arrangements for those who had spent the night in the Town Hall on their tour of duty were laid on at a hotel in the Town Hall Square known as The Flying Horse. When I was planning these arrangements I remember wondering whether the female section of the control room staff would require the same type of breakfast as the men and the same amount of food. It did not take me long to find out that they ate just as much as the men!

So far as my duties as Food Executive Officer were concerned I had an office open to the public in the building which housed the Public Library Art Gallery and Museum. There was an excellent staff under the immediate control of a competent Supervisor, a man in whom I had every confidence, and I attended at the offices each morning during the working week to deal with the correspondence and dictate letters and also to help to solve any problems which may have arisen.

When one considers that the rationing of food involved in an intimate

way every man woman and child in the town there were very few prosecutions for infringements which arose. The most outstanding concerned a prominent townsman who had a food business. He was caught red-handed receiving in his motor vehicle excess supplies of sugar from another vehicle on the moors outside the Town..... Shortly after the commencement of the War I was approached by a member of the Council who was a personal friend to take his son, Grenville as an articled Clerk, which I was happy to do. We knew that Grenville would, like all young men of his age, have to do his military service but the fact that he had some definite career to resume after the War was over, no doubt, would be a comfort both to him and his parents. Grenville went into the Royal Air Force and later commenced training as a Night Fighter Pilot. One day I was in the Flying Horse attending the Rotary Club luncheon when Grenville's Uncle approached me and gave me the dreadful news that poor Grenville had been killed. His father told me afterwards that he and a co-pilot were killed on the very last flight they were making in their Training Course.

I called upon Grenville's parents and was standing in the garden of their house in Oakenrod Hill with his father when the coffin came up the hill. I shall never forget the scene. Now Grenville's name is on the wall in the Law Society's Hall where so many names of young men whose lives were cut short are recorded.

.....

I had to go to London on only rare occasions during the course of the war and if one had to be away overnight it was wiser to arrange your hotel outside London. For this reason during the early part of the War, when Air raids were more frequent many people, myself included, stayed overnight at Bedford when coming from the North. I carry distinct memories of the hotel breakfasts in those days and particularly the butter allowance which was thin in the extreme and about the size of a two shilling piece! A place where one could get a really good breakfast was at the Lyons Corner House in Coventry Street but you had to be prepared to join the queue and wait for a seat at a table. You could get a slice of bacon, tea or coffee and toast and butter for 2/6 and the queues were patronised by all classes of people.

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One night I happened to be in Piccadilly Circus when the siren sounded and I sheltered in the doorway of Swan and Edgars Shop. The search-lights shone into the sky above and one could see in their beams a solitary plane. It must have been an enemy plane because the anti-aircraft guns began to fire and I could hear the thud of shell fragments as they hit the ground nearby

When I look through the photographs of my years in Rochdale I am reminded of many events and personalities and it makes me realize that there are still many aspects of my professional career there which have not so far been mentioned some of which I wish to record.

I cannot refer to them in any particular order and I, therefore, write about them, both individuals and events just as they occur to me. I would, before, recounting their effect upon me, state that so far as my professional career is concerned, my Rochdale years are amongst the happiest and most fruitful.

I think, possibly this was because the town was a perfect County Borough. It had a beautiful town centre and town hall, its population was neither too large or too small and its Council and Committee procedure was honoured and followed by all elected members first and foremost for the good government and benefit of the town and not with an eye on any political party. This spirit engendered a local population which was delightful to behold and created an atmosphere in which it was most inspiring to work. No wonder that Rochdale was the founder of the Co-operative movement and that in Toad Lane there is the first shop of the movement that spread over the world

Re The history of the Rochdale Pioneers was issued in 1944 and in that year the Town Council passed a resolution which I had prepared and which reads as follows:-

"That the Council do hereby record their sense of pleasure and pride in recalling at this time, during the year of the centenary of the Co-operative movement, that this world-wide organisation had its birth in the town of Rochdale."

In the year 1844 in this town, the pioneers of the movement began their struggle against the economic ills arising from the industrial revolution by inculcating

the spirit of self help and encouraging and providing the means of technical education and study, thereby contributing in no small degree to the social betterment of the people. In succeeding years the principles laid down by the Rochdale pioneers extended their influence not only throughout this country, but on the continent of Europe, in the British dominions beyond the seas, and in the United States of America, and from their humble origin in this town have conferred their benefits on a world - wide community.

The Council, therefore, gladly avail themselves of the fitting opportunity afforded by the centenary to extend their congratulations to the ROCHDALE EQUITABLE PIONEERS SOCIETY LIMITED on attaining its one hundredth birthday".

Rochdale can, indeed, be proud of its association with the Co-operative movement and I know that the spirit which was alive in those far off years and which resulted in the foundation of that movement was still alive in the years of my professional life in that community

.....

Talking about interesting personalities, the town was full of them! There was Sam - he was a member of the Town Council, not a Chairman of any Committee, but a man blessed with personality and wit beyond the ordinary. He was tall and good looking, a bachelor in his late fifties or early sixties, and he was proud of the fact that his surname was well represented in the aristocracy; not that he ever claimed kinship with any titled family! My first encounter with Sam occurred during my deputyship. He had issued proceedings in the County Court against the Corporation in respect of some orders we had made under the Housing Act which he disputed, and on the day of the hearing he attended Court with some of his drinking friends in order to show them how he was going to make the Corporation look "small" before the County Court Judge. He was not represented by either Counsel or Solicitor, and in fact, when I had studied the statement of claim before coming to Court I had made up my mind that it was the work of a layman and extremely difficult to understand. When the case was called Sam went into the witness box and I immediately arose from my seat at the Solicitors' table and asked his Honour's permission to submit a preliminary point. His

Honour agreed and I submitted that the Plaintiff's statement of claim did not disclose any legal grounds of objection against the Corporation. His Honour read the Statment of Claim and then without any hesitation he ordered the case to be struck out. Sam came out of the witness box and he and his friends sorrowfully left the Court. I am sure he never forgot that episode but I think he realized that he had made rather an ass of himself! Sam and his friends met every day during the week at the Flying Horse and enjoyed themselves in talk and ale in the bar and he told me he never had his lunch until the drinking hours were finished as he did not believe in wasting time in eating when he could be drinking good ale. Hw was not a drunkard by any means and I do not wish to paint him in that guise - he just enjoyed his life in that way. He had a great sense of humour and if he met me in the Flying Horse as I was going to lunch he would stand obsequiously to one side, bow his head reverently and make the sign of the cross! In the procession on Mayor's Sunday he wore a shiny topper and carried a silver headed walking stick and looked every inch a wealthy gentleman.

Shall I now mention Tommy. He was a freelance journalist - a member of the Council and one of its outstanding orators. He was remarkably good on Standing orders and he always watched me closely when rulings were given principally to see if he could get up and argue that the ruling was wrong. He was a first class outdoor speaker and I have seen him with a great crowd round ^{the} John Bright statue as he spoke from the steps surrounding the pedestal. That was in the days when the statue stood in the Town Hall Square opposite the side entrance. Later it had to be moved because it was in the way of traffic and it was re-erected in the Broadfield Gardens. It was a favourite spot in its time for out door orations. Tommy had made up his mind that he would read for the Bar. Rather a big undertaking for a man who had to earn his living as a free lance Journalist and one which would require a great expenditure of mental energy each day. However, the great thing about Tommy was that he succeeded in his ambition and was duly called to the Bar! I honour him for that!

He continued his membership of the Council and we also continued to have a few encounters so one day I asked him to come to my room and we had a chat. I believe I told him that dog does not eat dog and would you believe it, it made a great impression on him and after that our relationship improved enormously. I am sorry to record that Tommy did not live very long to practice

as a Barrister and it may be that he overtaxed himself. He was a man of small stature but I do not remember the cause of his early death.

Any account of my years in Rochdale which deals with my Corporation duties would not be complete without bringing in the Duckworth family. James was made Mayor in November 1937 and died in office a few weeks after his appointment. His widow was appointed to succeed him in January 1938 and was the first woman and the first person from outside the Town Council to be elected Mayor of Rochdale. She was a charming and courageous person and it was a great pleasure to be associated with her throughout her term of office. When she retired at the end of her Mayoral term she wrote a letter thanking me for my "kind guidance during the year" and expressing the hope that her inexperience in municipal matters had not added too much to my work and that in the days ahead we should often meet and if at any time she could be of use to me it would give her real joy. She signed the letter "Yours very gratefully Mr. Mayor".

She signed in this way because it became rather a joke between us which began when I was asked how she should be addressed by members of the Council and I advised that this was the correct and accepted form of address. This was so in those days before the advent of the title "Madam Mayor" which is used today.

I have already mentioned that my predecessor William Henry was never tired of praising the Town Centre as seen from his window in the Town Hall and one of the buildings which fascinated him with its architectural style was the Bank and by that I mean the Williams Deacons Bank (as it was then) in the Butts. It happened to be the Corporation's Bank at the time of my period of office and I, too, agreed with William Henry that it was an attractive building and an ornament to the Town Centre.

Jim, the Bank Manager, in my day, was a friend of mine and I frequently went to talk to him in his room at the Bank. There was on the wall an interesting picture of a member of the Clements Royds family who were former owners of the Bank. I noticed that the gentleman portrayed had only one good eye the other being a mere slit where the eye should have been. I asked Jim about this and he said that the poor fellow when a small boy had bent down to talk to a peacock in the garden and the wretched bird had pecked at his eye and damaged it to such an extent that it had to be removed. I used to meet Jim quite a lot at lunch in the

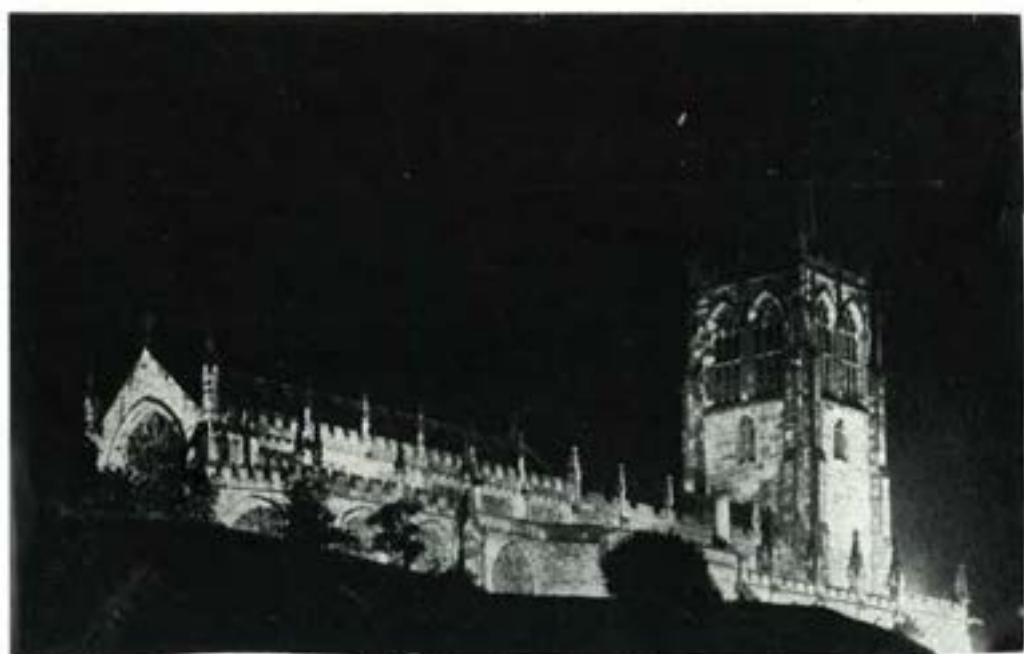
Flying Horse along with Sydney when we talked of "Ships and Shoes and sealing wax, and cabbages and Kings as Kipling says! Jim was a keen gardener and he and his wife spent a lot of time in their garden. She was called, (appropriately enough) Bluebell. I think I ought to add to these few words about Jim and the Bank that my Bank account which was transferred there in 1932 when I came to Rochdale is still there and I am sure Jim and Bluebell would be pleased about this if they knew but, alas, they have both gone to the heavenly gardens long ago.



Royal Centenary Luncheon (1958)



A' LOYAL STAFF - 1939-45



ST DUNSTONS CHURCH
WHERE STEPHEN WAS BAPTISED

