

The Lostock Hall Magazine

Issue 2
December 2012

Wateringpool Farm

A Tardy Gate Girl

Bacon Butty Wagon



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Welcome

Welcome to the second issue of The Lostock Hall Magazine, which will also cover Tardy Gate and nearby parts of Farington. Our thanks to Penwortham Priory Academy who support us by printing and formatting the magazine.

A copy of each issue will be kept in the Lancashire Records Office. Jackie Stuart has kindly allowed us to serialise her book entitled 'A Tardy Gate Girl' which we have heard you are enjoying reading.

I would like any one who would like to contribute their memories, childhood, mill, railway or any other subjects, or any information and photographs, to please get in touch with me. You can write, email or contact me by phone. Especially older memories which might get lost in time. If anyone would like to write down the memories of their older relations I would really appreciate it. Or contact me and I will be happy to meet with anyone who has memories to share.

We are able to produce this magazine by the support of the advertisers who you will find among our pages – please do support them and tell them you saw them in The Lostock Hall magazine. We appreciate their support because without them we would be unable to produce it. If you would like to advertise in our next issue please see the contact details below.

Have a look on Flickr at the Lostock Hall group of photographs, please upload any you would like to share.

Front Cover image by The Lostock Hall Magazine
Regards, Heather

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More from the Old Newspapers

The Chase – The U P Hounds will meet on Monday next at Tardy Gate, and on Friday at Lemon House.

Preston Chronicle January 14th 1832

Tardy Gate – To the Editor of the Preston Chronicle – Dear Sir, I beg leave, through the medium of your paper, to call the attention of those gentlemen who have the direction and control of the rural police, to the dreadful state of Tardy Gate and the immediate neighbourhood, particularly on the Sabbath; the disgusting scenes of drunkenness and the blasphemous oaths of wickedness, are not confined within the precincts of their own dwellings, but are seen and heard echoing through the lanes to the great annoyance of respectable inhabitants. Your insertion of the above will oblige. A SUBSCRIBER. June 23rd 1842

BENEFACTENCE TO WORK PEOPLE – Messrs. Dewhurst and Co. of Cuerden Mill, on Christmas Eve, presented **four hundred plum puddings** to their workpeople. This was in addition to their ordinary distribution of food three times a week. The puddings were for Christmas Day's dinner, they were each 6 lbs in weight. One was given to each family, except in some instances where the family were numerous, and then two were given. The puddings were made at the mill, and were pronounced to be of first rate quality. On Tuesday, R. Townley Parker Esq., Mrs Parker, and a party of visitors at Cuerden Hall, visited the mill, while a numerous body of cooks were making the puddings, and they expressed themselves much pleased with this act of consideration of the employers for their workpeople, and the cleanliness, order, and general excellence of the cooking arrangements.

Preston Chronicle December 27th 1862

Unseasonable visitor – On Christmas Day, a cuckoo was seen and heard near Cuerdale Hall.

Preston Chronicle December 27th 1862

Breach of the peace at Lostock Hall – At Bamber Bridge yesterday, Noah Wareing and Robt. Rigby were summoned for committing a breach of the peace in Watkin-lane, Lostock Hall, on the 16th ult. Rigby did not appear. A constable stated that defendants were fighting and making use of very bad language on the date named. He requested them to go away, Wareing went home, but Rigby declined. Wareing who was ordered to pay the costs, said that Rigby struck him, and he was only standing in his own defence. A warrant was issued for the other defendant.

Preston Guardian September 9th 1893

Foot Race – Much interest was manifested in a race, which took place on Saturday evening between Flanagan, of Lostock Hall and Tattersall of Leyland, for £20. A large number of spectators had assembled, and before the men took the mark Tattersall was the favourite by 5 to 4 on. A great change, however, took place when the race was commenced, and they veered round to 30 to 20 on Flanagan, who easily won, his opponent giving up before he had covered three-fourths of the distance.

Preston Chronicle September 23rd 1893



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Blue Anchor Inn, Farington

PRESENTATION – The inhabitants of Farington and neighbourhood, anxious to testify to Mr Samuel Fletcher, on the occasion of his leaving the service of the North Union Railway Company, as Station Keeper at Farington, the sense of his uniform respectful conduct, and his neighbourly and upright bearing during the time he has filled the office, presented to him on Tuesday last, at The Blue Anchor Inn, Farington, a handsome silver watch and silver watch guard. The following inscription was neatly engraved upon the watch : - 'Presented to Mr Samuel Fletcher, by the inhabitants of Farington and the neighbourhood, August 18th, 1846. Edward Bridge, Chairman.' A general feeling of regret has been occasioned in the neighbourhood of Mr Fletcher's quitting the service of the company, and more particularly under the circumstances through which he left.

Preston Chronicle August 22nd 1846

EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY – TREAT TO WORKMEN- On Monday last, the workmen engaged in constructing the Liverpool, Ormskirk and Preston branch of the East Lancashire Railway were treated by the contractor, Mr William McKenzie, to an excellent dinner at Mr Samuel Parker's, the Blue Anchor Inn, Farington. About five o'clock in the afternoon, about 60 jolly looking fellows, apparently in excellent trim for such an undertaking, sat down to a repast of real substantial Old English fare, of roast beef, &c., prepared in Mrs Parker's best style, these were of course accompanied by plenty of good brown stout, and all appeared to enjoy the repast. After the cloth was removed Mr Lee one of Mr McKenzies oldest servants, was called upon to preside, while Mr Flint another old servant of the Contractor, ably filled the Vice Chair. The chairman proposed the health of Mr MacKenzie, which was drunk in a bumper, accompanied by several rounds of cheering. Several other toasts were given and drunk during the evening. The Leyland band being in attendance, and having kindly given their assistance, greatly contributed to the conviviality. After recounting over the difficulties of levelling valleys, and bringing mountains low, cutting through rocks of adamant, and penetrating regions of gloom, these veterans evidently felt satisfaction in rejoicing over the cutting of the last sod; and the certainty that in this part they had bought their labours to a close. In this manner the meeting was kept up with good spirit till 12 o'clock when it broke up.

Preston Chronicle April 28th 1849

TWINS - On Monday last, a cow belonging to Mr Samuel Parker, auctioneer and innkeeper of the Blue Anchor Inn, Farington, gave birth to two heifer calves. Last March she gave birth to twin bull calves, and altogether she has had, though only being eleven years old, eleven calves, nine of them being heifers. Two years ago, a mare belonging to Mr Parker brought forth twin foals. To make the matter more singular relating to twins, Mrs Parker presented her lord with a boy and a girl at one birth. Lately also, as to follow suit, a prize pig had only two porkers at a farrow.

Preston Chronicle February 19th 1853

The Blue Anchor Inn is now known as The Anchor Inn on Croston Road.

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Wateringpool Farm, Tardy Gate, circa 1904



The lady on the left is the Great Aunt Maggie of Michael Wilson who has kindly let us reproduce this photograph. Members of the Wilson family lived at Wateringpool Farm for over a hundred years. Maggie looks like she is holding a brush and might have been whitewashing the inside of the building.

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Tardy Gate (Tardies Gate)

In 1542, in a deed relating to the Abbey of Evesham, Tardy Gate is referred to as 'A Tenement of owres lyinge in Ffarington which John Tardy now holdeth and occupieth'

Tardy Gate got its name from the Tardy family. The Tardies had a toll gate across Tardy Gate Lane (Leyland Road)

John Tardies house was on the opposite corner of the present day Tardy Gate Inn. There were a few cottages along each side of Tardy Gate Lane, a Smithy and a Tannery where Lonsdale Chase (on Croston Road) now stands. By the 1850's Tardy Gate began to grow as a result of the railways and mills. With both Farington and Lostock Hall having goods yards and engine sheds, and the mills being built, Tardy Gate itself prospered. In 1881 to 1891 the population of both Lostock Hall and Tardy Gate rose from 712 to 1108. One of the most important pathways in Tardy Gate was the ancient causeway which ran to Middleforth Green. Leyland Road itself was called 'The Wainesway or Wagons Way to Penwortham'.

Taken from A History of Lostock Hall and Tardy Gate by Jackie Stuart.

Lostock Hall

The name Lostock was given in 1212. The name does not appear to be a river name. It was probably derived from the Lostock Hall which stood upon its banks. The area of Lostock was formerly called Cuerden Green.

The 'stock' may denote a stockaded place. It is possible that the river was navigable. It may have been able to take the sailing craft of a Scandinavian invasion which came from the west coast of Ireland. The river supplied many of the cotton mills in the area with power. There are quite a few names in the district which suggest there were settlers in this area. Ulnes Walton from Ulf's Wall-town, Walton-le-dale from Waletune and Waleton.

In the reign of Edward the II, the estate descended to a James de Lostock. His daughter Margot or Margery many have brought the estate in marriage to a Banastre. John Banastre was described as from Lostock from 1402-1429. In 1548 the property passed to the Fleetwood family, and in 1590 William Fleetwood sold the estate to Roger Burscough 'with free fishery in Lostock water'. It was then passes on to Peter Burscough from 1611-1616. In 1662 Andrew Dandie (who gave his name to Dandy Brook) paid a rent of 12d to the Lord of Clitheroe for his land in Lostock. William Dandy (son) paid tax on three hearths at Lostock Hall. In the 1670's Andrew Dandy founded a school at Cuerden. Andrew and William were out-burgesses at Preston Guild in 1862.

Taken from 'A History Of Lostock Hall and Tardy Gate by Jackie Stuart

Drowning at Farington

The drowning fatality at Farington – An inquest was held on Friday afternoon by the coroner, Dr Gilbertson, at the Anchor Inn, Farington, on the body of a young man named Francis Riding, 24 years of age of Ward's Row, Farington, who was drowned under very melancholy circumstances on Thursday evening last, through the breaking of the ice on the Tarn. The father of the deceased, William Riding, a weaver, said that his son was employed as a wagon examiner on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company. He last saw him alive on Thursday night, when he left home with his brother and two sisters for the purpose of attending choir practice at Farington Church. The jury returned a verdict that he was 'accidentally drowned'.

At Farington, near Preston, Francis Riding, 24, has been drowned whilst skating on Mill Lodge. There was a large number of persons on the ice at the time, including Riding's brother and two sisters, but though the water was only eight feet deep, attempts at rescue were in vain. The deceased was one of the choir at Farington Church. He had only just left the choir practice when he was drowned.

Preston Guardian January
22nd 1887

*'Francis Riding's
gravestone in Farington
Church'*



Preston Digital Archive

Annual Appeal

Our initial goal of collecting 8000 images before the commencement of Preston Guild 2012 has been met, but we need your help to expand the collection even more. So, cap in hand, like Oliver Twist, we humbly ask for more.

We know you must have musty old albums, biscuits tins and the odd sock drawer full of interesting items of Preston and the surrounding areas past. So how can you submit them to us

Read on !

1. If you have the ability to scan them to your computer, you can send them to our email address as attachments (300 dpi. Photo quality please) to prestondigitalarchive@hotmail.com
2. For the technically among us you can mail material to our local address. We will make copies and return them to you (at our cost) Our mailing address is as follows
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Please remember to include a return address.
3. For heavier/bulky items such as postcard collection etc. one of our local volunteers may be able to pick up and collect or scan on site. Please let us know your preference. (Call us on 07733 321911)

So what are we looking for, obviously photographs form the core of our collection, images of commercial or industrial activity, lost streets and buildings, social activity and gatherings etc. We love to receive post cards, especially RP-PPC (Real Photo Picture Post Cards) Ephemera covers a broad spectrum of items and would include such items as theatre programmes, invitations, magazine articles, old advertisements and newspaper cuttings, also old church magazines.

At present the upper date range is 1990. We also try and confine the general geographical area to Preston, Penwortham, Fulwood, Grimsargh, Walton le Dale, Bamber Bridge and Lostock Hall.

Finally we welcome any suggestions you might have for improving our archive. You can see our archive on Flickr, to date we have received over 3,000,000 views, with an average daily count of +8000.

Thankyou for your interest and hopefully support.

Also a big thankyou to all Preston Digital Archive viewers.

Regards from Barney
Preston Digital Archive



Lostock Hall Council School 1938 - 48

My school days were interrupted with quite a few bouts of illness, and I often got behind in certain subjects. The School Board once came round to see why I was off school again and he said to my mother 'You should have got rid of her at birth!' My mother played hell at him, he never came again. Once when I was off my class had been taught algebra and when I went back to school I had not a clue what to do. In those days there were no catch up lessons if you had got behind. You just missed it and were never taught how to do it.

The headmaster was Mr Griffiths, a very stern man. Though on one occasion he was really taken with a crinoline lady on a bridge over a pond I had painted. I had done it to look like stitches in paint, it looked like embroidery. Another time he commented on a line of washing I had done as an advert for Persil washing powder. He married Miss Tuson, the girls PE teacher.

In the first infants I remember a tall lady whose name was Miss Franks. She had grey hair, which she wore in a bun. She always wore a long gold chain with a big gold cross. In our classroom we had different coloured tables and chairs, blue green, yellow and red. There was also a large rocking horse. Sometimes we were given a Horlicks tablets to eat. On my first day it seemed such a long time till my mother came for me at dinner time. I was not happy that I had to go back in the afternoon.

We used to get a small bottle of milk at breaktime, which had a cardboard top with a perforated hole to put our straw in. Once I threw the milk bottle top out of the window and Mr Griffiths saw me. He was furious and sent me out into the playground to pick up every scrap of litter. I never threw anything away again, I always found a bin, so I must have learnt my lesson.

He had a saying which was 'If you cannot do something, do the next best thing'. Over the years I came to realise what a good piece of advice it was.

In the first juniors there was a Miss Hurst, she was a right battle axe, who rattled my knuckles many a time with a wooden ruler, for something or nothing, talking or wriggling about in line. The teachers in Class 2 and 3 were nice but I cannot remember their names.

One thing I did not enjoy was reading out loud. We used to have to take it in turns to stand at the side of our desk and read a passage out of a book. I blushed really well in those days and remember my cheeks burning.

Another teacher was Mr Davies, and ex army man, who had come back from the war, and was used to dealing with the troops, he was very strict. His sister Miss Davies also taught us. She loved nature and often told us about her back garden. She lived over the bridges in Lostock Hall in a big house. She had a walled garden and told us in great detail all about a robin making a nest in an old kettle. She was very interested in wild life and made it exciting for us. Mrs Hooper was a good teacher, she taught the girls sewing. I was a very good hand sewer and enjoyed her lessons. She had a saying 'By the by'. Miss Haycraft was the cookery teacher, a very smart lady. In winter she wore a wonderful

fur coat, all soft and silky. Her nails were beautifully manicured and varnished in red and I often wondered how she did her work and stayed so clean. We made bread, scones, biscuits, and because of the meat shortage during the war, we made almost meatless Meat and Potato pies. We took home our baking in a basket which had a cloth cover on it. Miss Haycraft also taught us housewifery. I used to love going upstairs to her big room. When my friend Rose and I had to tidy the pantry for her we used to try on her fur coat which hung on a coat hanger behind the door. We were taught how to clean things like brasses and knives and fork, and how to use a flat iron. In the Housewifery Room was a huge fireplace, which had a big brass top, we had to polish it till it sparkled.

Boys from all over the district came to our school for woodwork lessons with a teacher called Mr Cairns. The girls used to take turns at being on Coffee duty which meant we made tea or coffee for the teachers and took it to them in their lessons. We would always colour up when we had to walk through the woodwork room, but it was all good fun.

I loved playing rounders, and was in the school team, we played many schools in the area and always seemed to win. I was also in the netball team but did not enjoy that as much. We got a young male teacher called Mr Iddon. He was very good teacher. He often used a galoshier to punish the boys. If I remember rightly one or two girls had a crush on him. The best teacher of all was Mr Harrison. He would have a laugh with us, and could tell us off, then immediately forget about it. We were the first class to stay on till we were 15. Mr Harrison moved up with us to the new pre-fab classroom.

After we left, Mr Harrison moved on to Whitewell, where he became headmaster at the village school. He died very young, in his forties. When I talked to him about being worried at leaving school, he said 'Don't worry, you will do alright in life, you have a lot of common sense, more than a lot of grown-ups'. Luckily I did. I saw him coming up the Ribble ginnel near the bus station when I was coming home from work one day and he asked me how I was going on.

The school caretaker was called Mr Watts and he lived across the road from school. In the playground we played often played skipping, sometimes with two ropes. Rhymes we often sung were The big ship sails on the alley alley O, The Farmer wants a Wife (which sometimes we did in a circle) and In and out the bluebell windows. We used to get nearly a full class in a line skipping. Sometimes you just had to run under the rope and not get caught on it. We also played two balls, or if you were really good, three balls. Most people those days went home for their dinner. Some people did stop at school and I think the dinner money was 1/9 for the week.

As I walked home from school at dinner time I often saw the old headteacher, Mr Hall along Wateringpool Lane. He used to walk with the aid of his chaffeur, and would walk as far as St Gerards road and then back to his home at No. 1 Wateringpool Lane. I always used to say to him 'Good Morning Mr Hall' to which he would smile. One day he said 'It's Good Afternoon, as it has turned twelve o'clock'.

By A. C.

More memories next month

Ada Ashworth – Bacon Butty Wagon

In 1944, catering facilities were set up at Lostock Hall to provide for a growing number of male and female staff employed at the locomotive and carriage sheds. An eight-wheeled ex-LYR wooden carriage body (possibly one of the vehicles belonging to the old breakdown train) was acquired and cut into two equal sections, which were located side by side between the shed offices and station platform. One section was used for the storage and food preparation and the other was fitted out with an oven, sink, hot water cisterns, display shelves and a serving counter.

It was always referred to by the railway workers as the 'bacon butty wagon', and continued to provide refreshments up to the early 1950's. Mrs Ada Ashworth of Lostock Hall was one of the ladies who worked there. This is a brief account of her early life and her time at the engine shed : Ada came from a railway family in Preston, and her grandfather had been a shunter at Preston East Lancs, where he lost an arm after being trapped between the the platform and a moving train. Notwithstanding this, he went on to become a successful 'one armed bowler' for his local cricket club. The family moved to Lostock Hall in 1912, where her father worked as a goods guard.

By 1924 he was doing a lot of distance work and spending much time in the 'barracks' at Wakefield. She had seven brothers and one sister; two of the brothers became signalmen. The family was able to travel places further a field once her father had received his privilege pass, and the return fare to Southport was one shilling for her mother and sixpence for each child. Because of the size of the family, her parents took turns in taking half the number to one place and the other half elsewhere at a later date. Ada recalls the huge amount of washing there had to be done each week, and one distinctive item, which stood out from the rest on the washing line, was her father's red triangular muffler for work, which doubled as a sling in case of an accident. Sadly, her father died on October 2, 1940 aged 56 years. He was suffering from cancer following an accident, when a shunting pole slipped during a coupling operation and struck him in the face.

Tragically, Ada became a war widow in 1944 and was left with two young children to bring up. She was offered a job at the shed by the canteen supervisor, Mrs Floyd, a large, homely Irish lady. Thankful for this offer Ada immediately became a member of staff. The ladies worked in three shifts: early, 0600 to 1400, day, 0800 to 1600 and late, 1400 to 2200; these being worked on alternate weeks with the cook supervisors always on the day shift. When Mrs Floyd retired, Ada took over as supervisor. She fondly recalled her time at the shed:

They were hard days, and the ingredients were always in short supply, but somehow the staff at the canteen persevered and nobody got left out at mealtimes.

A lot of women worked at the carriage sheds and some of the prettier ones used to get a lift up to the canteen on the footplate. One particularly attractive young lady was called Rose Grove – a name that was to become synonymous with the final months of steam traction. There were inevitable romances and two of the ladies married men from the shed. Fireman, Harry Moulding, took his fiancé to the cinema one evening. He was late home from work and hadn't time to change into his 'civvies', so he had to go along as he was, in dungarees and a cromby jacket. The film was a typical 1930's 'weepy', which bored Harry to death and caused his fiancé to shed a few tears.

On noticing this, Harry played the gentleman by handing her what he thought to be his hanky. When the film was finally over and the lights came on, the poor girl's face was all smudged with oil and grime. The 'hanky' had turned out to be one of his oil rags, which he used on the footplate. There was plenty of laughter and good clean fun, but never any bad language in the presence of ladies. Mr Turner, the shed master had his dinner sent in to his office each day. A lady called Doreen Counsell worked in his office and three other ladies, Mona Thorpe, Agnes Haythornthwaite and a Mrs Wilding worked in the shed with the men, and all the women had men folk working on the railway. Edith Counsell married Fred Parker; Theresa Molyneaux married Harry Moulding and Doreen Counsell married Mr Ford.

Everyone enjoyed the bacon and egg butties for breakfast and the favourite mid-day dish for the lads was college pudding and white custard sauce, which was normally only available with a full dinner. The younger lads who could not afford such a luxury would come round later on to see if there were any left-overs. With free grub in mind, there was never any shortage of volunteers to run errands to the village shop and they were always rewarded with a cake and a cup of tea for their efforts. One day, when preparing to make parkin, she sent a young lad to the shop for some oat-meal; he caused a bit of commotion amongst the staff when he returned with bone meal.

Grand National day was always a busy time for the ladies. Hundreds of people would arrive at Lostock Hall station from East Lancashire and wait there for the Liverpool train. There were many policemen on duty at the station and they used to call down to the canteen for refreshments. Although the facilities were strictly for railway employees only, the staff stretched a point and sent tray-loads of cuppas to the grateful bobbies. The extra sales helped to boost the coffers and kept the canteen going.

**Reproduced by the kind permission of Bob Gregson, taken from his book
'The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Around Preston'
ISBN 9780956518453 published by Atkinson Publications Ltd.**

A Tardy Gate Girl (cont)

With both Leyland and Preston having markets, some people would make a weekly trip there to do their shopping there. During the 'Wakes Weeks' most of the shops would close in the villages, and in Leyland and Preston too. The few that did stay open would be very busy places.

My dad didn't have to go to war because he had a reserved occupation. He was a coppersmith. He worked in Barrow-in-Furness in the shipyard helping to make submarines and ships. My mother worked at the Tank Factory in Leyland and helped to make parts for Matilda tanks.

I was born at home on the 9th June, 1944 at 6.15 pm, three days after 'D' Day and 11 months before 'V.E.' day. 'D' Day was Deliverance Day. Most of Europe was under the control of the Germans. It had been hoped that by September of 1944 that the war would be stopped and the troops would be home for Christmas. 'D' Day was to be a united allied forces operation called 'Operation Market Garden'. The target was the bridge at Arnhem. This proved to be a bridge too far and the war continued until May 1945. I was a war baby, a 'Tardy Gate Girl'. I was christened Jacqueline (called Tish by my dad). I was the first Lancashire born person in the family to survive. My dad's sister, Prudence, was born in Lancashire, but as previously mentioned she died in infancy and is buried in the Parish Church graveyard in Preston.

My nine and a half year old brother chose my name because there was a Belgian evacuee family down the road with a boy and a girl with the same names.

Apparently, I was a rather sick baby and wasn't expected to live. My grandmother, Eliza (my dad's mother) told my mother she would never raise me. She didn't reckon with my mum's stubbornness or mine come to that.

I had blonde curly hair and blue eyes, a real Shirley Temple type, although she did have dark curly hair.

My blonde curly hair was always being commented on. It did cause quite a bit of jealousy with some people. Remarks would be made that my mother had used Curlytop and Peroxide on it. One day I asked my mum what these words meant. She was really angry and wanted to know who had said them. I didn't dare tell her, but she found out anyway and let them know quite vehemently that they had no right to say such things. With my mum not having any hair, the last thing she would have done would be to put anything on mine. The fact that I had hair was a precious thing to both my parents, they certainly didn't want me to lose it. When you think about it, to make remarks like that was totally insensitive. It wasn't just my hair that caused this jealous reaction, it seemed to be everything I did, even the clothes I wore. It didn't matter so much when I was young, but as I grew older it did. My short fat strong legs were commented on too. One of my mum's friends used to say 'Ee! That child o'thines got a good pair of understandings'. This always made me and my mother laugh. I have never heard anyone before or since use that terminology, but when you come to think of it that's what they are, understandings.

My childhood in general was quite a happy one, but lonely as well. With my brother being so much older and having his own circle of friends and interests, left me very much on my own. My mum started work at Leyland and Birmingham Rubber Works shortly after I started school and my dad now worked at Leyland Motors. During the school holidays I had to look after myself until 1.30 when my mum returned from work. I was supposed to stay in bed, especially in the winter months as it was the only place to keep

warm. By the time I was allowed out of the house there was very little daylight left, then darkness would fall and I would be alone indoors again.

Through the loneliness I developed a vivid imagination. My mother's Singer Treadle Sewing Machine became a piano, while the lid of the machine became a cradle, or a horse drawn coach. With string attached to my big toes for horses, I would be a princess who sat in the coach. On Friday nights it was washing night and the wireless would be tuned into Friday Night is Music Night. I would sing and dance to my hearts content. One night I was dancing away on the linoleum floor when I suddenly did the splits. All the steam from the drying washing had made the floor very slippery. I was very careful after that. I was quite good at singing and knew all the new up to date songs, but I was a very shy child and only liked to sing at home. In fact I was an introvert and extremely sensitive. I still am to a certain extent. This combined with the shyness proved very painful for me at times. One such painful occasion happened when I was 6 years old, I had been invited to a friend's birthday party and everyone had to sing a solo, I tried to make excuses, a sore throat, I couldn't sing, I didn't know any songs, anything at all so that I didn't have to sing. Eventually I was persuaded to sing with promise of a sweet if I did. Sweets were still on ration then, so this was quite a treat. I managed to sing a song all the way through, word perfect and in tune. At the end I was told I hadn't sung it very well and couldn't have a sweet. This to a sensitive, shy child was terrible, but it was the jealousy thing again. I hated parties after that and vowed I would never sing outside of my own home again. Many years later I was singing Helen Shapiro's 'What Do You Want To Make Those Eyes At Me For?' I had just finished the song when I saw my dad's mouth agape, looking at me. He suddenly closed his mouth and smiled. He didn't say anything, he didn't need to. He had not realised it was me singing, but the look and the smile said it all. He approved and that meant a great deal to me.

I don't know how old I was when I learned to read, but this turned out to be a life saver. One Christmas one of my presents was 'Grimms Fairytales'. I read that book from cover to cover several times. It was my way of escaping from the loneliness, I could be any character I wanted in the stories.

As I grew older I got fed up of staying in bed, especially in the summer months. I would get up and watch my friends through the window playing. I was not allowed to open the door, so I could not go out to play. The summer days appeared to be long then so I had plenty of time to play out. By the time I was 10 years old I could open the door, make my own meals and play outside nearly all day long. It might seem young to be cooking at that age, but my mother had Quinsy, that's an abcess on the back of her tonsils, and somebody had to stay at home and look after her and do the cooking. It was not an easy thing for a child to do, but nevertheless I did it. I even made poultices to tie under her chin. She looked quite funny with a nylon stocking half filled with boiled potatoes placed under her chin and tied at the top of her head. Apparently if it got very bad it had to be lanced. Well the poultice worked and the abcess burst. Dr Cohen could not believe it when he paid a visit. He burst out laughing when he was told about the potato poultice and said 'I don't care what you have done, because it has obviously worked'.

By Jackie Stuart

Continued next month

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