

**Ron's Life Story**  
**Part 2**

**By**

**Ron Singleton**

I resigned from Blue Funnel on the 12th April 1956 after spending twelve years at sea. finishing with a very good job on a good salary. The only thing I had to show in worldly possessions was a lot of very good clothes. Which included uniforms (blues and whites) never to be used again, four or five very good hand tailored suits, a couple of good overcoats (one a 'Crombie' made to measure for me by Moss Bros.). Three very expensive leather suitcases, bought in Hong Kong, (I will mention them again later). A Ford Prefect motorcar plus a recently purchased camphor wood chest.

I was preparing myself to start my new job at Bredbury steel works, but it was these few days before starting that I started to experience stomach pains, which at times were very severe.

Whilst at sea, my health had been attended to by the Blue Funnel medical department, so I was not registered with any doctor. Mum, Dad and Maureen were registered with a doctor in High Lane. So I registered with the same doctor, who happened to be female. Her diagnosis was very vague, she said that it was probably caused by anxiety at changing my career. A prescription for some white powdery medicine, the pain disappeared and I thought that was it.

It was sometime in April when I started my job ashore. My metabolic clock would have to get accustomed to a whole new way of life.

The job at the steel works was in the packing department. That didn't mean packing things into boxes. It meant working a cutting machine, cutting round steel bars of various diameters into certain lengths. Then packing them into a cradle on the machine, tying them together with steel bands into bundles of various weights which could be anything up to a couple of tons.

I was fortunate that I was put working with a chap called Percy Dicker. Percy knew Harold Torkington; he used to work with him at Joshua Schofields, which was where Harold worked all his working life. It was a textile works in Romiley, now demolished and houses built on the land.

Percy was a big chap and very strong, he helped me a lot until I got accustomed to the work, which was soul destroying. After a time you would become brain dead. It entailed working one-week days, which included Saturday morning, and one-week nights, both twelve-hour shifts. At that time it was good money (£14 a week average) but you worked a minimum of 60 hours a week.

I would stand at this machine wondering if I had gone mad, giving up my career at sea to come down to doing this. But I was in love wasn't I, or so I thought.

Jean and I had become engaged about June that year; the wedding was planned for September 22nd. Which was the day that Harriet and Harold got married in 1927. I of course was living at home with Mum, Dad and Maureen.

Remember, only two bedrooms so Maureen, who was now sixteen was sleeping in Mum and Dad's room. Not an ideal situation for a girl of that age.

My mother had always received an allotment from me while I was at sea, the last few years I allotted her £12 a month, always giving her some more when I paid off and at home on leave. I cannot remember how much I gave her when I started work, it certainly wouldn't be anything less than three pounds a week.

We, Jean and I, were supposedly saving up to get married. She was working at a place in Romiley earning something like £5 per week. It seemed that every weekend was spent with her mum, dad, Uncle Frank and Auntie Mary in one of the local pubs, so there wasn't a great deal of saving going on.

By the way, I was still driving my car around, using it to go to work, and trips out at weekend. I had still not passed my test. I got another test date through; dad could not come with me, this time I asked Mrs. Pearson (Barry Pearson's mother) if she would come with me. Now she was another one who had held a driving license since before tests were introduced but she had not driven for twenty years and she certainly would not have a clue how to drive then, however, she suited my purpose of having a supposed qualified driver with me. This time I took my test in Macclesfield and passed. I had had a lot more driving experience and was confident.

The job at the steel works was really getting me down. Working in a factory was definitely not my scene, plus, I was having problems with my stomach again, also I was losing weight. I did mention in the Torkington household that I didn't think I would be able to stick working inside much longer. The reply I got was that Harold had worked inside all his life; it didn't do him any harm. He had been under a petticoat government; I certainly was not going to be.

There was one time when we had a party at "Sirestan". It could have been when we got engaged, because it was at the time when I had brought a lot of stuff home from the ship, like bottles of liqueurs, etc, so it wasn't long after I had left the sea.

All Jeans family was their including Jack and Ann Beetham. I, of course, was mixing these cocktails up that I used make on the ship when we had functions aboard entertaining people the company had connections with. Jean, of course, was trying all these concoctions out and I could see she was getting a bit tipsy. She disappeared upstairs, I thought she had gone to the toilet. When she had been gone sometime I went up to see if she was all right and she was flat out on my bed.

Ann came upstairs and we got her downstairs and sat her in a chair. People carried on talking and then all of a sudden she got up and starts flinging things about and swearing saying that we were laughing at her. Now I had been used to seeing some funny things at sea with people in drink but I had never experienced it with a female.

However, plans were going ahead for the wedding. The church, wedding cars, photographers (black and white then), bride and bridesmaid dresses. Joan and Christine Ashworth were the bridesmaid, Maureen was the chief bridesmaid and Ann Beetham was the matron of honor. Harriet and Harold were using the same clothes as they had had for Ann's wedding. I said I would get a new suit. It was frowned on a bit because they knew I had a few suits. I said I wanted something different. I had been used to having them privately tailored, but I was told that Harold always got his suits from Burtons. If he had had two in the last thirty years, that would be it. Anyway to keep the peace, I went and ordered a suit from Burtons. They had two branches in Stockport then, one at the end of Princess Street (now a musical instrument shop), the other on Underbank (next door to where Conrad's hairdressing salon is).

This suit took six weeks to make. My private tailor in Hazel Grove would have made it in a week, including a couple of fittings. Burtons had all their orders made at one of their factories on the East Lancashire Road. You do get a fitting after it was basically made up, then it is sent back for finishing. When I went for this fitting, I was not very happy. I pointed out to this guy in the shop, who was obviously just a salesman, not a tailor the things that were wrong with it. He made some notes and assured me that it would be right when it came back.

When it was supposed to be ready I went down to pick it up. I tried it on in the shop but I was not happy. I paid for it and came out with it in a parcel. When I got home I never said anything to my mother I just went upstairs and put it on. When I came down stairs my mother just said "our Ronnie what have you got on? That wasn't made for you". Which only confirmed what I already knew. So I parceled it up again and went back down to Burtons. I told the guy in the shop that the suit was not made for me, he said it was and went through the order book. By now I was starting to get annoyed, I put it on and pointed out what was wrong with it. He made some notes and said he would send it back to the factory. I asked him how long it would be, he said about a fortnight. I said that's no good I get married next Saturday, Oh it won't be back by then, I said well you can keep it I will have my money back, Oh we can't do that sir, "why not"? The suit has been made for you so you can have it altered to fit you but you cannot have a refund.

What an idiot, I told him again that the suit had been ordered especially for my wedding, if it was not going to be ready for my wedding I had no use for it. He was still adamant that he could not refund my money. It was then about three o'clock on the Saturday afternoon. I said to this guy "what time do you close"? "Six o'clock he replied." "OK, I will sit here until you close or you can call the police, because I am not leaving until I get my money back". Another customer came in with a female and another assistant asked if he could help, I shouted to him unless you want a sack I wouldn't buy anything here. The guy who had been dealing with me went to the till took my money out and gave it to me. I don't think I have ever bought anything from Burtons for myself since.

I finished up taking one of my good suits (a Birdseye one) to have cleaned and pressed and I wore that. Jayne has a photo of me with that suit on.

It was then that I was having my doubts about getting married. I was sick of working at the steel works, I was losing weight, I was having problems with my stomach and now the fiasco with the suit. But, I thought it was a bit late to call the wedding off, every thing had been arranged, the hang mans noose was waiting for me. The brides and bridesmaids dresses had been obtained, the church booked, flowers ordered, taxis and photographer organized. The best man was to be Jack Beetham; the groomsman was to be Percy Dicker (my steel works workmate) and June Wood's husband Harold, (June was a friend of Jeans).

The Friday night before the wedding a stag night had been arranged, just a small affair at the Sportsman's Arms on Higher Bents Lane. There were a few of the chaps I worked with at the steel works including Percy Dicker, also there was Harold Torkington and Jack Beetham. There could have been others there but I can't remember who they were. I know that Jack, Harold and I went down in the Ford Prefect and after dropping them off back in Marple, I was off home. When I got home it was throwing it down with rain and Dad was working until midnight at Horns garage in Stockport. He had gone down on Maureen's bike because no buses would be running when he finished. He was then coming up to sixty and not in the best of health, I thought riding home in that rain would just about finish him off, so I started off in the car to go and pick him up.

The rain was really coming down like stair rods. As I was traveling through Hazel Grove to the bend just past the Civic Hall, the car went into a skid, twisting round, went up backwards into the church wall that was there at the corner of Napier Street (the National Westminster Bank is there now). The back end of the car hit the solid stonewall flattening part of it, the front wheel arch ended up on a no waiting signpost. There was no damage to the back of the car, the rear bumper bar took the impact and never even bent it. The front wheel arch was slightly damaged; the post of the no waiting sign was at an angle of 45 degrees. Just then two policemen came along, could see what had happened and helped me to get the front of the car off the post. I was able to straighten the wheel arch out.

By this time my dad was just coming along from Stockport on Maureen's bike. He was like a drowned rat and he accompanied me with the car and the two policemen to the police station just further up the road at the corner of Commercial Road. (The police station disappeared from there forty years ago and at this present time they are just altering it again to put a new service road through to the new Sainsburys store opposite Bramhall Moor Lane). Breathalysing had not been heard of in those days, which was a good job; otherwise I would have lost my license, which I hadn't had very long. I just had to make a statement as to what had happened because there was damage to

third party property, i.e. the stone wall belonging to the church and the no waiting sign belonging to the Cheshire County Council.

My poor dad was shivering like a leaf with being wet through. These two coppers were decent sorts (they were, not like they are today, computer brained). They sat him down in front of a roaring coal fire and gave us both a mug of tea. After signing the statements dad and I set off home in the car leaving Maureen's bike at the police station to be collected later.

## **22<sup>nd</sup>. SEPTEMBER 1956 "OUR WEDDING DAY"**

Next day September the 22<sup>nd</sup>. 1956 was our wedding day, I had managed to get the wing of the car patched up in the morning at the High Lane Garage (Bob Austin's). The wedding was at the Grove Methodists on Church Lane, and was conducted by the Reverend Tongue, a nice chap in his forties. I was of course nervous.

In those days weddings seemed to be more of a communal affair than what they are today. With it being a local girl there was a big turnout. I knew very few people in Marple at that time. A lot of them would be regulars in the local pubs that Harold and Harriet frequented. The Newton's, Pembertons, Crosses and many more. Jean did look nice in her dress. I think Jayne has a black and white picture; color would have done it more justice.

The photographer by the way was Helen Winterson's husband. They had just opened their first shop opposite the Goyt Mill. Mr. Winterson was doing photography as a hobby, making a few bob at it at the same time. It was a nice autumn day and it went off very well. The reception was at the Navigation. It was a two course cold meal, main course being the usual ham salad all plated up and already on the tables when we went upstairs. Very amateurish compared to the standard that I set there.

The Millington's were the tenants there then, and old Mrs. Millington had prepared the meal for about 40 guests at 4/6 per head, Harriet paid. Like the rest of the pub, in fact like all pubs in those days, the Navi was a bit scruffy. The floor was covered in cheap linoleum (parquet floor design) tables and chairs were the same ones that I took over ten years later, red top pub tables and bentwood chairs. Pat Cross had got married to Dougie Carrington the week before and they had their wedding reception there. It would of course have been the same sort of meal that we had, that was all that was on offer in those days. An evening reception had been organized. A chap that Harold worked with played the piano, I would think there would also be a drummer. Jean and I hung around until the evening guests arrived, after which Jean changed into her going away suit. Everybody came downstairs to see us off.

I had of course told Jack Beetham about the accident the previous night, but nobody else knew. I was hoping that no one would notice the damage to the near side front wing and just as Jean was about to get into the front seat she spotted it and said "who's done that to our car"?, the Ford Prefect from 20

clock that afternoon had become our joint property. I said "get in and I will tell you about it" . So we set off for a week in Rhyl.

On the way I explained to her what had happened. Arriving in Rhyl we found this hotel that we had booked into. It was clean and comfortable but would need a lot doing to it to bring it up to the standards of today. There were of course no en-suite facilities, but there wasn't in hotels then except in the posh ones.

Down in the lounge we met another young honeymoon couple who was from Scotland. They had got married early morning and traveled down by train. Being September, the weather wasn't very good for being on the front in Wales so, we spent a lot of time, in the car, with this Scottish couple visiting places in North Wales. We found some charming little villages, and one, Llansannan, near Denbigh, we found this old world pub, with flag floors, no electricity. (There was none in the village) and oil lamps were the only means of lighting.

They did simple meals and also had a couple of guest rooms. We actually spent a night there the next spring with Harriet and Harold, we had a lovely evening in the bar with all the locals.

It was quaint going to bed with a candle, these old world pubs have always had a fascination for me. Apart from two pubs plus a post office come general store there were just a few cottages in the village. One of the pubs was bought a couple of years after that by Robinson's I think it was called the Saracens Head.

### **SETTLING INTO MARRIED LIFE.**

Returning from our week in Wales, I moved into Turner Road. The back bedroom was not very big, the camphor wood chest took a bit of space up. but we managed and I must admit that Harriet did really look after us. It was obviously a novelty for her, having a son in law living with them. We of course were paying for our board and lodgings and with our combined income (Jeans and mine), we should have been saving with the intention of buying our own house.

The accident that I had on the eve of our wedding, had of course to be accounted for. I was fully comprehensively insured so all the damage was covered. Marshall Wright a self-employed builder in partnership with his brother Ashley, who was a stonemason, repaired the damage to the church wall in Hazel Grove. Marshall at that time had recently been married and lived next door to Harold and Harriet, at number 28. (The Ellwood's have lived there for many years since then). I got to know the Wright family well over the years. Marshall, who was a very good joiner, unfortunately had a severe stroke some twenty years ago. His wife Audrey has taken care of him, but his quality of life has not been good. They have two children, both girls, who have done well for themselves.

I did of course get a claim from Cheshire County Council for the damage to the No Waiting Sign . The insurance company took care of that.

I continued to have stomach problems and I registered with the same doctor as the Torkingtons. This was doctor Mary Yuill. Her surgery was in a beautiful big house opposite the Marple Methodist Church. It was sold after the Yuills passed on, demolished, and a big block of retirement flats stand there now. The job at the steel works was really starting to distress me, together with my stomach complaint; I was starting to lose weight. I was never very heavy, and I weighed about 10 stone when I left the sea, but I was now down to about 9 stone.

Visits to my mothers would confirm this weight loss. Her words “our Ronnie you don’t look well and you are losing weight”. I just told her that it was the job at the steel works that was getting me down. I was searching the paper and writing off for jobs.

In the new year of 1957, I saw an advert for credit salesman. It was a shop on Princes Street in Stockport. I called in and they gave me an interview. One of the conditions was that you had to have your own transport. I of course had the Ford Prefect. So there was no question of offering me a job they were looking for mugs like me. At that time I was green to all these con artists. So I put my notice in at the steel works. The manager over the department sent for me and asked me why I was leaving. I told him that I was not used to that kind of work and that it was soul destroying. He then told me that he had noticed me and could see that the job did not suit me. He asked me if I would stay, with the intention of training me for time and motion. I turned it down and left at the end of the week.

I turned up to start this new job as a credit salesman on the Monday. They sent me out with this guy to show me the job. I must mention here that there was no salary, only a 20 % commission on what you sold. The guy who interviewed me said that I should have no problem selling a 100 a week to start with, rising into the hundreds when I got into it. That would mean a lot of money, if it was true.

It was early in the New Year and a lot of goods had been sold to these gullible punters before Christmas so that their kids had got something from Santa Clause. This guy who was showing me the job took me out to his patch, which was Wythenshawe. They were just building this vast estate then. He had his book with him, which contained all the names and addresses, how much they owed and how much they had to pay. This was a shilling in the pound on what they owed. Some of these people had had fifty and sixty pounds worth of goods for Christmas. They were living in these recently built high rise flats, which were already turning into slums.

The communal lifts and stairways were littered with rubbish and smelled of urine. Some of the people were quite respectable, but had fallen for the sales patter that this guy had given them. Finding themselves in debt, which they couldn't afford to pay. He was talking them into taking out a loan to pay of the



debt. They fell for it, the loan was at an even higher interest rate. So they ended up further in debt with more to pay each week. Some of the stuff that he had sold them in the first place was absolute rubbish, toys broken, clothes falling apart, everything was cheap and nasty which you could have bought on any market from a con merchant for a few shillings. They were paying pounds, finishing up with a hell of a debt that they had no chance of paying. The con artist salesman couldn't care less, he would get his commission and move on. I stuck it out for three days, in which time I realized that to do this job you had to be a crook. I told them what they could do with the job. It didn't matter to them because I had not earned anything anyway, so that was the end of my short career as a credit salesman.

It should have been a lesson to me, but it wasn't. I saw an advert for salesman selling domestic all-purpose hygiene machines. There was a phone number to call, when I did, I was told to attend this meeting in a room above some premises on the corner of Princes Street. (Which are now pulled down and Debenhams is there). About six young gullible chaps, like myself, turned up. Two chaps started giving us a load of sales patter and then, they bring this cylinder vacuum cleaner out of this box and start to demonstrate how this all purpose domestic cleaner works and what it will do.

After about three hours instruction, one of these guys asked if anybody had a car. I of course I had, so he made me the team leader and told me to take three others with me. I would be paid £1 per day expenses, no wages but 20% of any sales. He said we should sell at least three machines a day between us and at £30 a time we would earn a lot of money. I was shown on a map where to take my team and demonstrate the all-purpose household hygiene machine.

The area turned out to be a load of streets with terraced houses in Gorton. We split up (as instructed) into two teams of two. We knocked on a few doors and offered to return that night and give their house a full hygienic cleaning free of charge. (It was necessary to return at night to obtain the signature of the main householder, the husband, to sign the hire purchase agreement).

We soon booked a few demonstrations to return that night. I had noted that a few of the houses that we had booked these demonstrations at, did not need the latest technology in household hygiene machines, they needed incinerators, so I ignored them. Needless to say after a few days, out all afternoon knocking on doors, then going back at night we didn't sell a one. For a start we had to take a £5 deposit and then get the H. P. form signed. The only place most of these people had got £5 was in the gas or electric meter, and that wasn't theirs. I was now in my second week when I had not earned any wages, but this vacuum cleaner firm owed me five days expenses for running my car. I was determined to get that. I knew where their place was in Manchester, which they were running this operation from.

I went down to this run down office on Corporation Street. There were two or three people there with suits on (the big business con men). Two of them were the men who had given us the sales patter. So I asked them for my

money. They said "you didn't sell anything", I said "I know that, but I want my five days expenses at £1 a day". They had a bit of a conflagration and then one of them pulled out a fiver and gave it to me.

That weekend someone told us that they were taking people on at Chadkirk Dye works. I did ask this person if it involved working nights. I was told that they had not worked shifts there for a long time. So on the Monday morning I went down. They told me what the job entailed and working a 55-hour week the money was good. I was asked at the time that if necessary would I be willing to work shifts, to which I replied I would, after being told that they had not worked shifts there for a long time. I started the next day. This old chap who had worked there about forty years was showing me the job. It entailed working this dye machine, pulling a lever, letting a roll of cloth run through the dye, and then reversing the process just making sure the cloth did not kink. I worked all that week, including the Saturday morning. The next Monday, about six of us were called into the office and the manager started by telling us that the following Monday they were starting shifts, and that we, were to start it off. After he finished talking, he asked if we had any questions, which was my chance to tell him that I would be finishing at the end of the week. The job lasted not quite two weeks.

### **1957 WORKING FOR COMPSTALL CO-OP**

Harriet was a member of the local Compstall Co-op Society, She bought every thing from there to get the divvy. Also she used their bank for her savings. She asked the manager there (Alf Roebuck) if they wanted any drivers. He phoned through to the head office in Marple Bridge and spoke to the general manager (a chap called Albert Bradshaw who lived on Ernocroft Road). The answer was to send me down.

I started right away, driving one of there 10 cwt. Bedford delivery vans. The money was only about nine pounds a week, but it suited me better than working in a factory and I enjoyed meeting people. I got to know Marple and the surrounding district, also a lot of people who lived in the area.

The job entailed an early start, leaving home about 6-30, picking the van up in the yard at Marple Bridge. Then driving to the Romiley branch to meet the big bread van, which used to come from the Co-op bakery in Manchester.

The bread was delivered to all Co-op Societies like Hyde, Bredbury, Hazel Grove and others. I would load all the bread for the branches of the Compstall Co-op and then start delivering it to all the shops. The Compstall Co-op no longer exists.

I would start off at Romiley, then Cherry Tree, Compstall, Compstall Road, Marple Bridge, Mellor, Marple, Rose Hill, (now a Victoria Wine Shop), Hawk Green and High Lane, ten branches in all. After that it would be loading up at the warehouse in Marple Bridge, re-stocking the shops, then delivering the

weekly orders to the customers all over the area. It suited me for the time being, but the money wasn't very good.

I must come back to my sea days here. At sea every afternoon from 1400 to 1600 hours, it was known as dead ship time. When all activities would cease, even the three-day workers on deck, who would have been doing the noisy job of chipping the rust off the metal structures, would take up the quiet job of painting. Everybody hit the sack.

In the tropics, which most of our voyages were, the vain ones would be out on deck sunbathing. Homeward bound most of us would be out on deck getting bronzed for when we got home. The point I am coming to is that every afternoon, the habit of having a siesta for the last twelve years was hard to kick, (and still is to this day). Whilst working for the Co-op, I would usually find myself in the Turner Road area. With the spare loaf that I quite often had left over. I would call home and Harriett (who would be home from one of her two cleaning jobs) and I would have some sandwiches made with the nice fresh bread. After which I would crash on the settee until 2 o'clock. Harriett would wake me up and I would return to the van and go off to one of the branches to take their orders out. Four in the afternoon I would finish.

Wednesday was half day closing for all the branches. So it was a quick wash down for the van in the yard at Marple Bridge, and home for a kip (Lazy sod). Evenings were spent scouring the paper for any suitable jobs that might be on offer, then watching television. Television was still something that was new and by no means did every house have one. Those that did usually rented them from either Radio Rentals, or a private firm who had only two shops. Lomax & Samways. One shop in Hazel Grove, near the Rising Sun, now an Indian Restaurant. The other one, which was on Market Street, Marple. Later became Bennett's (radio and electrical). Now a Thornton's chocolate and card shop. Up until 1956 there was only one TV. channel that was B.B.C., then I.T.V. came in, both only in black and white.

It was when watching a programme about people who could be awarded money (probably £500) if they had a good idea for needing this cash. This young bloke came on and said that he had started a business up hiring washing machines out to people. He was being called up to do his national service and he wanted this money to replace a clapped out van, plus another couple of washing machines so his father could carry on running his business for him while he was doing his national service.

I thought, what a bloody good idea, so, the next day, when I was delivering the mail from the main office to the Co-op furniture and electrical shop on the corner of Market Street (MacKay's are there now), I enquired about washing machines. The price and which were the most compact and easy to handle. Although washing machines had existed in one form or another since just after the war, very few people owned one. The main reason was the price, about £80.

If you wanted anything on hire purchase at that time, the government ruled that to keep the economy stable, a deposit of 50% was required. Not many people could fork out £40 for the deposit on a washing machine, and besides a more important thing was a television set.

### **MY FIRST VENTURE INTO BUSINESS**

First, I did some market research by casually asking people, while I was delivering their groceries, if they had a washing machine?. If not, how did they do their washing? The answers fell into different categories. They had a washing machine, they employed someone to come in and do it, they sent it to the laundry, or they used a launderette (non in Marple at that time). Some of them were still back in the middle ages, with a dolly tub and poser, like Harriet. The biggest majority fell into the last category. I then enquired if a washing machine was delivered to their kitchen, and charged 4/- for the first hour, then 2/- every hour after that, would they use the service?. The response was promising. Housewives with families who didn't go out to work mostly wanted to do their washing on a Monday morning.

When the workers in the family were at work, and the children were at school. With one washing machine I could only fit one customer in on a Monday morning, unless, I got it to them early, then I could fit in two. I had to convince them that with a washing machine, which took the drudgery out of washing, wash day could be any day of the week Others who were at work during the day, wanted a machine at night or weekend. With one washing machine I could fit in three to four customers a day. So I went round the Marple estates and booked myself half a dozen customers. Some I had got to know whilst working for the Co-op, others who went into the local pubs.

My next move was to obtain a personal loan from a bank. Since I left the sea I had closed down the account I had with Barclays bank, so I went to the District Bank on the corner of Market Street, now National Westminster. The manager at that time was a Mr. Arthur Winter. Banks in those days were much more personal, they didn't need security screens, just a long wide counter. Armed robberies were unheard of outside the big cities. You didn't need to book an appointment to see the manager. I just asked over the counter to see Mr. Winter (who I got to know very well later). He opened his door and welcomed me with a handshake. After inviting me to sit down he pushed a silver cigarette box over towards me inviting me to take a cigarette. It would seem strange today because most places have smoking bans. But in those days it was common courtesy.

I introduced myself, then told him that I required a small loan to set up a business. He needed to know what sort of business I was starting. When I told him about hiring washing machines out, he leaned back in his chair and a broad smile came on his face. He was intrigued as to how it was to work and after explaining it to him his smile widened. He leaned forward on his desk and asked me how much I required to borrow? I told him I wanted eighty pounds. He then asked if I had any collateral, and my answer was a Ford

Prefect motor car .He filled in a form, smiling all the time, asked me to sign it, then he wrote out a Bank cheque for £80 made out to the Compstall Co-op whom I was buying the washing machine from. I WAS ON MY WAY IN BUSINESS.

I purchased my first washing machine, a Hoover 0343 model with a power wringer. Firstly I had to find out how it worked myself, so, after picking it up from the Co-op electrical shop I took it round to 30 Turner Road, and did some washing for Harriet. At the same time giving her a full professional demonstration, polishing up my sales technique. Then it was back to some of the people I had previously canvassed to book the days and times, making sure not to overlap with just one machine. My job with the Co-op got me to Marple between 8-30 to 9-00 a.m.. Then I would nip round home, pick up the washer in the Co-op van, taking it to a 9-00 o clock customer.

Then continuing to deliver the bread to the rest of the shops, I would call back and pick up my machine, plus my 4/-d to 6/-d (20p. to 30p.) and deliver it to the next customer. At that time in Marple there were still four mills in the area. Goyt Mill, still weaving, Strines print works. Compstall Mill and the Aqueduct Mill. Kay's who at that time manufactured fire lighters in Reddish took over a part of Hollins Mill that had not been pulled down with the rest of the mill, and started making draught excluders for windows and doors from foam rubber. At some of these mills the women would be on two shifts, 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 10 p.m.. So after finishing my Co-op job about 4 p.m., I would use the Ford Prefect to collect and deliver into the late evening. (With the back seat taken out it just fitted through the back door and lay down where the back seat had been). It didn't take long for the word to spread, especially among the working women, and I was getting more and more customers. It soon became obvious that I could not cope with one machine, so I purchased another one from the Co-op on hire purchase.

I then had the problem of only being able to fit one at a time in the car. So, I sold the car for cash to the Midland Garage, near the Rising Sun in Hazel Grove for a £170 and bought a Austin A 40 van I had seen advertised for £85. With the rest of the money I bought another machine. So I now had three. One of the problems in those days was that household electric plugs were not all standard like they are today. 13-amp ring main was just becoming the standard in all-new properties, and when older properties were rewired, ring main systems were installed.

There were about five different types in general use, so, I had to make up adaptors with cable and the different plugs. I fitted my machines with the standard 13-amp plug, so whichever plug the customer had I would use the appropriate adaptor.

We were now in 1957 and one of the big events that took place in Marple that summer was the demolition of the Hollins Mill chimney. The biggest part of the mill had already been demolished, so, the demolition of the chimney was well advertised. It was to be done by the then well-known expert Blaster Bates. All

the village plus people from far and wide came to witness this historic event, which took place on a Saturday afternoon.

When they had pulled the mill down, there was a lot of good wood. If it wasn't sold or pinched, it was burnt. Harold decided that he was going to build a shed at the back of the house. So I collected a lot of this wood in the van and transported it to 30 Turner Road. A lot of it was floorboards that machinery had stood on, so it was impregnated with oil and would never rot. He made a damn good job of this shed and I think it is still there today. I used the shed to store and repair my washers, and repair other people's washers.

While I was going round with my washers, people who had their own machine would hire one off me if their own had broken down. They also asked if I repaired machines. Well, I did keep my own machines repaired, they frequently needed it with the hammering they were getting. So never passing up a chance to earn a bit extra, I would load it up, take it home and have a go at repairing it in Harold's shed. Also I started to repair people's vacuum cleaners. That was the start of me entering into the Domestic Appliance Business.

How was my life progressing? I had now been married for nearly twelve months. I was enjoying the Co-op driving job, and I was working hard with my washing machines, but still, I hadn't lost the call of the sea, but my connections with the sea were slowly ebbing away. A family called Carter who lived on Brindley Avenue was all immigrating to Canada, and they had been asking around for packing cases and suitcases. Harriet mentioned that I had three very good ones, so they offered to buy them. They finished up in Canada. Some of my white jackets that I had no further use for she sold to a couple of local blokes who worked on the bacon counter at the Co-op, Gerry Brierley and Roy Hopwood. The money of course would come to us.

A small farm at the top of Mellor where I delivered an order to, bred collie dogs. One of her bitches had just given birth to a litter of puppies and they were lovely. I thought it might be a good idea to buy one for a wedding anniversary present. I mentioned it at home, Jean was all for it, but Harriett wasn't very pleased. We got this puppy when it was old enough to leave its mother. He was a little beauty with a pedigree as long as your arm. That was one of his problems he had been too much interbred, so he was highly strung. Harriet, who at first didn't want him, fell in love with him and would take him out whenever she went shopping. One day when she had him out on a lead in Market Street, someone had stopped her and was admiring him, when, another dog who wasn't on a lead jumped on him. Harriett got bitten separating them. After that whenever he saw another dog, Shep automatically went for it. He lived to be fifteen. I had to have him put down when I was in the Navigation, he went off his back legs and became incontinent.

One of the pubs that we would visit was the "Hatters", which needs no describing. The landlady was Betty Davies. She had not had it very long when we started going in there. Before taking the pub her family lived on Rushton Drive. Her mother, who everyone knew as Nana, helped her to run it. Betty's

husband, Ernie, was still working at the time. He was one of the managers at Tootals in Manchester. They all knew that I had been in catering at sea, and that I was interested in running a pub. Ernie who was on the committee at the Conservative club called me to one side one night, and told me that the steward there had done a bunk with the takings and had left his wife there. He said if I was interested he would put my name forward for the stewards job. We discussed it, and we agreed to have a go at it, so we were invited to go for an interview. When we arrived for the interview there were about six other couples there who had replied to an advert in the M.E.N. It turned out to be a forgone conclusion, they offered us the job. It was now December 1957. Jean (who was now working at an engineering firm in Romiley) and we gave in our notices, ready to take over at the Conservative Club. We moved in two weeks before Christmas. The only piece of furniture that we owned at that period was the camphor wood chest. So we collected various pieces of second hand furniture, finishing up with sufficient for the bare essentials, some we bought, some had been given to us.

### **THE MARPLE CONSERVATIVE CLUB**

Our first so called home was a challenge. For a start it was a hell of a size. It was run down and grotty, in fact you could say it was filthy. It was the middle of winter and a coke boiler heated the building. I knew absolutely nothing about boilers, but Harold had an idea how it operated, how to fire it up and get the clinkers out of it.

The boiler was in part of the cellar, which was massive. It went all the way under what was then, the billiard room. Years after, they spent a lot of money altering all the cellar, building up the floor, so that now, you walk up two steps into what is now the concert room and the cellar was made into the billiard room. With another room down there, which is supposed, to be a separate games room, with a separate bar. The bar is certainly never used, and the two billiard tables are very rarely used. The concert room gets used now, certainly used a lot more than when it was the billiard room.

I will describe the way the club was when we were there at the beginning of 1958, starting with the cellar. The boiler, which I have already mentioned was in a separate part of the cellar, next to it was the only female toilet in the building. The club at that time did not allow females in, except one night a year and that was the president's dinner and dance, which was held upstairs in Shepley Hall.

The toilet in the cellar was mainly for the use of the stewardess. The rest of the cellar, which had a low ceiling was (at the time that I took over) full of empty wooden beer crates and bottles, which should have been returned to the suppliers. One of the first things I did was to get them returned, apart from taking up a lot of room, they also tied up a lot of money. the bottles had a deposit of 2d. each and the wooden case 3/-the total for each case was 7/-d and there must have been between 100 to 150 cases. A lot of money in those days.

Besides the bottles being stored in the cellar, (full and empty), there was a separate lock up for the spirits, which didn't contain much, not like the bonded store on a Blue Funnel Ship. The cask beer was also kept down there, on a couple of wooden stillages. They didn't sell much draught beer; in fact they didn't sell much of anything, until after the pubs had closed. My experience with draught beer after taking over the Navi was that, first and foremost cask beer has to be kept at a temperature below 47 F. with a free flow of fresh air. Secondly you have to have a reasonable quick sale for it.

The club did not conform to either of these conditions, so the draught beer most of the time was undrinkable. In those days keg beer was unheard of, so beer drinkers would drink bottles.

Even today they cannot keep draught beer at the club, and they have a perfectly good temperature controlled cellar. These days most places like the Conservative Club, where they do not have a big beer trade, they only sell keg beer, which is just a big metal container, (11 gallons) with pasteurized beer in it and is dispensed by CO 2.

The entrance to the cellar was by a trap door in the floor of the bar. It is still the same today, except, that at the bottom of the steps you turn to your left, where the complete new cellar has been dug out from underneath the rest of the building.

The bar is still in the same place, as is the stewards private lounge, but at the back of the lounge a new extension has been built, which contains the stewards bedroom, bathroom and kitchen.

When I was there, a very small kitchen led off the private lounge. The kitchen also contained a bath, which was covered over by a hinged board. No wash hand basin, the kitchen sink had to double for that purpose. No toilet, I used the club toilet. When the club was open, Jean had to use the one near the boiler house.

Standing at the front of the bar, on the right is a serving hatch, which serves into a lounge. Part of this lounge used to be our bedroom, the door of which was where the serving hatch is now. So, you had to go through the bar to get to the bedroom, not very private.

A passageway ran from the bar lounge, which is now blocked off because the stairs down to the snooker room are there. Three rooms led off this passage, the first on the right was the secretaries office, now the ladies toilet. The second on the right was, and still is, the committee room. The one on the left, was next door to the steward's bedroom, and was used as a card and games room. A door at the end of the passage led into the hall at the bottom of the stairs to Shepley Hall.

Upstairs is Shepley Hall, still the same except that at the far end, where there was a stage, it now has some steps up to a bar with a lounge area. A new kitchen and ladies and gents toilets have also been built there. An original



door is still there that has got some very steep steps leading downstairs to where the old boiler room was and a door on the ground floor leading out to the side of the building which was where the coal merchant would deliver the coke for the boiler.

At the top of the stairs leading into Shepley Hall, is a small cubicle. This was a very interesting and historic part of the Conservative Club. It has sadly disappeared in the late 1990s whilst they have been carrying out cosmetic alterations. Shepley Hall was actually the first cinema in Marple. It would be around the time of the First World War, 1912 to about 1920. The hall would have a dual purpose, being used a couple of days a week to show silent films. The screen would be on the stage (where the bar is now) and chairs would be set out in the main hall, it would hold about 100 people. A pianist would accompany the silent film on the piano.

To come back to the cubicle at the top of the stairs, the door that leads into the cubicle had a hole in it with a small shelf on each side. This was the pay desk where you would get your tickets for the cinema or other functions that went on there. There is now no trace of this having been the pay box.

At the interview before we were offered the job, only a very brief description of duties were explained. One of them was looking after the snooker tables, such as brushing and ironing them, I didn't have a clue of how to do this. My only experience with a snooker table was in Falmouth in 1946 when I missed the departure of the Ocean Valley and consequently had to stay in the seaman's mission. To pass the time, I attempted a game of billiards with a fellow seaman, and ripped the green baize on the table with the cue. I have never been back and I have never played on a snooker table since.

We were expected to keep the place clean, order and keep the stock for the bar, also run the bar. We were told that the club was open for the members to use the facilities of the club from 10-00 am to midnight. The door had to be open from 10-00 am so that members could come in and read the morning papers, play snooker, and play the fruit machines. They did not say anything about the bar facilities being available from 10:00 a.m. till one and two o'clock the following morning.

I did complain about this the first week I was there, pointing out that there were no shutters for securing the bar. This meant that someone had to be in the vicinity of the bar for 12 to 14 hours a day.

They said that they would put a shutter on the bar. They did! They put a Venetian blind up, which was as much use as a chocolate fireguard. The members would come in, part the folds on the blind and shout through for bar service.

I carried on with my washing machine hire business, and had now got four machines. After trading in my Austin van I acquired a more modern Ford Thames 5 cwt. I also started operating down Stockport. No need to advertise, it was getting round by word of mouth.

My operation in Stockport started at the four storey flats on Lower Hillgate. That was hard work, having to carry the machines up flights of stairs. It was while I was operating in the flats in Hillgate that I got to know "Khan", who owned the Oriental Restaurant on Lower Hillgate.

A woman in the flats who was one of my customers, did a few hours work at the Oriental. She was also friendly with Khan's wife Jean, who hailed from the Gorbels, an infamous part of Glasgow.

Jean then had two young children, both girls, Pat and Sharon. Jean was soon talked into becoming one of my customers. This in turn led to me being introduced to Khan.

The first thing Khan does when he meets somebody is shake their hand and ask in a strong Pakistan accent, "how the blinking heck are you"?. From that meeting 45 years ago we have remained friends ever since. More on Khan later.

The hiring of washing machines eventually spread out to Edgeley, Adswold and other parts of Stockport. I finished up doing two full days a week down there. It was hard work carrying the washers, which weigh 90 lbs without the wringer, and then going back for the appropriate electric lead and the wringer.

It was not doing my stomach problem any good. This had been diagnosed as a stomach ulcer. The washing machines had now become more or less a full time job, and the two full days that I was spending down Stockport, Jean was left in the club on her own.

Her mum would call in each day and take Shep (the collie dog) out. He would now be about nine months old. By now he was more or less full-grown with a lovely sable long coat. Harriett always had him out, people thought he was her dog. That incident when he was a puppy, when that big dog jumped on him, had made him very nervous, so he didn't like strangers stroking him. He was a good guard dog, Jean always felt safe behind the bar when he was there. There was no such thing as burglar alarms then, At night when we did eventually lock up we gave him the run of the place, and on a couple of occasions, in the early hours of the morning he went mad, barking. Getting up and putting a few lights on deterred any would be intruders.

The club did not allow us any staff of any kind, not even a cleaner, so we paid for a cleaner out of our wages, which was just over £9 a week for the two of us. I was doing all right with the washing machines. The cleaner we employed, was Mrs. McMullen, she lived on Edwards Way and was already one of my washing machine customers. That is how she came to ask me if I wanted a cleaner.

To come back to the working of the club in 1958, and, keeping my customers in Marple happy with the washing machine business. I would be out delivering my washing machines early morning, then back to the club to help clean up, bottle up and get the bar ready.

At ten in the morning if the front door wasn't open there would be a tap on the front window with a walking stick. It would be old Pat, one of the older brothers of Park and Paterson the metal merchants on Cross Lane. He was still one of the directors but, they paid him a salary to keep away.

He lodged with a Mrs. Dawson on Brickbridge Road. She would bundle him off out of her road at that time in a morning so she could clean up. It would be the same routine every morning, old Pat would hobble up the steps with his walking stick. When he got to the bar he would part the slats on the blind and shout through, "White Worthington", which you had to pour into the glass for him. He would take one swig and then belch all over the place. Then go and sit down to read the papers. One or two others would come in to read the papers after that. The next regular about midday would be Frank Wardle, one of the local undertakers. He was also a painter and decorator.

He was on the club committee, and also had a drink problem. He would come into the club after he had already been into the Pineapple, and order a class of lemonade then ask you to put a treble gin in it. He would be back again a couple of hours later for the same order. The bar hours at the club were supposed to be the same as pubs, but that was completely ignored. I complained to the secretary, his stupid answer was that was how the club had always been run. The premises had to be open from 10:00 a.m. to midnight, so the members could take advantage of the facilities, like reading the papers, playing snooker, and playing on the illegal one arm bandits. Yes, one-arm bandits were illegal even in private members clubs.

The so-called blind on the bar was a complete waste of time, as I have already mentioned, so, it was a waste of time lowering it. The pubs shut at 10.30 pm, and about 11.00 pm they would start rolling in. The blind would be down but they would be shouting through for more drinks, sometimes till one and two in the morning. It was a waste of time complaining because half of them were on the committee.

The only till that was there was a drawer, not unusual in those days. Mechanical

tills were available, but the club did not have one, so, you had no check as to how much cash should be in the drawer. The other thing was that this money drawer was underneath the bar counter, and there was no lock on it. At the time that we took over, a pint pot was kept near this drawer full of sixpences, change for the one arm bandit. The steward's private lounge was, and still is, through a door at the back of the bar. I put a mirror up on the lounge wall, which faced towards the bar, so you could see if someone was standing there. There was a member (who shall remain nameless) who had an addiction for these fruit machines.

He would be in two or three times a day playing the machines. With the job that he had, there was no way he could afford to keep feeding the machines. I was standing in the lounge one day, not long after we took over, when I glanced in the mirror I saw this guy put his hand over the bar, and was helping

himself out of the sixpenny pot. I dashed in and caught him with a hand full of sixpences.

He went white, I ordered him out of the club, and told him he would be reported. It was obvious that it was not the first time he had done it. With no check on the bar takings no wonder the stocks had always been down before we took over. I told Hilton Walker who was president and treasurer of the club that I wanted the drawer moved to the back of the bar and a lock on it.

Another thing about the one-arm bandits, I have mentioned that there were two. They were placed opposite each other in the bar lounge, and in front of each one was a round cane coat hanger. When coats were hung on them the machines were obscured from the bar.

I was in the bar this particular day, and these two guys were playing one machine. Nothing unusual in that, but I noticed that the machine was slightly tilted to the right. It turned out that one of these guys had got his foot under one edge of it.

The way these mechanical machines worked was that you put a coin in (6d) which released the handle, which then rotated the three wheels. The coins then slid along a visible carriage, this carriage held the last six or more coins. Each time you put a coin in the machine, it moved them along and they dropped into a tube. The tube then paid out on the winning lines. When the tube was full, the coins then dropped into the moneybox. The money that dropped into the box was the profit and was shared 50/50 between the machine owner and site owner, in this case the Conservative club.

If a coin was slightly bent, when it got on to the carriage it would jam and the coins would start to back up, eventually preventing the handle from being pulled. The chap who owned the machines (who also had an off license in Portwood) trusted me (but not the previous steward), he left me the key to the back, so I was able to unblock the carriageway if that happened. This would save him being called out to unblock it. If the machine was not horizontal, in this case tilted to the right, the coins would not move along the carriageway freely and would start to jam each other. This would leave a coin keeping the handle release open, which would allow the machine to be continually pulled, in turn, emptying the tube.

Once the blockage started they could let the machine go level again, and their action was to fake putting a coin in the machine each time before pulling the handle. Of course they were not putting money in the machine. The law of averages on any gambling machine is that you will not win, and unless you come in with a pocket full of coins you will have to come to the bar to get change.

That is what made me suspicious, they were playing continually and not coming for change. When I went round the bar to check, they stopped pretending to put money in and said to me "Oh look it's jammed". They didn't

reckon with the fact that I had been twelve years at sea, and come across characters like them before.

I said to them that the machine is jammed because you tilted it. I pulled the handle myself to demonstrate what they had been doing, which worked the machine. I told them they had been pulling the machine for some time without putting any money in. I just told them to leave the club.

I reported the incident to the secretary who in turn wrote to them asking them to appear before the committee but they never turned up. After that the machines started to show a lot more profit, so it had been going on a long time before I took over.

To put the machines in view from the bar, I transferred both machines to the left side of the lounge and the coat stands to the other. Still on these machines, (which I think was where the profit to keep the club going came from), the chap who owned them would turn up to empty them every Saturday about one o'clock. That always seemed to be when there were a few in (the chairman, secretary and most of the committee). He would take the boxes out of the back and count it with the secretary. After which I would take the change and give them the notes, which in those days would not be a lot with 40 sixpences to the pound. The machine owner would always keep some of the change back, and start to buy drinks for the vultures, sometimes two and three rounds. (Remember in part one I had seen all this sort of thing before in Blue Funnel with the customs officials before sailing. At least they did pay crew price for their goods, this lot were just scroungers).

One of the members who came in, Bob Tavenor, was the brother in law of Gladys Gordon, the licensee of the Ring O Bells. He liked draught Bass, which he could get at the Jolly Sailor. That was one draught beer that had a longer storage life, and did not usually have a head on it. It was in firkins (9 gallons), and was possible to sell before it went like vinegar.

Bob was a bit of a character; he had a very dry sense of humor, always came in on his own and didn't mix with anyone. We always had a good chat with each other; he kept me informed as to what went on round the other pubs.

It was while I was in the club that I first met John Houlton. John had been born in the mid 1930's with a silver spoon in his mouth. His parents lived in Wembley, and his father was a director of Austin's, an engineering firm in Dukinfield. They had put him through public school, so he had a cut glass public school accent. He would be at school until he was nineteen or twenty. When he finished there he had to do his national service. His parents could not have him going in the army as a private, and mixing with real people, so, they bought him a commission. He went to officers training at Sandhurst.

After his national service as an officer, which gave him a bloody big chip (pip) on his shoulder, he came up from London to his father's firm in Dukinfield as a business trainee. His parents found him accommodation (not digs) with Mrs. Gordon at the Ring O Bells and of course he had to have an open top M.G.

sports car He was a right Burlington Bertie. He didn't have a lot in common with locals, not even in the Conservative Club. So, he tried his hand with the jet setters at the Carver Theatre, and it was there that he met his future wife, a lovely girl who had been evacuated from Ardwick during the war. Her name was Brenda Bell.

Brenda had come from a working class family, and she was not ashamed of it. When she arrived in Marple in 1939 she would be a young girl of six or seven with a cardboard gasmask case and a little bundle, with her possessions in. Ray Noble has told me that she was a pretty girl then and it was a big shock to him to see her with two fingers in her mouth, whistling better than any lad. Brenda was fortunate, she was billeted with the Smiths who had a decorating shop on Hollins Lane. (Part of it is now Hollins Building Supplies). The Smiths who were getting on in age, only had one daughter, and she would be in her fifties. I believe they showered Brenda with love and affection, which she had not had at home in Ardwick. They made sure she had a good education, first going to grammar school and then onto some girl's college.

Miss Smith, who of course had never married brought Brenda up like her own daughter. Needless to say Brenda never returned to Manchester. Of all the evacuees who came to Marple she had been very fortunate. The tragedy came later when she met stage door Johnny, John Houlton.

John and Brenda married in 1958. John never seemed to have many friends, he did try to associate himself with a few of the business people in Marple like, Rowland Fox, who had at one time been an engineer in the Merchant Navy. His parents had the off license, which stood at the corner of Church Street and Chapel Street; also Mr. Fox senior had a small lorry that he did local haulage with. When Roland left the sea he took over the haulage business and expanded it by buying two or three big furniture type vans and doing the haulage for Kay's plastics.

John finished his bachelor night at the Conservative club, (of all places), the only person with him was Eric Pickup, (of all people). I don't know how he come to know Eric but, he was his best man. They both came into the club about midnight. John was legless when they came in, Eric wanted to order a mixed cocktail of drinks for him, but I would not mix it up. It finished up with John having to be carried out.

John and Brenda got married the next day at the Congregational Chapel on Hibbert Lane. Their first home was one of the flats on the opposite corner to the Chapel.

That's a bit of a deviation, I am supposed to be doing my life not John Houlton, I will have to come back to him later, because, I more than likely could write a good part of his autobiography.

It seems in my lifetime that there have always been some very sad events at different times. One of these such events happened not long after we had been in the club. It was a devastating blow to football supporters, one of which

I have never been, but it was very sad because there were so many lives lost. This sad event was the Munich air disaster, which involved the Manchester United football team. Most people will remember this, but briefly, the whole team was traveling home after a football match in Germany. Besides the team there were club officials including the manager Matt Busby, plus a few press reporters. The weather at the time was very inclement, with snow and ice on the runway. The aircraft failed to get airborne, crashing at the end of the runway. There were eleven persons killed, five or six of them were the young footballers.

The Conservative Club at this time did not have any land attached. There was just enough room at the back of the building, and the boundary wall, to get to the back of the building for maintenance. On the other side of the boundary wall was a stone built white washed cottage, with the land surrounding being a garden and hen run. The owner, a chap called Goddard was rather eccentric.

He lived there with his wife, a couple of dozen hens, and a few cats. He was a stonemason by profession, and in the garden he had even made his own headstone with his and his wife's names chiseled into it. When he eventually died, the Conservatives bought the property, extended out on to it, building an extension to the steward's accommodation. The Conservative Association built an office for the Hazel Grove Conservative Association, and the rest of it made the present car park.

My washing machines were doing well and I now had five machines. The Wednesdays and Fridays that I was down Stockport were busy. Khan at the Oriental restaurant on Hillgate and I had become good friends. I used his place as my headquarters when I was in Stockport, giving all the customers the telephone number there in case anything went wrong with the machines, which with the amount of use they were getting, it was becoming more frequent.

I won't bore you with technical details but the most common problems were, blocked pumps, broken pump impellers, pump bearings leaking water, wringer drives breaking, wringer gears breaking, and the main washer impeller bearing leaking water.

I taught myself how to do all these repairs, and I was a regular customer to Hoover Ltd. offices on Dickinson Road, Levenshulme, to order and pay for the parts and then over to Daisy Works, Levenshulme, on the main A.6., (which was also the Hoover workshop) to collect the parts. All this was good experience when I joined Hoover Ltd. two or three years later.

After being in the club three or four months, it was becoming obvious that it was not going to work out. Between us we were putting in about 100 hours a week. The club was open to the members from 10 am to midnight, which alone was fourteen hours, and then you couldn't get rid of them. It was closed all day Sunday. For that we got just over £9 a week plus accommodation

(such as it was, the bath was in kitchen and there was no wash hand basin) heating and electric.

It was a hell of a big place to keep clean. Shepley Hall could be in use two or three times a week, that alone took some cleaning. You could have a dance up there on a Saturday night, when the floor would have to have French chalk on it, so it would slide for dancing. Then every Monday there would be Badminton up there, so the floor had to be scrubbed a couple of times to try to get the shine off it, so the badminton club wouldn't slip on it.

The woman who ran the badminton club was the daughter of Hilton Walker (the president and treasurer of the club). I had been out on this Monday night collecting my machines in, it would be either the end of May or the beginning of June 1958.

When I got back to the club, Jean was in tears behind the bar. When I asked her the problem, she said that this woman (Hilton Walkers daughter) had come down and played hell because one of the women had slipped and twisted her ankle, she said the floor was too slippy. I went straight upstairs to this woman and told her that we had spent all morning trying to get the shine off it after the Saturday night dance. If it wasn't good enough she could take her badminton team and bugger off.

Actually it was just the excuse I was looking for, because we had found out just a few weeks before that Jean was pregnant with Jayne. I came down stairs and the secretary was in the office, I went in and told him what had happened, and also said that if they were going to have dances on a Saturday night, the floor would not in future be fit for badminton. Also I am handing in our notice, we will be leaving a week on Saturday.

That was the end of my bad experience at the club. It is a cushy job these days, the club doesn't open now during the day, except on Sunday from 1.00 pm till 4:00 p.m. It only opens from 8.00 till midnight every night. They still get one full day a week off, a nice new flat as accommodation, free heating and lighting and about £15,000 a year salary plus holidays. A far cry from 1958.

### **THE CONSERVATIVE CLUB TO 10 STOCKPORT ROAD**

At this time, my washing machines were doing well, I now had six. It was hard work and I was out every day including Sundays. The mother-in-law Harriett heard that the flat, at the back and over the top of one of Worralls ironmonger's shops was empty.

We enquired about it, and moved in there at 1-5-0d a week (1-25p). I hired a garage across at the Navigation to keep my van with washing machines in for 7/6d a week.

With the help of Harriett, Harold, and Jack Beetham, we knocked an old settle copper wash boiler out of the kitchen and eventually decorated it all through.



During all this Jean was getting advanced with her pregnancy. I was of course still suffering every so often with my stomach ulcers, they weren't sympathy pains.

One of my washing machines customers was Mrs. Shaw, Marshall Shaw's mother. At that time they were still at the garage opposite the Pineapple, living in the house next to the old garage. All pulled down now and the new Renault garage built there.

Old Mr. Shaw (Malcolm) was still alive then, most of their business was petrol sales, and motor repairs, which was Marshall's job. (He is a time served motor engineer as well as a funeral director). They had a couple of Limousines which were used for taxi work and funeral cars. Marshall was a drummer with Joe Kemps dance band. (Joe was a Marple chap). Marshall would be out every Saturday night drumming, and Barry his younger brother would be out courting. So, Mrs. Shaw, who did all the bookings for the taxis asked me if I would do these regular Saturday night bookings and any others that came in. She used to offer me money but I wasn't really bothered because they didn't make much out of it, and I usually got tips.

I became very friendly with the Shaw's especially old Mrs. Shaw; she originated from North Walsham, where my mother came from. Jean started in labour with Jayne, I took her to Aspland maternity hospital in Hyde, in my van. Jayne was born on the 4th. December 1958, on her mother's birthday. Jayne tells the story that when I first saw her, I said, that she looked like a monkey, I do not think that was true actually. She was dark skinned but to me she was beautiful, and I was so proud of being a father, I couldn't wait to tell everybody.

When Jean was ready to come home, Mrs. Shaw told me that I wasn't bringing her home in the washing machine van; I had to take the Austin Sheerline Princess limousine to bring her home.

Aspland maternity home is a very big house off Mottram Road, Hyde. It was traditional that when mother and baby were leaving the matron always carried the baby out. When I opened the door of the Austin Princess for Jean to get in, the Matron said "oh this is a nice car isn't it", I didn't bother telling her that it had been loaned.

The accommodation we had, was adequate, we were in the center of the village, and just across the road was the garage I rented from the Navigation to keep my van and machines in.

Winter was a difficult time with the machines, besides the problem on some of the roads with snow and ice, I had to make sure there was no water left in the pumps otherwise they would freeze and split the pump chamber.

My washing machine service was spreading out. I had customers in Mellor, Bowden's Farm, Ley Lane and Sandy Lane Ludworth, as far out as the Commercial Inn, at Chisworth, now the Hunters, Mill Brow, Strines, which

included The Sportsman's Arms, The Royal Oak, and Brophy the cattle dealer at the White Cottage.

Working the two days in Stockport was hard work. I was doing the flats on Hillgate, which were four floors, with no lifts. The flats in Edgeley were eight floors, and had lifts but, they didn't always work, it was hard work carrying the machines up several flights of stairs.

I was also beginning to be a bit choosy about the customers I took on in some of these flats. Some were nice people but, there were others that I avoided.

My headquarters in Stockport was still Khans Oriental restaurant, our friendship continued, and we helped each other mutually. Khan's command of English was very limited. He had served in the Merchant Navy during the war. Being a British citizen from Pakistan he was allowed to settle in this country after marrying Jean. One thing that we had in common was that we had both been in the Merchant Navy, which was relevant with me being able to understand his limited verbal knowledge of English. He had great difficulty in reading and writing, which I helped him with.

There were certain people who did try to take advantage of him, but he trusted me and I advised him on a few matters. One of the first, was his accounts, and legal matters. This was when Maureen started to help him by setting out his accounting system. Maureen at that time worked for a Stockport firm of solicitors, (Walls Johnston & Co.) whose offices were down from the market place. A couple of evenings a week she would go to Khans and do his books after she finished at the solicitor's office.

The Oriental on Hillgate was the first actual Indian type restaurant outside Manchester. Trade was increasing, he had already extended up to the first floor, and he planned to expand up to the second floor, moving his staff who lived on the second floor into where he lived across the road.

In order to do this it meant that he would have to move himself and his wife and two children out of where they were living, so after searching the local papers for houses for sale, I took him in my van to look at a few properties and he finally settled on one off Didsbury Road, Elmtree Drive, Heaton Norris. It was a modern semi detached.

The firm that Maureen worked for acted as his solicitors, and so he moved in, and his Pakistani staff moved to where he had been living, so he extended the restaurant up another floor.

I had already been taking Khan out in my van, teaching him the rudiments of driving, it was a bit difficult, and so I advised him to go to a driving school for professional tuition. The thing about Khan was that he was not short of intelligence and if he was going to do anything, he wanted to do it yesterday, consequently he didn't book one or two, one hour lessons a week, he booked two and three hours a day every day of the week.

After he had had the second floor fitted out, (decorating, carpets, lighting and furniture) all top quality, with a traveling dumbwaiter from the ground floor kitchen to the two upper restaurant floors, he of course needed more crockery. The best place to buy crockery of the same design (Indian Tree) was the actual potteries in Staffordshire. We set off one day after I had taken my machines out, for this pottery in Staffordshire that specialized in hotel quality crockery, where he had bought his original stock.

He wanted a full set, enough for another thirty covers, dinner and side plates, soup bowls, cups saucers etc. It was very heavy stuff, when it was loaded in my van, the chassis was down at the back and the wheels were up at the front.

A lot of the trade at the restaurant came after the cinemas and pubs had closed and he could be busy till one o'clock in the morning. It was at this particular time when it was starting to get popular for people to go for a meal after a night out. Previously it had only been possible to call at the fish and chip shops and eating them out of the paper on the way home. Some chip shops had eat in places, and they would be queuing up to get in there. Khans was the first place in Stockport to cater for the Indian Restaurant trade, so from ten o'clock onwards it would be very busy.

The biggest percentages of customers were decent people, but as usual when people had taken in a skin full of booze their manners slipped, and they would get quite rude with staff. Some of them arguing about their bills at the same time giving the Pakistani waiters a load of verbal abuse, which they didn't understand. Khan had me going down at weekend to help out along with Khans wife Jean to sort out problems. There were the odd occasions when they had finished their meal, they would jump up from the table, out through the door, doing a runner up Hillgate with Jean and I running after them. So when we could see some of the customers getting a bit boisterous we would lock the door, Jean and I standing there to calm them down, and persuading them to pay up. Sometime Jeans language in her Glaswegian accent was a bit choice.

Khan went in for his driving test and failed. He instructed the driving school to apply for the first cancellation after the compulsory thirty-day period. So he took it again after about five weeks and passed. How he got over knowing the highway code, I don't know, I think he got one of his Pakistani friends from Manchester who had passed his driving test, to help him with the translations.

Like I said with Khan, everything had to happen yesterday. Before his second test date, I had taken him down to Quick's in Manchester, and he settled on a new Ford Prefect, which would cost about £500 in those days. He had it delivered to his house, ready for when he passed his test. Insurance wasn't a problem for new drivers in those days.

Still on Khan, the premises in Stockport were doing very well, and he wanted to branch out into other areas. Together we were searching the evening paper for suitable premises. The first one he bought was in Henry Square, Ashton-

under-Lyne, just as you are going into the town. It was a big double fronted place, and it wanted a lot doing to it, within six months he had it open. It was shortly after this that I sold the washing machine business, so I didn't see as much of him.

After he had opened the place in Ashton and got it running with a manager in there, he bought his first premises in Hazel Grove. It had been a bakers and confectioners, on the corner of Grundy Street. It is a large property, with a lot of buildings at the back, which used to be the bakery.

Khan's next restaurant was in Sale. I never got to see that one, so I didn't know much about it. He then bought a place opposite the Rising Sun at the bottom of Hazel Grove. He called that one the Rawalpindi, its still there and I think it is still trading under that name. At the time he opened that one he sold the one at the corner of Grundy Street. He then bought a hotel somewhere in Scotland. This of course was a few years later when I had moved into the Navigation. He was telling me about this hotel he was going to buy in Scotland, one night when I went into the Rawalpindi, and asked me if I would be interested in moving up there and running it for him. It was too big a risk, I turned him down. I don't think he had it long before he sold it again.

The last place he bought was in between the Bamford Arms and the crematorium, I think that started of with the name Rawalpindi. He put a large extension on the back of this place, it could easily hold 100 persons, and had a big car park at the back and side.

He never seemed to have more than a couple of places at a time, as he bought one he would sell one off. When he got the one up and running near the Bamford Arms he sold all the others off and concentrated on that one. Liz and I celebrated our wedding there in 1976. Khan has sold that one now, at first it was a Greek Taverna, I don't know what it is now. He will of course now be in his eighties, his children will all be married (he had five). Jean apparently left him some years ago. She would get a nice settlement figure. He certainly worked hard, used his brains and he must have made a lot of money. I last saw him about nine years ago, before he sold his last place. He had started wearing a wig, and he did look a rum bugger. I last saw him in 1992 when I was doing a relief at the Brington Arms in Portwood, Liz and I went in for lunch on Sunday after we had closed in the afternoon, and he would not let us pay for the meal and drinks we had. That was the last time I ever saw Khan, I don't know what became of him, or even if he is still alive. I liked Khan, he was one of the decent hard working Pakistanis and we have been friends since 1958.

It was now 1959, and we were still improving the property we were in. The bathroom was very old fashioned and looked a mess. We decided to have a new bath (still cast iron in those days), washbasin and toilet. A friend of Jack Beetham did it with the help of Jack.

The summer of 1959 was one of the hottest on record, the reservoirs were drying up, water being turned off for most of the day. The local authorities put

up standpipes, in order to conserve water. This of course was not doing my washing machine business much good.

We all know that you need water for washing, so I was diversifying by going round garages collecting scrap tyres, taking them to a place in Cheadle Heath. (Morrisons Supermarket is on that land now) It was a collecting place for tyres. If the casings were good you would get a price for them, depending on the size, sometimes up to £5.

The good tyres were sent off for remolding. If the casings were no good you just got sixpence, the scrap value. I could fit between 12 and 20 tyres in my van, depending on the size. Out of that number I might get a couple with good casings, which would make me a days wage and pay for my petrol. Other days they could be all scrap, so I had lost money. But it was a good fill in during the water shortage, and at other times.

At the back of the kitchen to the flat was a flagged yard, surrounded with a brick wall, with a gate leading out onto the right of way for all the properties. The Worralls had a long garage at the end of this right of way, where they had a circular saw for cutting wood, and other bits of engineering equipment.

The Marple Band Building fund now owns the garage and the land surrounding it. One day in the near future, we, on the Building Committee, hope to build a band room on there.

The right of way was only ten feet in width, just wide enough to get a car or small van down. There were iron railings and a line of trees on the other side of the right of way. and then there was an embankment, dropping down into the canal arm, which led from the Peak Forest canal into the Hollins Mill.

The mill had now been demolished. The canal arm had been blocked off at its junction with the Peak Forest, and also the bridge, which carried the road going into the Memorial Park, had been blocked off and filled in. It left this stretch of the canal, about 200 yards, and about two to three feet deep as a stagnant stretch of water. The field drains from the parks also drained into that stretch, and still do.

With the hot summer, this stretch of the canal arm had practically dried out. In normal times there was a smell from it, but with the hot summer it smelled just like monsoon ditches in Singapore, (remember them in part one?). Plus all the rubbish that had been tipped in there had become visible, old prams, bits of furniture, wheels, tyres, just about everything people wanted to get rid of. It was disgusting, and at the edge of the Memorial Park, the center of attraction in Marple.

It was during one of these hot summer days that Jayne, who was now six months old, was outside in her pram, with a sun canopy shading her, and a cat net covering the pram, when suddenly there was a terrific scream from her. We were both in the house at the time, and dashed out to her. There was blood coming from what appeared to be a bite on the left side of her cheek.

It was obviously a rat bite, there were signs of them in the canal arm. It could smell the milk on Jayne. I immediately went up to the Council offices and reported it to Ernie Shatlock who was in charge of public health and everything else to do with Marple Urban District Council.

At the time they were widening Strines Road by digging into the embankment, loading the dirt into lorries and taking it down to the Marple tip, which was down at the bottom of the Lakes Road. I did mention this to Ernie Shatlock that instead of tipping it down the tip why didn't they fill the rat infested stinking ditch in with it.

He had not got an answer for that, but, I did tell him at the time that I was getting the press involved with the matter. Both the Stockport Express and the North Cheshire Herald ran stories on it, and within a couple of weeks the canal arm was filled in.

We must have had Jayne to the doctor about the rat bite, and I think she would have been given some anti-biotics. Up to now (2002) I don't think she has had any effects from it (Ian and the boys may have noticed some since).

Next door to our flat, (10 Stockport Road), were two flats, one on the ground floor, the other above it. Both belonged to the company that owned the cinema. The people who lived in the top flat were called Alexander. Mrs. Alexander had two young children, and the press took a picture of Jean and Mrs. Alexander pointing at the ditch. The people in the bottom flat were called Corbett, Janet Corbett's mother and father. Mr. Corbett, was a coalman, delivering coal to houses, before there was central heating. The manager of the cinema at that time was Laurence Corbett, (brother of the coalman).

At the time cinemas were having a hard time, television was taking over, and the company that owned it closed it down in the early sixties. A chap called Travis bought the cinema with the idea of opening it has a Bingo hall, but Marple council would not grant a license for it. I also think there would be a restriction on it, because it had once been some sort of chapel, which had been built by the Carver family. There is talk at the present (2002) that Wetherspoons, the pub company are interested in buying it, but I think the same restriction will apply.

The two flats next to the cinema were sold to Mr. Travis at the same time. He was not interested in renting flats out, he wanted a bigger return for his investment, so, he turned the bottom one into a shop, with accommodation upstairs. The shop was rented by someone selling up market children's clothing, and traded for two or three years, but, like all small businesses it was suffering from strong competition.

A person by the name of Alice Sutherland took it over as a children's wear shop, sold all the stock, and then applied for a wine bar license. At the time that Mr. Travis bought the cinema, he was buying up a lot of property in the center of Marple, including the Co-op buildings next to Nat-West bank. This

was the clothing and boot and shoe department, now rented out to Helen Winterson's. The other part is at this particular time a computer shop. Mr. Travis also owns the furniture shop, which was Vernon's, now Edel Carpets.

When Alice applied for a wine bar license, which was later up graded to a full drinks license, it automatically increased the value of his property to the status of a public house, without any cost to him. The same property has changed hands a few times since Alice Sutherland opened it as a wine bar. A couple of new tenants have gone bankrupt and it has on one occasions been closed for a couple of years. It opened up again in late 2001 as an up market eating house, but it won t last.

I am jumping about 20 years ahead at this point so I will come back to 1959. We had by now spent a bit of money improving the accommodation that we had, I will stop calling it a flat, because apart from the shop part at the front, it went up two levels, the ground floor was living room and kitchen, the first floor was two bedrooms, bathroom and toilet, and above that was an attic bedroom.

I have mentioned that we decorated it all through, and we had purchased all the paint and wallpaper from Mr. & Mrs. Worrall, who owned the property, and we had put new bathroom fittings in. What we spent then compared to today's prices would seem like peanuts, but to us, then, it was a lot of money.

The Worralls also had two petrol pumps, which were situated each side of the alleyway down the side of the shop. There had originally been two small cottages down the alleyway, but they had been knocked down a couple of years before we moved there.

I also bought all my petrol from Worralls, in all I was a good customer. It would be early in 1960 that Mr. Worrall asked me to move out because he needed the accommodation for storage. It did come as a bit of a shock after we had spent a lot of money with him and improved his property at our expense. He certainly didn't need it for storage because, when I think back, the writing was on the wall for all small businesses. He was obviously thinking of selling the business and property in the future. I did mention to Mr. Worrall that we had spent a lot of money, in the 18 months we had lived there, and most of the materials had been purchased from him. I asked him if he would be compensating us for the improvements we had made to his property. The answer was negative.

## **WE BUY OUR FIRST HOUSE**

We were fortunate to find a property within our price range, number 36, Church Lane. We paid £600 for it, and we obtained a mortgage through the Marple council, at a fixed interest rate of about 6%, for 25 years paying £18 per quarter, just over £6 a month.

We moved in sometime in 1960. There was no bathroom, and it was an outside toilet. No hot water, and no power plugs. With my limited knowledge of electrical work (which can be dangerous) I fixed a few plugs in (not ring main), and wired a water heater into the kitchen.

We managed. Baths were taken at 30 Turner Road. The property had previously been rented, and as they came empty the landlord was selling them off. Like all rented properties it had been sadly neglected, so once again we started decorating it all through. I got one of my washing machine customers to re-point it, and another washing machine customer decorated all the outside paintwork. Jack Beetham put a new front door on, and flushed all the panel doors for us, which was the style in those days.

The Navigation changed hands late 1959 or early 60's. The place didn't seem to have the same family atmosphere after the Millington's left. After we moved into Church Lane we started going into the Ring O Bells more often. We knew a lot of people who went in there so it became our local.

Mrs. Gordon was a widower, her husband Jim died just before I moved to Marple. She ran the Ring O Bells with the help of her sister "Doris", Bob Tavener,s wife. Since Jim Gordon died Bob looked after the cellar at the Ringers, but he worked shifts and was not always available to see to the cellar. Mrs. Gordon hadn't got a clue about the cellar, she couldn't even change a barrel. So, if something went wrong and I was in, she would ask me to fix it. Eventually Bob asked me if I would take over looking after the cellar for him, which I did for a few years.

I was still working hard with my washing machines, and every two or three months suffering with my stomach pains. The government of the time, (I think it was conservative), boosted the economy by lowering the deposit rate on all hire purchase goods, and extending the period of repayment.

The writing was on the wall, and more and more of my customers were buying their own machines, with a 15% deposit and a two-year repayment period. I now had a family and a mortgage, so I seriously had to consider my options, which wasn't many. One of Jeans relations was an insurance agent for the London & Manchester Insurance Company, which had an office on the A6. On the same side and lower down than the Infirmary (now offices and flats).

This relation said that there was a book going with this Company, and that he would introduce me to the manager. Now I will digress a little here by saying that this relation had made a good living out of selling insurance. but, here again you have got to have the stomach for it.

Insurance is a very complicated business. For a start you are not selling an actual product, insurance is invisible, you are selling them the idea of investing in the future, either for themselves or for their family when they pass on. Today they are known as financial advisers. and today you have to be qualified to go out and sell it.



This relation (whose name avoids my memory), was the husband of one of Harold's sisters. He thought he was doing me a good turn, and in a way he was.

I was left with a dilemma, I didn't want to let my remaining customers down, also what was I to do with my six washing machines, the spares and other bits and pieces.

I put an advertisement in the Evening News under businesses for sale. I worded it in such a way that it would attract someone with an electrical and mechanical background wanting to start up on his or her own. Sure enough I got two or three phone calls that same night. A couple of them were too far out of the district to be of any benefit to themselves or the customers. But one, whose name was Gerry Cartwright, he lived just off Hillgate. He was keen, and he came up to see me that night.

He was a qualified electrician and at the time was working on maintenance at Ferranti's in Wythenshawe. He wanted to set up on his own doing house wiring and repairs. But, he needed something to start himself off, and bring in a bit of money to keep him going until he got established, he was married with two children.

I had advertised the round and six machines for £200, I was keeping the van. He agreed to pay the price because it was just what he was looking for. There were just two problems, one, he had some money, but not £200 and two, he hadn't got a van. I had the solution to both of his problems, so he took the next day off work, and along with me, went to see good old Mr. Winter at the District Bank.

Mr. Winter had that smile on his face again, (my business ideas seemed to amuse him). I introduced him to Gerry, and told him of our plans. He sent out for my bank details, (no computers then to bring up your details), and he could see that although I wasn't making a fortune, I was keeping my head above water, and had even gone in for buying my own house. He questioned Gerry (who, had never had a bank account before) because he didn't know him from Adam, I had only met him the night before. Gerry was living in his own house, which was a little two up and two down terrace on Hillgate.

Mr. Winter opened a current account for Gerry with a £200 loan. It was a bit of good business for the Bank. Gerry didn't make a fortune with the washing machines but he did build up a nice little business doing electrical work and had two or three men working for him on building sites. Years later, when I was in the Navigation, I would occasionally bump into him, I don't know where he lives now, but I would gamble that he still banks in Marple.

The second problem for Gerry, was transport. I knew that they had a van at Compstall Co-op, it was a 10cwt. Morris which had been used by the furniture department and, was on its last legs. So we both went down to see Albert Bradshaw, who I had helped out over the last 12 months with my own van when one of theirs was off the road.

Gerry bought the Morris 10cwt. for £15. It was a start, and also a death trap, the brakes and a few other things didn't work very well on it. There was no M.O.T.. in those days, if there had been they would have written it off. I started with the London and Manchester Insurance Company some time in 1960. It was a good thing I had the van as transport, otherwise I could never have covered the distances I had to travel.

For the first couple of weeks the manager came out with me to show me the round (debit they called it) and how to go about selling more insurance. The debit was approximately £100 a week, collectable, and for collecting that amount you got something like 10% plus a few shillings expenses.

You had to rely on new business to make a decent living, and then you got thirteen times what the extra debit was. For that you had to wait thirteen weeks, if it lapsed in that time you didn't get any commission, if it lapsed before twelve months you got a proportion knocked off your wages.

My round or book covered Bramhall, Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme, Edgeley, Shaw Heath, Cale Green, Davenport, Great Moor, Offerton, Hazel Grove, High Lane and Marple. Altogether, I was covering about 200 miles a week. Needless to say I was searching the paper every night for another job, and my ulcers started to play up even more.

### **I JOIN HOOVER LIMITED**

Searching the Evening News about the middle of 1960, I came across an advertisement for sales service reps. with Hoover Ltd. with the address of the Manchester district office on Dickinson Road, Levenshulme. I knew the place very well because I was always down there ordering and paying for parts for the washing machines, then collecting them at Daisy works on the main A6, opposite the main Manchester Police head quarters.

I phoned up the next day, and arranged to go for an interview that week I reported to the offices one evening and was taken upstairs to wait my turn to go in for the interview. I was shown into the office of the manager of the Manchester south district. Mr. Harris. He was a fairly well built man, and he was dressed in an immaculate dark suit with a sparkling white shirt with tie. As soon as he spoke, it was obvious the man had had a very good education. The usual type of opening questions at an interview, my age, where I lived, previous employment, for that I gave him my Seaman's Discharge book. ( that puzzled him a bit). I told him what I had done since I had left the sea. Then he asked me if I had had any electrical experience, and I gave him one of my washing machine hire leaflets. He read it and was intrigued that I used Hoover machines, and that I kept them repaired myself, purchasing the parts from the office downstairs.

I had not mentioned that I had already sold the business, and was working at that time in insurance. He asked me why I was giving it up. My reply to that was that I wanted to work in appliances, especially Hoover. He went on to

explain to me about the Company. That it was the biggest domestic appliance company world wide, the code of conduct of their sales service representatives, their dress code and general manner with users. (Note! users not customers).

He also explained that they had to be very selective in the persons they employed because it cost X amount of £ to train each sales service rep. He was coming to the end of the interview when he said to me, "suppose I tell you that you are not the type of person we are looking for". I was a bit taken aback by that, my reply was that for the time being I would carry on hiring, selling, and repairing washing machines and vacuum cleaners. I think that convinced him that I was keen. He then explained to me that I would be going to their training school in Nottingham for five weeks, board and lodgings provided plus a starting salary of just £7 a week, which was the basic pay.

Before leaving, Mr. Harris handed me some papers, which set out information about the Company and what their expectations were from any employee who was employed as a sales service representative. I was told that if I was successful in passing out from the Nottingham training school, I would be joining the Buxton unit of the Manchester South district. The manager of the Buxton unit was a Mr. Fred Kennerly. He would be contacting me to arrange for me to spend a day with one of his sales/service reps, so I would have an idea of what Hoover Ltd. was all about.

The next day, I went into the London & Manchester offices and handed my notice in. I did have most of the £200 I had sold the washing machine business for, which would help to get us through the period I would be in Nottingham, training for Hoover Ltd. on just £7 a week. About ten days after my interview, I received confirmation from the Manchester office giving me a date to report to Nottingham and the address of the accommodation where I would be staying. I also was contacted by Fred Kennerly to meet him at the Electricity Board showrooms on Market Street in New Mills at nine o'clock on this particular day.

Fred was a chap in his mid forties, and was dressed in a very smart suit. He had this chap with him called Eddie, (surname I have forgotten). He was also smartly dressed, spoke with a southern accent, but he actually lived in Buxton. Eddie was a very nice chap, he had been with the Company less than two years, and was totally Hoover brainwashed. He was the chap I was going to spend the day with to see what the job entailed.

At the time he was covering a large area, that's why they were taking me on to take over some of the area. I left my van parked in the street at the back of the electricity board and joined Eddie. He first of all called at the furniture department of the New Mills Co-op and we saw the manager their "Bill Barton", where he picked up an R.F.S. (request for service). We left there and went to Arnold & Plants shop on Market Street.

These shops were all authorized Hoover dealers, without this authorized dealership, shops were not allowed to stock and sell Hoover products. That

was in the early 1960's. Also shops were not allowed to sell their products below the retail price. Hoover dealerships were much sort after by electrical dealers, and the Company was very strict about the shops and the density of the population in a particular area before they would grant new dealerships.

The advantage to the dealer was that there was a sales service rep. calling on them three or four times a week, in some cases every day. The representative would take orders from the dealers and send them off to the district office. Once the order was delivered to the dealer, the rep who was out on the area servicing the users products would be endeavouring to sell new machines into the home of the present user and also calling on neighbours who you found out by conversation did not possess a Hoover product. You always carried a junior and a senior vacuum cleaner with you, which belonged to one of the dealers, ready to demonstrate how efficient the new product was.

One of the closing points of a sale, (of which there were several) was to ask them a D.P.S. (Dual Positive Suggestion) and a good one was which dealer would they like to purchase the product from. Through general conversation you had already found out where they had bought their television or carpet from, so you would use those two names. For example "would you like to purchase it from Frank Swindells, where you bought your television from, or from Garsides where you bought this lovely carpet from"?

I spent this full day with Eddie, he was very good, and I enjoyed every minute of it. In the day we did about five service calls, a bit of cold canvassing, that is neighbours in the area, two or three demonstrations. I think he made a couple of sales. It was a very interesting day, and it inspired me to get through the training course and start on the job.

My instructions were to travel down to Nottingham, and report to the Hoover training offices, which were in the centre of Nottingham for nine o'clock on a Monday morning. So I set off in the van on the Sunday night. I had been given a map showing where the digs were, which was near the Trent Bridge cricket ground. I found the road where I would be staying. They were all big Victorian houses on the road, and were used as bed and breakfast establishments.

There were already some blokes at the accommodation, from down south and up north as far as Barrow-in-Furness. The lady who ran the place showed me into a room with two beds in it, the lad I was sharing with was from Ilkley, Yorkshire. It turned out that there were about 12 of us on this course; we were all staying in this house, which had four floors. On the ground floor was the dining room, where we had breakfast and an evening meal. The first two floors were the shared bedrooms with a bathroom with toilet on each floor. The top floor would be the owner's accommodation.

At that time, 1960, the trolley buses were still running in Nottingham, the landlady in the digs told us all to get a bus at the top of the road which would take us over the river Trent into the city centre where the Hoover offices were.

It was nothing new to me, being thrown together with a lot of strangers. We soon got to know each other's names, and where we were from. We sorted

ourselves out into pals. As usual (birds of a feather) I paled up with a thick head from Birmingham, (I must attract these Brummies, remember the lad I paled up with when I joined the Vindicatrix, in 1944, mentioned in the first part of my life storey).

The chap in charge introduced himself to us, his name was Mr. Plowright, and he was the sales instructor. A tall chap and as usual very smartly dressed, he had a very educated manner in speech and presentation. The technical instructor was a much older chap by the name of Mr. Crane. He was to instruct us on the technical side of all the Hoover machines, vacuum cleaners and washing machines. He certainly knew every nut and screw in every Hoover product and his job was to pass this knowledge over to us. At the end of each week there was an exam, it was going to be a hard five-week slog.

The day began at 9:00 am till 12:15, with a 15-minute tea break in the morning and then from 1:30 pm till finishing at 5:00 pm. All the time you were taking notes in notebooks that were provided. We were also provided with a book of "A 4" to copy into from your rough daily notes. The instructors marked this each day, just like being back at school. The day was alternated between sales (Mr Plowright) and service (Mr. Crane). I found all the instruction very interesting. It would take me ages to write up at night from the rough notes. As usual with me I had to put twice as much into it to get a result.

There were a few clever ones amongst us with secondary school education who could take it in better than me. One of the chaps who came from Barrow was a professional rugby player, he played for Workington Town. There was he and this lad from Birmingham, and it was obvious that they were not going to get through the course. They didn't bother writing much up in their books, both being single they were only interested in getting down to the pub at night.

Every Saturday morning was exam day, you were told to revise what you had done during the week ready for the exam on Saturday morning. Your sales exam consisted of oral and written exams. The service exam was written and practical. After the exam you were free to go home as long as you were back there in the classroom by 9:00 am Monday morning. In those five weeks I learned all the short cuts between Marple and Nottingham. I could do it in one and a half hours

There was a pass mark of 70% on all exams. We all got through the first two weeks not knowing what our marks were, we were told that the third week was the most crucial, if you did not come up to standard by then you were out.

At the beginning of the fourth week we were all called into the office individually and informed of our progress. That was when the first casualty came, the lad from Birmingham, it was obvious he was not cut out for it. He would never have made a salesman, and he hadn't a clue about electrics. As for myself I was told that I had just got through.

At the beginning of the fifth week the rugby player got the chop, I was told I had just got through again. We were now on our final week, and we were

really being put to the test. The final exams were to be taken all day Friday. I was a bag of nerves. The exams finished early afternoon, and then we were sent off for a couple of hours while some of the Nottingham managers who had been in on the exams, assessed the results.

Once again we were all called in individually and told our fate, I again had just scraped through, but I had done it. That Friday night we were all out celebrating with the instructors. Checking the tools that we had already been issued with, and issuing other tools took up Saturday morning and equipment we would need, like sales and service stationary, spares for all the different machines, service record books with prices of all the spares. In total there must have been between £100 to £200 worth of equipment, equal to about a £1,000 today. It all had to be signed for, and then off home to be let loose on the unsuspecting public on the Monday morning with your area manager.

### **I AM NOW A HOOVER REPRESENTATIVE**

I met up with Fred Kennerly (my area manager) at the electricity showrooms in Disley on the Monday morning. Fred introduced me to the two staff at the showrooms at the same time picking up a couple of R. F. S (request for service) both in the Disley area. From there we visited the furniture and electrical department of the Disley Co-op. the only other Hoover dealer in Disley. They turned out to be a good dealer by the fact that at that particular time, most of the working class people of Disley were members of the Co-op.

In the Disley, New Mills, Marple, and Hazel Grove area there were a lot of mills and engineering factories, so the population of Disley had a variety of occupations that they could choose from. Most of the working class people were living in terraced houses, of which there was a lot, most of them were rented properties. There was also a good-sized local council estate. So thinking about it now they would not be tied up with mortgages and would have a lot more floating cash.

When we went into the Disley Co-op., they had made a couple of sales over the weekend, which was a good start for me. I think one, was a junior cleaner (model 1334) the other a twin tub Hoovermatic washing machine.

The Hoover dealership benefits were realized when the products were sold. In most sales the Hoover rep. would undertake the delivery of the machine, make sure the machine was installed correctly, and the mains plug wired up correctly, then the user was given a full demonstration of its correct use, after which the guarantee would be issued, and a service record card made out and signed by the user, authorizing a Hoover rep. to call at regular intervals to check the machine and offer service if needed.

With Fred Kennerly we loaded the machines and delivered and demonstrated them to the users. That was a good start to the job, I had already earned £4-5-0 commission, and in those days the Hoovermatic carried a £3.

Commission, a Hoover junior £1-5-0, which was paid the week after the guarantee card was submitted.

The next job was to clear the two R.F.S's, which were in the Park Road area (posh area) near Carr Brow. After that we called on Ken Williamson in High Lane. He was an electrical contractor and had a shop nearly opposite the Red Lion pub, and was the local Hoover dealer. I had known Ken Williamson since I was a kid. At one time the family lived in the side cottage of Clock Cottage when we lived round the back. His dad was a builder and he built the three big detached houses opposite the Dog & Partridge, the middle one the Williamsons occupied themselves.

They had two sons, Donald, the eldest, and Kenneth. Donald went in with his dad building, and Ken served his time at Hallams, the electrical contractors in Stockport. Ken started on his own, electrical contracting, and at the time that I started with Hoover he had about 30 men working for him plus the shop, which used to be the coach house for a big house that was there, many years ago. It was pulled down and first of all High Lane British Legion built a club house, and after they went bankrupt it was taken over and it is now the library in High Lane.

I have mentioned previously about learning to dance at Hartley House, when I was fifteen. Twenty stone Anna Arden played the piano, and Ken Williamson played the drums, so Ken and I knew each other well, which was good for both Ken and Hoover Ltd.

Fred Kennerly was with me on and off for the first couple of weeks. I was settling into the job and enjoying it. I only had the three dealers, the two in Disley and one in High Lane plus a shared one at the bottom of Hazel Grove, opposite the Rising Sun pub "Samways". It was shared because any sales or R.F.S's originating from that dealer, from the Rising Sun, up the A6 as far as the New Mills boundary were mine.

The biggest area of land in Disley, and High Lane was taken over by big detached houses, some of them with an acre or two of land, in which would be their own tennis courts. Some had housekeepers, but most of them employed cleaners. Biggest majority had Hoover products, and when the housekeeper or daily help reported that the product wasn't working efficiently, they would either contact the electricity board in Disley or, contact our area office on Dickinson Road, who would send out an R.F.S. to me through the post.

Most of the residence in these big houses had accounts with the big stores in Manchester. Consequently if they bought any Hoover products and they were purchased through the big stores like Kendal's, Lewis's or Afleck & Brown. Most of these stores had their own female Hoover store demonstrator, who would sell the product and have it delivered to their home in the relevant stores delivery van. I would then receive a copy of the stores sales slip from our office. I would go along making sure the machine was correctly installed and give a full demonstration on its use, then getting the user to sign the

guarantee form and issue a service record card. After doing this I would be paid the commission of the sale.

The whole of Lyme Park estate was in my area. Besides all the farms and lodges, of which there were plenty, which housed the workers on the estate. I covered Lyme Hall itself, which is a National Trust Property run for them by Stockport M.B.C.

Now I must explain here, that on our last day at Hoover school, Mr Crane, the technical instructor, quickly ran through all the old pre-war machines, known as the four hundred, five hundred, seven hundred and eight hundred models. He did say, that we were very unlikely to come across any of them and no more spares were being manufactured for them, so the spares for them was very limited (Hoover guaranteed spares for thirty years on any of their products). Mr Crane dismantled one of each model to instruct us on them in case we came across any. The general idea was to sell them a new machine anyway. He went to a lot of trouble to explain the top bearing on these machines which actually had nine separate pieces, one of which was a spring, the eighth piece of the bearing was a cap that fitted over the other seven pieces and that was held in with a circlip.

I got a R.F.S. in the post from the Dickinson Road office for Lyme Hall itself; users name was Stockport M.B.C. the bill having to be sent there via the office. I got to Lyme Hall and was shown into the big ballroom on the first floor and told that someone would bring this machine. They did, and it turned out to be an eight hundred model. As usual I presented my professional confidence and asked if they could just bring me some newspaper they could leave me with it. (We always worked on newspaper). After they had left me alone I did the usual pre test on it and diagnosed that it just needed a good servicing. I thought, this is going to be good, I had never touched one of these before, so, I started to strip it down and committed the carnal sin, which Mr Crane had told us about, "always put your thumb on the top cap before releasing the circlip", I didn't, and the whole nine pieces flew all over this bloody big ballroom.

I started scrambling round this massive ballroom trying to find these nine pieces that made up this bearing. It was a warm summers day and I was sweating even more with the thought of not being able to put this machine back as I had found it, never mind servicing it. Thankfully I did at last gather all the bits together, what a relief. I put a new drive belt on it (the 612, a more recent model fitted the 800 series). I picked up the machine and my toolbox and looked for someone to sign my service sheet. I think they had forgotten I was there. It was the longest time I ever spent servicing a cleaner.

I covered High Lane and Disley and then Fred moved me to cover the whole of the Marple area that included Marple Bridge, Mellor and the whole of Compstall. It was a much bigger area, I had about 3,000 user cards for it and the dealers at the time were, the Electricity Board, Frank Swindells, Compstall Co-op, and Garsides.



I called on Ernie Want (Suttons) radio and television, who I knew very well and talked to him about the advantages of being a Hoover Authorized Dealer. I did of course have to get him to fill in the dealer application forms, with the name and address of two present suppliers and his bankers details, his premises details, like the shopping area and shop frontage, plus (and this was most important) his initial order. He said he would just order one senior and one junior cleaner. I told him that would not be any good for him or me, I pointed out that on the first day that his order would be delivered (about one month), I could personally sell both those cleaners in one day, then he would be out of stock for the month, and I would be left with no option but to sell them from another dealer. So, he reluctantly gave me an order for three of each cleaners plus two Hoovermatic washing machines and a 0321 power wringer.

I now had five dealers in the Marple area. When Ernie was accepted as a dealer and his stock was delivered, I called into see him and set a display up for him. While I was in his shop doing this, a lady walked in. She lived just round the corner on Derby Street, (there were terraced houses there then). She said "I have got a Hoover, its not working too well", I said "I will pop round and have a look at it for you", which I did, I told her what needed doing to it, went out to get my tool box, called back at Suttons and picked up the junior cleaner I had just set up for him. I went back to her house, put a new bag in and said, "Just try that". She was amazed how light and easy it was to use. I finished up getting her to sign the sale form and guarantee. That was Ernie's first sale; he had only taken delivery of all his order a couple of hours before. I sold another one for him in the afternoon, and persuaded him to give me an order for another six machines.

My job with Hoover was going very well, I looked forward to getting my van out in a morning and starting work, (I still rented the garage at the Navi). The job was demanding, we had to do 21 service calls a week, book and do fifteen demonstration a week (five washer and ten cleaner). Still only got £7 basic plus £1 a week towards tax and insurance on the vehicle 10/-d garage fee plus 4d. A mile. You had to make it with your commission, which was £3-10-0d on a Hoovermatic, £1-10-0d. on a senior and £1-5-0d on a junior. If you did at least one Hoovermatic a week plus three or four cleaners you were on a good wage.

It was the policy of the Company that every area had a meeting once a week. We in the High Peak area would meet at a pub in Whaley Bridge, "The White Hart", usually on a Wednesday afternoon, which was early closing day. Fred Kennerly started the meeting off by bringing us up to date on the modification of all products and any new products, which could be in the pipeline. Sometimes the area manager could attend these meetings. At the end of the meeting we would all have to verbally declare what our mid week sales figures were, so we all knew who was having a good week and who was not. After the meeting a meal was provided by the pub, (Hoover paid) then we would settle down to having a drink and a game of darts. There was about ten or twelve of us in the area so; it was a good social gathering.

It was at these meetings that I first met Derek Bramwell, Ray Oliver and Tom Boulton. Derek Bramwell covered the Bakewell area, which was the extreme limit of the Manchester South district. Beyond that was the start of the Midlands District.

Ray Oliver covered Hayfield, Chapel-en-le-Fifth, and Whaley Bridge. Tom Boulton covered most of the Buxton area. I mention all this because these three became a significant part, later in my life.

The Manchester South district of Hoover Ltd. also had a social club, which was organised by someone in the district office. In the summer they would organise car rallies on Sundays, and we would all meet up at places like Rudyard Lake, have a picnic and they would organise games for the kids, it was a really good social atmosphere, which gave us the chance to meet other families, bonding us together into one big Hoover family. This in turn helped our families to understand why we sometimes would be out late into the evening, selling Hoover to the public; in fact we all became Hoover brain washed.

It was at these Sunday socials that I met Derek Bramwell's wife Joyce, and his two daughters. Ray Oliver's wife Jessie, and his adopted daughter, and Tom Boulton's wife, whose family owned a big fruit and veg business in Buxton. At that time we only had Jayne, she would be two years old then.

The big event of the year would be the Annual dinner dance, usually held at Sale Locarno, which was a big entertainment complex on the Altrincham Road, Sale. Now demolished and a big office complex is there. It was to one of these dinner dances that Les Dawson brought his first wife Meg on their first date.

Every three months, or quarter, there would always be a district meeting, the purpose of which was to introduce the quarterly sales competition. These competitions were run as district and national sales events. There were always good prizes to be won at district level, and really exceptional prizes at national level, like a brand new car.

In the Manchester south district there would be between 80 and 100 reps at these meetings. So wherever we met it needed to have a big car park and would usually be a big pub with catering facilities. One such place that I remember well was a big pub in Wythenshawe. It was the summer time competition and the top prize was a trip to the Olympic games, which that year was being held in Rome.

At these meetings it had now become a bit of a talent show for Les (Dawson) who would always dress up in the appropriate gear and do a bit of a comic act in displaying the prizes on offer. In this case doing a bit of a sketch on the Olympic games, usually finishing with what later became the classical style piano playing of the then unheard of, "Les Dawson."

It was now 1961 and things were going well with my job, I was covering the whole of the Marple area. And was already well known with my washing machine hire business, but I was now known as the local Hoover man and seemed to be well respected. Compstall and Marple Bridge were very good areas. I picked up a R.F.S. (request for service) for one of the cottages on John Street, Compstall. It was a Monday morning and I finished up spending a couple of weeks in the village. In those days (forty years ago), Compstall was a very close-knit community. The Andrews family, who built and owned the Compstall Mill, built the village. The streets were, until the last twenty years, all named after the different members of the family. Now a lot of new houses have been built, trebling the size of the village.

Forty years ago the mill was still being used for what it was originally built for, cotton spinning mill, and 80% of the population of the village worked there. Some households had three or four members of the family working at the mill. The rents were very small, and the wages were average, so, there was no shortage of money.

If a vehicle pulled up on any of the streets, half a dozen doors would open to see what was happening. My van had Hoover sales service stickers on the windscreen and so word soon went round that the Hoover man was in the village. The neighbours would come knocking on the door asking me to go and look at their appliances.

It was a Hoover mans dream, the service calls that I was turning into sales, was unbelievable. There was a set trade in allowance for the users existing machine, which was deducted from the price of the new machine. All post war machines would carry up to £5 trade in allowance. The new Hoover junior vacuum cleaner was £30, less £5 trade in. They would just go upstairs, and go under the mattress, or wherever, and bring down the £25 balance in notes. My dealers were running out of machines, most of them were being sold through the Co-op so they could get the dividend. I was borrowing machines from other dealers to lend to the Co-op to keep the sales going. The trade in of course belonged to the dealer. I would take it back to their shop, make out a workshop-reconditioning request and send it off to the district office. It would then be collected and sent into the Daisy Works workshop where it would be fully reconditioned at a set price. They would look like new machines when they came back, except that they were the older models. The dealer could put his own mark up on them, and they would sell for between £15 and £20. I of course would get a service job allowance for the workshop reconditioning, and all I had done was make out a workshop repair request.

I was still helping Mrs Gordon at the Ring O Bells, doing her cellar for her and helping her by doing other bits of jobs. Mrs Gordon also took on a lot of outside bars at the Baths Hall during the winter, when the baths was closed for swimming, and opened up for dancing. She relied on me to organize the bars for her, and her sister Doris, with a couple of others who would help me run the bar. Mrs Gordon hadn't got a clue of how to organise these outside bars, and she could have been robbed blind. I had to keep my eyes on whoever was working the bar. Her sister Doris was always well oiled at the

end of the night, her glass of lemonade, which was continually full, was heavily laced with gin.

It was after doing one of these bars for Mrs Gordon that I got a memo from Mr Harris, our Hoover district manager, stating that it had been brought to his notice that I had been seen working behind the bar at the Marple baths, and that it was against company policy to be seen doing a second job, particularly behind a bar. As a consequence I had to tell Mrs Gordon that I could no longer help her out.

At that time a person by the name of Keith Phillips had started coming into the Ring O Bells, he was well known for working at the local pubs and the last place he had worked was the Hatters Arms, but Sadie, the new landlady who had recently married Ernie Davies after his first wife Betty had died, got rid of him. I knew he was looking for a chance to jump into a job at the Ring O Bells so I told Mrs Gordon to ask him to help her out, he was highly delighted, he hadn't got a clue about cellar work but, I gave him a few instructions on what to do. The draught beer sales were going down and down and Mrs Gordon would brag that the draymen had told her she had the best bottle sales of any pub in Marple. She hadn't got a clue herself about draught beer and couldn't pull a pint properly, even if it had been fit to drink. She didn't realise that was why she had the biggest bottle sales in the area, nobody could drink the draught

Doris Tavenor, Mrs Gordon's sister, lived with her husband Bob (mentioned earlier) and son who's name was Gordon, on Brickbridge Road, opposite the Ring O Bells. Mrs Gordon and Doris, although they were sisters, didn't get on with each other. They originated from the Gorton area of Manchester, but they both married well. Mrs Gordon used to put on airs and graces, always dressed in expensive clothes with loads of jewellery, and she would sit behind the bar with a tea tray with china tea cup and saucer with matching teapot, sugar basin and milk jug, (she was tea total), and put on her cut glass accent, until something happened that made her forget herself and she would come out with her broad Manchester accent. Doris was just the opposite, although she would dress in good clothes, she never forgot her roots and with loads of make up and lipstick on she would still talk with a broad Manchester accent.

Doris always wanted her own pub, and she applied to Wilson's Brewery for a tenancy. She took over the pub in Stalybridge which had the longest name of any pub in England, probably the world, called "The Thirteenth Cheshire Rifleman Volunteer Reserve" the locals just called it the Rifleman. It was a favourite haunt of the Stalybridge Band before they got their own band club.

Doris and Bob had only been in the pub a couple of weeks, when one night Bob came over with one of their barmen to visit Rose Norris, the landlady at the Jolly Sailor in Marple. They came over in the barman's car. On the way back he forgot to stop at a "T" junction and ran right under the back wheels of a big lorry. Bob was killed outright, the barman survived. He was a great bloke was Bob and he would have got on well with the locals. Doris stayed on at the Rifleman; she was there for fifteen to twenty years.

To come back to my job with Hoover, we had a standard control check from time to time on our service work. You might only get checked once in a couple of years, you were just picked at random. The person who did the checking was a chap called "Ewins". Mr. Ewins was one of the head technicians in North West. He would pick out three or four service calls that you had done the previous week, telling the user who he was, and that he had come to check that their machine had been serviced to the Hoover standards.

I received a memo from Mr. K. D. Walsh, who was the head of the whole of the Manchester district, to say he was very pleased to note from Mr. Ewins check on my work during the week ending 10th. June 1961, that I had achieved a standard of 90%., and remarked "This is a first class result and I trust you will maintain this high standard in the future". Needless to say I was very pleased with myself, I had struggled through my time at the Hoover training school but this proved I could do a good job.

About this time I changed my Ford Prefect van, which I had had from my washing machine hire days, and bought an Austin Cambridge saloon car. It was about two years old when I bought it, and was ideal for the job with having a fair sized boot and was low at the back, which made it easy to slide Hoovermatics and other washing machines into the boot. Besides, Jayne was coming up to four, and it wasn't ideal to carry her around in the back of the van

By the beginning of 1962, Hoover policy started to change. They had brought in a few top people from America with new ideas to improve productivity. What they did was to form all sales service personnel into groups of three. A group would consist of a supervisor/salesman and two service men. The service men had to do forty service calls a week and supply the supervisor with at least ten booked demonstrations to follow up. It was hard enough for me to do 21 service calls a week to the standard that I was doing them, so to do forty was impossible unless you cut corners, which I was not prepared to do. So the writing was on the wall for a few others and myself.

In the meantime, three of the Buxton lads had all left Hoover. Tom Boulton, Derek Bramwell, and Ray Oliver all resigned. They rented part of a jewellers shop on Hardwick Street just off Spring Gardens, in Buxton. The jeweller now only did watch and clock repairs so he didn't need much shop window or shop space. They divided up the shop window space with a partition, which gave them a very small display area, with a fair sized room at the back for repairs.

They then registered the name "Spalec" as a limited company and each of them put in £100 as shareholders. They applied for dealerships to Hotpoint, Servis, Morphy Richards, and of course Hoover Ltd.. They also opened an account with T. N. Robinson the electrical wholesalers in Stockport who very kindly supplied them with small appliances (kettles, irons, toasters) and lots of other things on three months sale or return basis.

I carried on with Hoover Ltd. for two or three weeks, struggling to do forty service calls a week, which I just found impossible to do with any degree of a

high standard. I decided to resign and start servicing on my own in the Marple area, where I was now well known. I held back about 1000 service record cards. Nobody asked me about them because I think it had been decided to run down the service side of Hoover Ltd. and hand it over to Sales/Service appointed dealers. I also held back all my specialist Hoover tools except the Megger, and also all of my small spares (some of which I still have today, forty years on).

I paid a visit to the lads at Buxton (Spalec Ltd), and they agreed to supply me with other spares that I needed. I was still selling machines of any make, which they were supplying me with, paying me commission on the sales.

I was actually selling more on my own in Marple than the three of them were selling in the whole of Buxton, and the extensive surrounding area. So the three of them decided to ask me to join them and become the fourth partner, putting in my £100 for shares. That meant another trip to Mr. Winter the bank manager, (who I never failed to amaze).

Business was doing well in Marple and very often one or even two of the partners would need to come down and help me with delivering and installing machines and help me with service work. It was at this particular time that Servis Washing Machines were running a sales competition with all their dealers. Dealers were set a target to achieve in a set period in their particular area. Our area covered the whole of the Peak District. The prize was a cheque for £50. Our target was six twin tub washing machines. I sold all the six in the Marple area, which didn't come under the Peak District. It was then decided by the four of us that we look for, and open premises in Marple

### **"SPALEC" OPENS IN MARPLE**

The site of the Hollins Mill had been cleared, back in 1958 and had been a vacant plot of land which had been handed over to the Marple U.D.C.. It was about 1960 that planning permission was granted by the council for a block of nine retail shops plus a supermarket at the end. Supermarkets were just starting to take off in a small way. Two or three small shops in Marple had already converted into self-service, like the corner shop in Coronation Street.

The contract to build the shops was given to a firm from Warrington, and financed by the Coal Board Superannuating Scheme. (Who still own them). When they were building them they had a lot of problems with the foundations due to the canal arm running near. (Mentioned earlier when a rat bit Jayne). They had to divert drains and pour tons of concrete in to stop the foundations filling with water. Ready mix concrete was just coming in at that time.

It took about two years to complete building The Hollins (which it is still called). The first one to open was John Williams's supermarket. They moved across the road from where the Italian Restaurant is now.

When they opened the first purpose built supermarket in Marple it had a cafe upstairs. You had to walk past the checkouts to go upstairs to the cafe. It didn't last long; it obviously wasn't paying because it was attracting some of the wrong type of people, mostly youngsters who would sit there for hours after buying one cup of tea. This deterred the better type of customers from using it. That was forty years ago and those youngsters will all now be grandparents.

When the nine shops were completed they did not have a shop front. The people who leased them had to put their own shop front in, and the rules in the leasing were strictly set out. The shops up near the supermarket were supposed to be for food retail only; other trades were to start at the opposite end. The next shop to open was Wise Ways dry cleaners, which was next to the end, the next one was a national firm of bakers, I can't remember the name now, it as changed hands with a couple of national bakers since, and is now run by Gregg's.

We at Spalec Ltd. had been looking at a few empty shops in Marple. One we looked at was once a shop known as the dairy, because they used to deliver milk round Marple. Littlewood's butchers are there now. We decided against that because it was dilapidated and needed too much money spending on it, plus not being near the main shopping area. We also looked at one on Derby Way, which had just been converted from a terraced house. There were three things against that, first, it was too small, second, it was only a couple of doors down from Albert Bennett, the television and electrical shop on the corner of Market Street and Derby Street (as it was called then before it was pedestrianized) Albert Bennett's is now a Thornton's chocolate and card shop. And thirdly, the guy who had converted it into a shop was a property dealer who had the upstairs as an office, and he wanted over £500 a year rent for it, (equal to £20 a week).

It was then decided that we would send off for details on the shops being built on the Hollins. When the details came back, they included all the restrictions on the properties. They were on a twenty five year all repairing lease, which also included the self contained two bed roomed flat upstairs for an annual rent of £720 per year plus rates.

We had a couple of meetings about it, also a meeting with our Bankers, accountant, and solicitor in Buxton. It seemed like a big risk but, compared to the shop on Derby Street it was a lot better, and we could rent the flat out upstairs which would defray some of the cost, so we decided to go for it, and signed a twenty five year lease on number nine. We had worked out that if we couldn't be near the supermarket, (which we were pleased about later), eventually, they would put some sort of pedestrian crossing there and we would be the first shop that would be on the other side of the crossing.

Mark was born on July 5<sup>th</sup>. 1962. Jean decided that she would not go into hospital, so, he was born in the front room of 36 Church Lane. Sister Turner, (one of the two local Midwives), had been visiting her, but when Jean went

into labour, Sister Tuner was on her day's off, so Sister Greenleaf from Marple Bridge attended the confinement.

It was at this time when I first met Liz. I was doing some cold calling on Ernocroft Road for servicing appliances. According to my Hoover record cards (which I failed to hand in when I left Hoover) number 28 had a Hoover cleaner that had not been serviced for years, so it seemed like a prosperous call. I hadn't reckoned on meeting a person like Dorothy (Liz's mum). You had more chance of selling ice to Eskimos than what you had of selling Dot anything, (completely different to her daughter, anybody could sell her anything). For a start the Hoover record card must have referred to the previous occupier of the house. The Masons didn't have a Hoover cleaner, and there was no chance of selling Mrs Mason one, but they did have a Hoover hand wringer washing machine, which I offered to look at. On checking the washing machine it was badly in need of a good servicing. God knows when it was last serviced, and it had been doing the washing for a family of six.

I told her what it needed and she agreed to have it done. Whilst in conversation I told her that we would shortly be opening one of the new shops on the Hollins. She jumped right in and asked if we would need any staff as her daughter who was eighteen and just left grammar school was looking for a job. Whilst I was kneeling down at the back of the washing machine her daughter walked in. That was my first meeting with Liz.

We didn't give her the job anyway; we started somebody called Cynthia who lived in Compstall. I think it did Liz a good turn anyway not getting the job because she rose to great heights in the insurance business.

After we had signed the lease for the shop the agents informed us that it had been decided to build a bank adjoining our property, which turned out to be Barclays. We didn't object to that, it could only make it better for us.

Once again we got the assistance of Jack Beetham who got a builder friend of his to put the shop front in and he did all the joinery work by putting a false ceiling in because it was too high. Jack put all the shelves in and display boards, building a demonstration kitchen at the rear end of the shop and fitting the back room of the premises out as a workshop with a big heavy workbench and shelves.

Ray Oliver, who was a qualified electrician, with me helping him, did all the electrical work. All four of us were sometimes working till midnight getting the place ready. We opened in September 1962, two months after Mark was born.

The shop floor was spacious and it took some filling with stock, which we didn't have, a lot of. Some stock we brought down from Buxton, washing machines and vacuum cleaners, other stock we got from T. N. Robinson's like kettles, irons, toasters, fridges etc. on sale or return. Some manufacturers did not sell through wholesalers like Robinson's; you had to have an approved direct dealership with manufacturers like Hoover, Hotpoint, Servis and English



Electric. You could get three months credit from these companies, but unlike Robinson's, it wasn't on sale or return, so every three months we would have some big bills to pay.

We had to have an opening promotion, so we took a half page advert in North Cheshire Herald, which had the biggest circulation in the area, (free papers had not come in then). We could not afford to have a celebrity to do the official opening for us, so, we got the then Marple carnival queen to do the honours. (Les Dawson was unknown then).

We also needed a sales promotion to kick start us, so we came up with the idea of issuing a draw ticket for every £5 spent. The prize was a Hoover Junior cleaner (1334 model), which retailed at £30. The promotion ran for four weeks, in which time we had issued a considerable number of draw tickets. We had sold a number of washing machines, and at £85, gave the purchaser 17 tickets.

After decking out the shop with bunting etc., once again the only celebrity we could afford was the carnival queen to draw the winning ticket out, and we got our old boss, Mr Harris the manager of Hoover Ltd. to present the Hoover Junior to the winner who happened to be a person on Station Road.

Market Street had been and still was the main shopping area in Marple. People were reluctant to cross the road, even though the traffic was only a fifth of what it is today. Those that did venture across were just window-shopping.

Next to Spalec was Wise Ways the dry cleaners. The only other shop open at that time was the bread shop plus the supermarket, which was a new shopping experience and was rather slow in taking off. However soon after we opened a person called on us to ask who had put our shop front in as he was taking the shop next to the dry cleaners, and opening it as a paint and wallpaper shop. They had other shops in the area under the name of "Fairhome". We gave him the name and phone number of the chap who had fitted ours, so up until the place was taken over by Bargain Booze in 1999 it had exactly the same shop front as Spalec.

The next one to open was the greengrocer. A chap called George Hayes first opened it. At that time he lived on Park Road, Disley and I knew him from there because I used to service his wife's Hoover appliances. He was usually at home in afternoons and I had had a few long chats with him. He had been one of the wholesalers on Smithfield Market and had also started opening shops in new shopping areas. His method was to put a cheap shop front in and the fittings inside were just boxes all round the walls with the stock in, and three serving boxes in the middle of the shop. Being a wholesaler in the market he knew all the best quality produce. He had a flat truck which he would go down to the market early each morning and come back piled up with fresh produce, set it all out in the shop and put a very small mark up on it, which gave him a big turnover with a moderate profit.

It didn't take long for his shop to catch on in Marple, they were even coming from all the surrounding areas for top quality fruit and veg at very reasonable prices, which of course was good for the other shops on the Hollins trying to attract customers from the other side of Marple.

George ran the shop for about two years. He worked very hard and built up a tremendous turnover, and was employing about six staff. This was what George did. He would take over empty shops on new precincts, build up tremendous turnovers and then sell them off with long leases at fixed rents for thousands of pounds and then move on opening another one. He told us at Spalec, who he was friendly with, that that was the last one; he was definitely retiring after he sold the Marple shop.

It was sometime in either September or October 1962 that we had Mark christened at the Methodist Church where we were married and where Jayne had been christened, Ray Oliver and his wife Jessie were his god parents.

The winter of 1962/3 was one of the worst on record. As well as being bitterly cold all the roads and railways were blocked with snow. The main roads and railways were cleared, but other roads, like Ridge Road going over by the Romper were blocked for weeks. It was also at this time that the government had brought in the Clean Air Act, and smokeless zones were coming into force. All houses had to convert to burning smokeless fuel. Central heating in houses, as we know it today was beginning to take off, Electric heaters, like storage heaters and oil filled electric radiators, like the firm Dimplex were making, just needed plugging into the mains electric, but if they were over one kilowatt, it would normally be necessary to put in a ring main system.

There was a lot of business for us in the new shop we had just opened. As well as selling these heating products we were installing the wiring, Ray Oliver, as I mentioned, was a qualified electrician, but we all got involved with these wiring jobs.

We just could not get enough heating appliances of any description. A lot of people were turning to portable paraffin heaters, which were not all that safe, and resulted in a lot of house fires. The petroleum companies were doing well out of it, resulting in there being more adverts on the television for Esso Blue paraffin than what there is today for three piece suites.

The next shop to open on the Hollins was Holt's the chemist. Mr Holt and his wife were both chemists, and it was their first venture into running their own shop. They lived in Ashborne Crescent, which is a continuation of Manor Road.

There was now in 1963 just two shops, which were still empty. Barclay's Bank opened in 1963, and we were actually called in to do some electrical work, which had not been installed to their satisfaction.

The two empty shops were not taken till well into 1964. The one next to the supermarket was originally intended to be a food outlet, but nobody was

interested in opening next to a supermarket. Eventually it was opened as a ladies clothes shop. The people who opened it already had a shop in Glossop under the name of High Fashion. I got to know Cath and Bill Plover very well later. Bill owned an engineering business in Glossop and Cath, with the help of staff ran the two clothes shops. They did live in Glossop, but they came to live in the flat over the shop after they opened it in 1965.

Bill Plover was associated with Glossop Band club and besides having his own dance band he also played with Glossop Old Band. He also gave trumpet and cornet lessons to youngsters, he did actually give lessons to Gary Cutt, and, after he became involved with Marple Band (1968) he gave the youngsters of the band individual lessons. These youngsters included Paul Beetham, Gary Thelwall and Gary Murphy.

The other empty shop was taken over by the Midland Bank. Not very good move, because all the shops, we had been told, were to be retail outlets and, banks are not retail outlets. Besides that we already had Barclay's Bank next door to us, but, the Coal Board Superannuation Scheme were anxious to get all the shops occupied so they would rent them to anybody who would take them.

I had now decided to get rid of the Austin Cambridge car for two reasons, (1) it was a bit heavy on petrol and (2) I needed something with a bit more carrying capacity. Mini cars had then been out for about four years, and were proving to be very popular by the fact that they were reasonably priced and economical to run, so I traded the car in for a brand new Mini Van, it cost less than £400. They took the Austin in part exchange as a deposit; the balance was on hire purchase, which put an extra strain on our finances. At the time we were only taking £20 a week each out of the business. This included the running costs of our motors, except petrol.

This was the time when Jack Beetham and I decided it would be a good idea to go out selling cockles and mussels in pubs and clubs at weekend, to supplement our incomes. There were regular adverts in the Evening News for salesman, so the two of us phoned up Kershaw's who operated from Southport. They told us to turn up at Store Street, which is under Piccadilly station and opposite the old Manchester main fire station, and has now been closed as a fire station for some time. A two ton van would turn up with all the baskets of cockles and mussels, and all the salesman would meet this van there, collect their baskets and then disperse all over the Manchester area every weekend selling the shell fish into all the pubs. Kershaw's was not the only firm who were in the trade so competition was keen, and you had to seal up all your outlets by giving the landlord of the pub or the doorman at the club a packet of kippers so that he wouldn't let the competition in.

I had one of the Kershaw family come out with me and we canvassed a new area in Wythenshawe, calling at a few pubs and clubs. We built up enough outlets to form a round, so, the next weekend (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) I went out on my own. Jack Beetham took over an existing round in Gee Cross and Hyde. At first I had about ten outlets to cover, mostly pubs with two big

labour clubs, all in the Wythenshawe area. At these two clubs I would give the doorman a packet of kippers (value 2/-d). In those days clubs in the Manchester area were very popular. They would all have concert secretaries and would have turns on every weekend. The clubs would get packed and members had to go early to be sure of a seat. There would be as many as six or seven waiters waiting on because it would have been impossible to serve everyone at the bar and walking back to their seats with trays of drinks, so, it was waiter service only.

I would wait for one of the turns to finish and then I would start going round shouting "cockles and mussels". When I got in front of the stage I would throw the compare a packet of kippers and he would shout out over the microphone and sing "cockles and mussels". Then, every night I only had to stop at the door to the concert room, and the compare would start singing cockles and mussels.

I canvassed another club "The Royal Naval Association Club" in Wythenshawe. I got in there by telling them I was ex Merchant Navy and I joined as a member so that was easy to get into. I finished up dropping all the pubs and just did the three clubs; I was selling the biggest basket of all the Kershaw's salesman, and making about £12 a weekend.

A sign had gone up on the Ridge Road, past the church on the left hand side, saying that a development of new houses was going to be built on the field that looked across over to Mellor, by Poole and Foster of Denton. The house on Church Lane was going to want some money spending on it to modernise it with a bathroom, so I enquired about the houses off Ridge Road as soon as the builders hut went up. I was shown a plan of the site. Immediately behind Ridge Road was going to be about twenty semi-detached houses built at a price of £2,650. In this price was an allowance for choice of fireplace and wallpaper. Looking at the site plan number 18 was going to face an opening which would eventually be a proposed road to carry on building down the field, and would give us the best view of any of the houses looking over towards Mellor and Mellor golf course. They have still not built any more houses on the site, so still at this time (2002) No. 18 still as a commanding view over to Mellor Golf Course.

I paid my fifty pounds deposit on number 18, and put 36 Church Lane up for sale with Jim Headridge, of Headridge and Chapman at a price of £1200, which was double what I paid for it nearly three years before. Two houses (one each side of No. 36) have just been sold this year (2002) for £99, 950. (The world has gone mad.)

It didn't take long to sell Church Lane, so after the footings had gone in, I had to press the builders into getting on with it. Jack Beetham who was now the foreman on a building site in High Lane would go up to Brookdale at weekends to check that they were not shortcutting anything. Once the roof had gone on the pair of semis I pressed the foreman on the site to get it finished, slipping a ten-pound note into his hand, a lot of money in those days. Within a week all the floors and doors were in and within a couple of more

weeks it was finished and ready to move in and No. 20 next door had not even got the floors in. We were the first to move in on the estate.

The chap, whose name was "Travis" had bought Vernon's furnishing shop (now Edel Carpets), also the cinema and part of the Co-op, (which he still owns and rents off to Helen Winterson's), had us do some electrical work and install some electric heaters in his house in Ashton-under-Lyne, and in return he supplied me with a new expensive three piece suite at cost price, £125. It should have been about £200, a lot of money in those days. I bought it through the hire purchase company we were using for our customers, North Derbyshire Finance Company, which was owned by Sam Longson.

We also had new carpets fitted right through the house, and a new dining room suite with the money we got from selling 36 Church Lane. A new electric cooker and fridge from the shop didn't leave us with a lot of money.

It was approaching Christmas 1963 and old Jim Nolan (John Nolan's father) was the night watchman on the site. We felt sorry for him sitting in the builders hut on those cold winters nights and we would invite him in for a warm and some supper. Old Mrs Nolan used to think I was a smashing chap, to her I was the best Hoover man around.

Clive Littlewood, the butcher, bought next-door No. 16, and moved in about six months after us, after he got married. His son John was born when they lived at No. 16. The end of 1963 was the beginning of the break up of Spalec Ltd. It did require one of the other three to travel down from Buxton every day. Tom Boulton had started to get involved with his brother in a night club venture in Buxton and Tom's wife had broken away from the family greengrocers business and had taken over one of many guest houses on Chapel Walk which is just up from the Pavilion Gardens. So Tom wasn't interested in travelling down to Marple. That in turn led to him and Derek Bramwell having words, eventually causing the break up of the four directors of Spalec.

It ended with Tom and Ray Oliver buying Derek and I out and splitting the business. They kept the shop and name Spalec in Buxton. Derek and I took over the Marple Shop, and started a new company. With me being well known in Marple we decided to register the name of the new company in our own names in alphabetical order.

### **BRAMWELL & SINGLETON LIMITED**

Derek Bramwell and I were now committed to the Marple shop. Derek still did service work in Bakewell and Buxton to the customers who knew him and the business in Marple continued to expand. It was decided to take on an apprentice. A young lad who lived on Brickbridge Road. His name was John Pearson, and his mother cleaned for Mrs Gordon at the Ring O Bells. He was about to leave school (the Willows) and we offered him a job as a junior. Like

all young lads starting their first job, at first he was a bit wooden, but he liked the job and began to take an interest in what he was doing.

Derek and I decided that we would get firms vehicles and we approached a Ford main dealer in Atherton, on the other side of Manchester where we got the best deal. My Mini van was traded in against the new vehicles but Derek sold his Ford Anglia car privately. I was happy having two vans with the firms name on them but Derek didn't want to run his family around in a van so we got one van and an estate car, which we were supposed to alternate each week

When John was old enough to drive, I would take him out on jobs with me and let him have a go at driving on quiet roads. He scared me a few times so we finished up sending him for driving lessons. He stayed with Bramwell & Singleton until he was well in his twenties. When he left he got a job with Hoover Ltd. as an area manager.

The restructuring of Hoover Ltd. continued. One of the main changes was that they handed all the service work over to the dealers, whose staff could attend training courses, after which they were issued with Hoover Dealer Service signs to display. We ex Hoover men were in a prime position and automatically received the Hoover service signs (our training had been done to the exacting Hoover standards). They also began to dispose of the service engineers. Those were the chaps who had the special tools to do service work on machines that the sales/service staff were unable to do. One of these machines was the fully automatic washing machine, the "Keymatic", which was introduced in 1962 (before I left Hoover) and proved to have a lot of teething troubles. The only people trained at that time to do the service on these machines were service engineers. They had Hoover vans, which were lettered, and they carried all the parts and special tools in these vans to carry out the repairs in the users home.

Derek Bramwell's brother in law, Derek Martin, was one of these service engineers who they were getting rid of. We wrote to Hoover offering to take on Derek Martin and buy the van with the Hoover lettering on plus all the special tools and spares. Hoover Ltd. were very happy to do this because it gave them a Hoover agent who would be covering the South Manchester area for service with all fully qualified engineers.

Another Hoover chap to lose his job was Doug Pearson (no relation to John). He lived in Buxton, so he went to work for Spalec Ltd. The two people who were running Spalec, Tom Boulton and Ray Oliver had considered the shop on Hardwick Street too small and decided to move into bigger premises on Spring Gardens, the main shopping area in Buxton. It proved to be a big mistake. They were not in the new shop very long when they had to declare themselves bankrupt. That was the end of Spalec Ltd.

Under the terms of our split with Spalec, we, Bramwell & Singleton, were not allowed to open a business in the Buxton area while they were trading. After they went bankrupt we took over the first shop on Hardwick Street and

opened it up again, this time as Bramwell & Singleton. It is still there trading under the same name, but without either Bramwell or Singleton.

We took on Doug Pearson to help Derek Bramwell do the servicing in the Buxton area, and Derek's wife Joyce ran the shop. We dispensed with the services of Cynthia in the Marple shop and took on Christine Moores, (nee Kerney now Leigh) which made a total staff of seven, which included Derek and I.

Another Hoover chap who had joined Hoover after me was Brian Austin. He left Hoover in 1964 and opened up a shop in New Mills. Brian, who was originally a Marple chap, had served his time as an electrician. He combined the two trades, doing electrical contracting and servicing appliances. He took on a chap called David Wood, but he and Brian could not get on, so David approached us for a job. We took him on at the Marple shop mainly to do electrical work, but he was also very good on appliances, particularly automatic washing machines, which were becoming more and more popular.

David was with us for a while and then he set up on his own in Glossop. He is now the biggest appliance dealer in the area. Liz and I now buy any appliances we need from David, and he also keeps them in repair, if I am unable to repair them.

Well into 1964, I was still having problems with my stomach. When the pain was severe, I would carry half pint cartons of milk around with me, drinking milk helped to relieve the pain. I couldn't stand the smell of fried food, the smell of chips from chip shops made me feel sick. I had now had these ulcers for eight years and they were getting worse.

Jack Beetham and I were still out at weekends with the cockles and mussels, winter and summer. I was working six days a week from the shop and out Friday, Saturday and Sunday night with shellfish.

We still frequented the Ring O Bells when we had a baby sitter, but my stomach problem prevented me from drinking much beer, so, I would drink orange with water. Jean got her share of Guinness.

Sometime in 1964 the Beethams exchanged their house on Townley Terrace with Joan Close, who lived on Hibbert Lane (opposite where Jayne lives now). Jack had been working as a foreman on a building site in Bury. While working on this site he befriended a woman who had a very good job in the clothing business. Jack had told me about this liaison, but I didn't think there was anything serious in it. Anyway, on the very day that the house exchange was taking place, there was a bloody big row with Jack and Ann. Jack took his clothes, which were already packed for the move, into the back of his car and bugged off. That was the end of that. They got divorced and Jack never came back to Marple as far as I know for more than thirty years, and that was when he came into the Navigation one night. I didn't know him until he told me who he was. At the time he left, Paul would be six, and Gary would be four.

Still in 1964, we had a reunion with one of our ex Hoover colleagues. I returned to the shop after lunch and noticed that a car was parked at the front, in the lay-by, (cars could park there then). After I unlocked the shop door I went into the back, then the shop doorbell went. When I went into the shop who should be standing there but "Les Dawson". He was as surprised as I was. After some greetings I took him into the back of the shop, putting the kettle on to make him a brew. Shortly after, Christine Moores arrived back from having her lunch, and Derek Bramwell arrived down from Buxton. John Pearson came in through the back door. There was of course a lot of laughter remembering the times with Hoover. It wasn't long before Les, had Christine and John falling about laughing.

We eventually found out that Les had just finished another summer season in Blackpool, trying to break into the big time. At that time it was the usual thing with Les, once the season finished he was out of work, but now that the sales service had finished with Hoover Ltd. he had to look for something else, and at the present he was supposed to be a rep for an electrical wholesaler in Rochdale. He was supposed to be building up new business for them, that's how he came to call on us, he was passing and noticed that a electrical shop had opened on a new precinct and knew that there would be a good chance of opening a new account. He saw the name over the top "Bramwell & Singleton", but it didn't register with him until he came in and saw me and then Bramwell.

He was there all afternoon. There wasn't a scrap of work done by anybody; a lot of tea brewed and everybody's sides were aching with laughing. He opened an account for us with this firm in Rochdale, and we gave him an order for about £75 worth of parts. Needless to say we never got that order, but, it wasn't long after that, that he got his big break on Hughie Greens show "Opportunity Knocks", and he never looked back after that. Now that is all history, but they are the sorts of things you never forget.

We all know now that Les went on to become one of the biggest stars on television and stage. He lost his first wife Meg, with whom he had three children sometime in the early nineties. He was then living in a very big house in Lytham. He married his second wife who was a barmaid in his local pub, they had a daughter. Sadly Les was leading a fast life, which caught up with him a couple of years later, he died of a heart attack in the mid nineties. I feel very proud to have known him personally.

### **BLUE FUNNEL COMES INTO MY LIFE AGAIN**

Blue Funnel days, but I had never sailed with him. He was just starting in Blue Funnel as a Midshipman, when I left. I met up with him in the Ring O Bells when he came to live with his wife in the old school house, across from the Ring O Bells car park on Waterside. Ken used to frequent the Ring O Bells; we had a lot in common.



He was preparing to sail on the Pyrrhus. The night before he sailed he came into the Ringers and said the chief steward knows you. It was of course Hughie Cleary. So I wrote to Hughie. He wrote back to me telling me that his chief cook was Billy Croft. The memories came flooding back. They were away on that voyage for the usual three months ten days. I found out the day they were docking back in Liverpool, which very conveniently was on a Sunday. I had the estate car that week, so I went down to Liverpool and met the Pyrrhus as she was coming through the locks into Gladstone Dock. Both Hughie and Bill were standing at the rail waving to me; Ken Owen was at his entering port station, which was on the poop deck, aft.

After she tied up I went aboard, it was a wonderful feeling standing on the deck of a Blue Funnel Ship again. It turned out I knew a few of the crew. Billy Croft hadn't changed much except he had got fatter. He told me he had now got three children and gave me his address to go and visit and meet Audrey again. Ken Owen had finished and was ready for coming home so we packed all his bags in the back of the estate car and I brought him home to Marple. That was November 1964.

On the Tuesday I had got home from the shop and was watching the news on the TV. When it came on that there had been a serious fire on a ship in Gladstone Dock, Liverpool. It was the Pyrrhus. It showed pictures of her with smoke belching out of number 3 hold. They pumped water into her, she finally settled on the bottom. When they were repairing her they took all her passenger accommodation off. The passenger trade had now finished, as air travel was taking over, and was no longer viable. The Company were taking the passenger accommodation off all the ships.

The following weekend the four of us, Jean, Jayne, Mark and I, went down to visit Billy Croft. He was living in a block of flats in Huyton, Liverpool. I had also called on Hughie Cleary at the address he was living at that time. While I was there we talked about what I had done since I had left the sea, and how a complete change in my work had brought me into the domestic appliance business. I was now a director in a limited company, and that we had two shops. While we were there Margery mentioned that her vacuum cleaner wasn't picking up too well, so I had a look at it. I didn't have any tools with me, but I soon diagnosed what was wrong when I switched it on. It was a Hoover junior 1334 model; the dust bag tube was blocked up. I only needed a coin to unscrew the bag nut to clear the blockage. They were both impressed, apparently it had not been picking up for weeks. The next week I went down and picked Billy Croft and his family up and brought them to Marple for the day. I took him down to the shop, Bramwell & Singleton and into the Ring O Bells. He was most impressed and said he would love to live in Marple.

It was now coming up to Christmas 1964. We had Jayne who would be six, and Mark who was two and a half. There was no big toy stores like we have today, (Toys R Us), in Marple we only had Astley's and Goslings, besides being newsagents they also sold toys. All shops and some pubs, in those days would run Christmas clubs. People would start paying in during the year. This would be put on a club card, which could then be spent at Christmas. We

had put some money on a club card at Goslings. Come Christmas week we got what we could afford in toys. For Jayne it was a toy typewriter. (She has never let me forget that. Even to this day she reminds me about the rubbish typewriter we bought her for Christmas).

I gave up doing the shellfish at weekends, my stomach was getting that bad that even the smell of them was making me feel sick, and the pains were becoming more frequent. I would often be servicing a machine in a users house and I would have to make an excuse that I needed to go back and get a part, but I would nip home, have a drink of milk and ten minutes lie down until the pain had subsided.

Early in 1965 Mrs Gordon at the Ring O Bells went into hospital in Buxton to have a hip operation. She had no relative who could run the pub for her, but Keith Phillips who had been helping her knew a woman who used to manage a pub in Manchester who would run it for her. This woman was certainly not the type for the Ring O Bells. For a start I only ever saw her in one costume suit, and that was getting a bit threadbare. We found out that the pub she had been running, was, some back street place, all the customers were puffs, homosexuality had not been legalised then.

Mrs Gordon had had her operation and was starting to get over it but she had a heart attack and died. It was very sad, she was a decent old lady to those who she liked but there weren't too many of them. Mrs Gordon's only relative was Doris, who had the pub in Stalybridge. Doris left her son Gordon to look after her pub and she came over to Marple. The first thing she did was getting rid of the scruffy woman from Manchester. She then had to make the funeral arrangements with Marshall Shaw.

The brewery had to be informed because the Ring O Bells did not now have a licensee. The tenancy manager at that time was Bert Sumbler. He of course came to see Doris, who agreed to run the pub until a new licensee had been appointed. I had met Bert Sumbler on a couple of occasions, and I did mention to him that I would be interested in taking over. He said that he already had someone in mind ready to take over.

On the day of Mrs. Gordon's funeral, Marshall Shaw brought her body back to the Ringers and the coffin was opened in the back lounge, which is now the dining room. I often think about that when I see people dining in there. About forty people attended her funeral; she was buried with her husband Jim at Southern Cemetery. After the funeral we all went back to the Ring O Bells, including Bert Sumbler. The front doors were shut, as it was a private occasion. Doris had been having a few drinks before; she was getting a few more when we got back. Bert Sumbler went back to his office after shaking hands with everyone. About 5-30 p.m. when the pub should have been opening the phone rang, Doris answered it, and when she came off the phone she started throwing things about smashing a few things up. The phone call had been from Bert Sumbler to tell her that a new licensee would be there in the morning, also the stock takers and valuers to do the change over. That's

why Doris had gone berserk, shouting that they had not given her sister time to get in her grave.

The new licensee was Emmy Yates. She had been on the pub scene for some time, always attending the licensed victualers functions. Even though she had only been a barmaid, she always dressed the part as if she was a licensee. For all that, she was a nice person, and she mixed in well, but she hadn't much idea of running a pub. She liked the idea of being a pub landlady and mixing with all her so-called landlady friends. Her husband had his own haulage business, so he wasn't interested in the pub.

It was in March 1965 that the people who had the Bulls Head on Market Street put their notice in to leave. At that time it was a real tatty place, really old fashioned. The bar and everywhere needed gutting. In the front lounge were some old leather settles. All the springs had gone in them and the horsehair was sticking through.

I phoned Bert Sumbler to enquire about the tenancy, and he sent me an application form to fill in. He then sent me a letter to view. Jean and I went round the place, everywhere was grotty. Bert then sent us a letter for an interview. When we were in his office he told us that he didn't think the place would be right for us. So we left it at that and Sam Flaherty took over. He came from the New Inn opposite the Stockport Infirmary. He hadn't been in long when they started to rip the place apart, it took about two years before it was finished.

Things didn't alter much at the Ring O Bells, except the beer improved. Emmy got rid of Keith Phillips. An old bloke, (Mr. Fallows), who had retired from Robinson's Brewery, after working at first Bells at Hempshore Brook brewery in the bottling department and then for Robinson's when they took over Bells, so he certainly knew how to keep the beer lines clean.

Even so the trade did not increase all that much. Emmy was only really interested in having her name above the door and entertaining her licensee friends. George, Emmy's husband, didn't spend a lot of time at the pub. They still had their house in Offerton, from where George ran his haulage business, so he spent most of his time there.

Emmy became very popular with certain people, one of whom was John Holton. He fancied his chances with her, but she was old enough to be his mother. That of course did not deter John. I think eventually she told him in no uncertain terms to behave himself. He started to look elsewhere, he picked up with some right rough jobs whose names I must not mention, and he, with a lovely wife like Brenda.

Things carried on in the shop, with seven people to cover wages for, plus, the cost of running two shops we had to have a fair weekly turn over. The service calls were not coming in regularly enough to keep four service men on the road. It had been agreed between Bramwell and I, that I concentrated on sales while the others kept the service work going, which was our bread and

butter. But, it wasn't working. If there were no requests for service they would be hanging about instead of getting out and knocking on doors, like we had to do in Hoover days. I told them that I wanted a certain amount every week bringing in by each one of them on labour charges alone, plus parts they were encouraged to sell.

To prove the point I loaded the van up with spares and my tool kit, setting off with a load of ex Hoover user cards for the High Lane area. I took John Pearson with me and we spent all week in the High Lane area knocking on doors offering service on their appliances, which I knew they had. Apart from servicing, we were also selling new machines. The only thing I was returning to the shop for, was to pick up new machines that I had sold, and then I went to deliver and demonstrate them, I left John in someone's house servicing. At the end of the week we turned in four times as much as the rest of them on labour, plus parts and the new machines I had sold. I told them in no uncertain terms that they would have to pull their fingers out.

Every year Derek Bramwell would take his two weeks holiday off and he always went with his family to Looe, in Cornwall. So. I decided that this year we would have a holiday, and decided on Tenby, where we had been once before, when we only had Jayne. Now we had Mark who would become up to three, plus we were taking Harriett and Harold with us. As it turned out it was a good job we did take them with us.

For a few weeks before we set off on the holiday I had been having a lot of trouble with my stomach. We set off in June with the estate car; I was the only one who could drive. It is over 200 miles to Tenby and, my stomach was starting to play up, so I had to stop for a rest. We were staying at a pub in between Tenby and Saundersfoot, when we arrived; I just wanted to get my head down.

We went down for the evening meal but I could not eat anything, instead I went for a walk, and then went for another lie down. During the evening Jean came up to get me to go downstairs, they were all having a good time in the lounge of this pub. I did make the effort but I could not face any drink, I felt terrible and just wanted to be left on my own.

The next morning we went down for breakfast, and the landlady came in with these full English breakfasts. One look was enough; I just got up and went for a walk outside. After they had had their breakfasts it was decided that we would go and spend the day on Saundersfoot beach, so we packed the car up with buckets and spades, costumes and towels, and I drove them all down to the beach. We parked the car, it was a beautiful day. Jean and her mother went off to buy things to have on the beach. Harold and I took the kids onto the sands, and then we went to hire some deckchairs. We carried the chairs over to the sea wall where there was some shelter. I was trying to put these deck chairs up when I could feel that I was going to be sick. I leaned over the sea wall and that was the last I remembered until I came round with Harriet slapping my face.

The next I remembered was being lifted onto a stretcher by two ambulance men and there was a big crowd round me, they all thought, including Harriett and Jean that I was about to pop my clogs.

The ambulance took me to Tenby Cottage Hospital, a very small place with probably about ten beds. I don't really remember much about it, but apparently one of the local doctors checked me over, and just left me there. I was getting weaker and weaker as I had lost so much blood. Jean was spending most of the day with me but I had no idea about what was happening. It was a good job that Harriet and Harold were with us, they were able to look after the kids and try to give them some sort of holiday. Apparently they had got someone to drive the car back to the pub where we were staying.

Eventually I was transferred on the Thursday of that week to the hospital in Carmarthen. They had left me in that cottage hospital from Sunday to Thursday. I was slowly dying and I would have done if it had not been for Jean insisting that they transfer me to a proper hospital. It was about a thirty-mile journey in the ambulance, a female attendant was in the back with Jean and I. I told the attendant that I felt sick and I remember her saying to try and relax and not think about it. Apparently she did whisper to Jean that if I were sick it would be the end of me.

On arrival at Carmarthen, they connected me up to a drip while they were wheeling me to a ward. There they started to put blood into me, Welsh blood that saved my life. I had six pints altogether. They took me to somewhere in the hospital, which is the main hospital for South Wales, and put me through an x-ray machine. I remember somebody saying there, that my veins were like white worms.

Jean had been in touch with Derek Bramwell, and on the Saturday, the day we were supposed to travel home, he and Derek Martin came down in the van. Bramwell drove the family back in the estate. They all called in at the hospital before they left, I was heartbroken, I thought it was the last time I would see my family.

The following Sunday, Derek Bramwell and Derek Martin brought Jean all the way down to see me, it was over a 400 mile round trip, they took it in turns driving. They kept me in hospital until the following Thursday, by which time the specialist thought the ulcer scar, had healed over and had stopped bleeding. I had been in there exactly two weeks and they had saved my life. But, I was still very weak. They told me I could be discharged home. So Derek Bramwell and Derek Martin came down in the estate car with Jean. On the way home Jean told me that she thought she was pregnant again.

The following week, when I felt strong enough, I changed my doctor from Mary Yuill, who Harriett had got me to register with, to doctor Belcher, who was a young doctor who had taken over doctor Allen's practice, which at that time was at the Gables on Stockport Road, which is now a Spanish Tapas restaurant. After telling doctor Belcher what had happened to me, he picked

up the phone and made an appointment for me to see a specialist at Stepping Hill. It was then that all the family changed over to doctor Belcher, including auntie Mary and uncle Frank

Doctor Allen died, and the house (The Gables) was far too big for Mrs. Allen to live in, so, doctor Belcher had to find a new surgery. At the time the old lady who lived in the small semi detached house next to Cooks, the coach proprietors had died. So Dr. Belcher bought it to turn into his surgery. It is now known as the Marple Medical Practice and with five doctors is the biggest one in Marple. It has been built on front, back and side. You would never think that at one time it was just a very small semi detached house.

It wasn't many weeks before I had an appointment at Stepping Hill to see a Mr Carr who was a surgeon who specialised with stomach problems, and I was put on his list to have the ulcer removed. In the meantime I had gone back working at the shop. I had to give up smoking; I had already given up drinking. With the money I was saving on that I bought a cine camera and projector from Mr. Holt the chemist on the precinct. In fact we did a deal. He wanted a small fridge to keep his vaccines in, so I supplied him with a fridge and I got the camera and projector in return, which I financed through North Derbyshire Finance. A collection of some of the films I took, I had transferred onto video, Mark and I have a copy. I also took up golf and bought myself a half set of second hand golf clubs.

One Saturday morning either in September or October 1965, Christine came through to me in the workshop saying that a chap wanted to see me in the shop. When I went through it was Mr. Bert Sumbler. (Robinson's Tenancy Manager). I thought he had come to see me about his washing machine, because, the last time I met him he mentioned that he had a machine, which needed attention. After some general conversation he just came out with "how do you fancy taking over the Navigation?" I was a bit taken aback, the licensee at the time was John Braddock and the place had a bit of a reputation. I told him that I would have to think about it. In the meantime he said he would send me a letter with permission to view.

The following week I got a letter from Mr Sumbler giving me permission to view. I called in and saw John Braddock and arranged to go and view one evening with Jean, who by that time was three months pregnant with Michael. It was obvious that the place needed re-vamping and a complete change of cliental. Anna, John Braddock's wife, who was German, but a very nice lady had done the only decorating that had been done for years. They had only been there four and a half years and while she was there she had her only child "Joe" in Stepping Hill Hospital.

After we had viewed the place, we went home and thought about it. I could see that it had a lot of potential if it was put in order and diversified from just selling beer. The next day I phoned Mr Sumbler, and told him I was interested, but I didn't want to be put on a list of possible licensees. It was then that he assured me if I wanted it, it was mine. No one else was even

considered for the place and by the time the news got out that John Braddock was leaving, the new licensee had been appointed.

I went down to the brewery a few days after. Mr. Sumbler gave me the facts and figures on the place, and I handed over a cheque for £400, which was the bond, required. It was called a bond. It was actually a deposit placed with the brewery that covered what they considered would be the maximum amount of your fortnightly account with them. If it happened that you are unable to pay your account on the due date, you went on cash with order, or C.O.D. They made sure you never owed them any money if you went bankrupt or you got kicked out of the pub for some reason. This was really a bit of a farce by the fact that the last two or three years at the Navigation (1987 to 1991) my fortnightly account was never less than £5,000 and they still only had my £400 deposit. I think the woman who took over from me had to put down a bond of £6,000, which was of course based on my trading figures. In all due respect to her, I don't think her trading figures ever came anywhere near that. In fact I would gamble on the fact that they don't today, eleven years on, and prices 60 % to 70% higher than when I left.

Harriet lent me the £400, which was repaid to her after we had sold Brookdale. Jim Headridge put the house up for sale at £3,500. I also needed two referees on the application for my licence. Jim Headridge was one (he was a magistrate), and a chap called Eric Jones, married to Margaret Gosling, who had the paper shop on the corner of Hollins Lane, was the other referee.

When I told Derek Bramwell I was taking over the Navigation, he was a bit concerned, but I told him I would be carrying on at the shop and get staff in to run the pub at lunch time. I arranged with John Braddock that I would take over at the end of the year. I actually took over on the week in between Christmas and New Year 1965. The chap from Bateman's estate agent and valuers came on change over day. His name was Trevor Bensen and he did the valuation. Trevor has been dead a few years now, but at the time he was training a young lad by the name of Jones. He (Jones) still does all the valuations for Robinson's and also has an estate agents business with a partner called Mitchell, (Mitchell and Jones). Their offices are on Hall Street, Offerton.

There wasn't really much to value in the rooms, it was all fixed seating, in those days and was part of the building, which belonged to Robinson's. So there were only the tables and chairs in all the rooms, including upstairs, plus the beer pumps (which were knackered) and a bit of stock. I think I still have all the receipts and I remember the total came to about £850.

## **THE START OF MY TIME AT THE NAVIGATION DECEMBER 1965**

Jean was now six months pregnant with Michael, and of course was showing. That Christmas and New Year were a bit hectic. It would normally be something you wouldn't do, move house over the Christmas period, but John and Anna Braddock wanted out, and as far as I was concerned my accounting would begin and end with the beginning and ending of the year.

*I took over the four staff that John had. They were Eric Smith, Sammy Cross, Tommy Waring, and a chap called Trevor Vaughan. All male because in those days you couldn't have females working they're with the language that was common in the pub at that time. Of the four I only kept two on, Eric Smith and Sammy Cross. Both of them were hopeless behind the bar, so I kept them on for waiting on in the rooms. If they did work behind the bar, the bar floor would be swimming in beer. I tried to get them to put the glasses on a waiters tray before they pulled any beer, for two reasons, when they pulled the pumps, the over pull would go into the tray, and secondly they would not be holding the glasses in their hands with the beer running over them, not very hygienic. The slop trays under the pumps had auto backs on them, which meant any over pull would return into the pump chamber and recycle into the next beer to be dispensed. I disconnected the auto backs straight away.*

*Auto backs were made illegal shortly after that by the public health, but even to this day I have seen them in pubs, whether they are working or not I don't know. I tried to get them to use waiter's trays to put the glasses on when they were pulling beer, but you have a hell of a job teaching old dogs new tricks. It wasn't long before I got rid of them and started to bring females in. That could only be after I started to clamp down on the language, and got rid of most of the rough element. The concert room upstairs (that's what it was known as) until a few weeks before I took over had been used on Saturday nights for entertainment. There was a very old piano up there. John Braddock had a small stage built in the right hand corner of the room.*

*This was where the piano was. Electric organs were starting to become popular, and John bought one of them. He had one of the local characters called Ambrose Walsh playing the organ for him. Ambrose needed a few beers down him before he could play. In fact he was mostly more drunk than sober, at times it was guess the tune. He had sheet music on the stand but I don't think he could read a note. A chap called Derek Bidwell, who was a bit of a singer and entertainer, would do the comparing.*

There were some characters went up there at weekends. Some of them who thought themselves good singers would take their own sheet music up with them. They would give it to Ambrose who in turn, if he wasn't too sure of the tune, would ask them to sing the first few bars so he knew what key they were singing in. Most of them didn't know he couldn't read the music.



John Braddock was also a boxing matches up there. So, as well as the stage in the corner, he had a raised boxing square built in the centre of the room. It was made out of expensive maple boxing fan, and he had some daft idea of having wood. Charlie Ingham made it for him. There were pieces in each corner, which came out, and you could put the corner posts in, and then the rope round to form the boxing ring. It also served as a dancing area. I don't think the boxing ring was ever used except, by his son Joe. John had grand ideas that his son was going to become a boxing champion.

A little room that served as a kind of bar upstairs. John Braddock had Charlie Ingham build a bar.

Electric beer dispensers and keg beer were just starting to come in then, but John didn't bother with them. He had a hand pull beer engine put upstairs, with a pipe coming down into the bar downstairs. This then connected into the pipe coming up from the cellar. It was too big a pull from the cellar up two floors to the upstairs bar, and unless the pump was being pulled continuously, it would run back down the pipe, which didn't do the beer in the barrel much good. So most of the beer was being brought up from the main bar by the waiters. I still have that hand pull beer pump.

The house on Brookdale didn't take long to sell. It went for £3,500. I paid Harriett the £400 she had lent me and, cleared the bridging loan I had had from the bank for the ingoing. It was in the first few months that I was there that some middle aged females started to come in. One of them was Ethel Murphy. Ethel was a smashing person, she had been married a couple of times, and had a big family, but she kept herself very smart and for her age she had a good figure. She was as hard as nails, and wouldn't stand any nonsense from male or female. I first knew her when she hired a washing machine from me.

When I took over the Navigation, there had been a men's dart team playing there. The first couple of matches when I took over were against some of the rough pubs in Stockport. They and their language were even worse than the existing clientele at the Navigation, so I got rid of the darts team. They went to one of the other pubs in Marple.

The women who had started coming in asked me if they could use the dartboard, which was in the then so called taproom. When they went into the taproom, the men who were in there started shouting, "men only in this room". I told them that there were no separate rooms for sexes in the pub now except the toilets. So the men started coming out with foul language, I told them to cut it out or get out. To name two of the men, who were only young chaps then, Brian Davis and Frank Eaton. If you ask Frank now he will remember it. To prove my point on this I had a sign put over the door of that room, declaring it the games room.

The women got a darts team together and joined the Stockport women's darts league. That was the start of the turn round of the Navigation. I started doing freshly made sandwiches behind the bar. The ham and beef, which I cooked, was displayed under a Perspex tray, which gave people an appetite when

they saw it. It's against food hygiene regulations to do that today, but that was the start of food in the Navigation and the start of food in the first pub in Marple. Before that you could only get crisps, nuts, pickled eggs, etc.

By the end of February 1966 Jean was getting towards the end of her pregnancy. I was still working at the shop during the day, and a lady called Nora was doing the lunchtime opening for me. I would be there for opening at 5-30 in the evening. The freshly made sandwiches (Ham, Beef and Cheese) were proving to be very popular. They were of course done to Blue Funnel standard and garnished with lettuce, tomato, cucumber, onion and cress. Something never seen before in the pubs in the area. It started to attract a lot of office and shop workers in at lunchtime. Men started to bring their wives in at nighttime; the women always went for the freshly made sandwiches. I think I charged 1/6d. for sandwiches, 8p. in today's currency.

It had been arranged for Jean to be confined at home, upstairs at the Navigation. Sister Turner, the midwife who lived on Barlow Crescent was to attend the birth. She had already delivered all the equipment needed for the confinement. It would be on the morning of the 17th. March 1966 that Jean went into labour. I contacted Sister Turner, who came and examined her, and said she would come back later in the afternoon. Michael was born about 4-30 in the afternoon. I was there, with a wife, who had just given birth, a new born baby, and a pub to open at 5-30., plus, I had Jayne coming home from school. Mark was round at grandma Harriet's.

Since taking over the Navigation at the end of 1965, I had to put a firm hand on the people who were frequenting the place particularly at six o'clock at night, when all the roughs and toughs spilled out of the Liberal Club across the road. Being a private members club they could chose their opening hours to suit their members providing they were between 11-00 a.m. and 10-30 p.m. They would open at three in the afternoon (when the pubs closed) and close at six for one hour so as to get rid of all the rough drunks who they had been happy to take money off, before the regular members came in at night. With the bar in the club closing at six o'clock, they would make for the first place they could get more drink, which of course was the Navigation. I refused to serve them, which meant that I was getting a load of abuse. In the end they got the message and went to the other pubs on Market Street. It was the same the evening when Michael was born. I was there on my own, dashing upstairs to see to the needs of Jean and Sister Turner, a load of drunks coming in from across the road, and I always remember at the time that the barrel of bitter ran out and wanted changing.

I shall never forget the day Michael was born, or indeed any of the others, Jayne, Mark or Tim. Looking back it has been a big part of my life, and I certainly would not like to be without any of them.

I took a couple of weeks off from the shop, to be able to look after Jean with the help of Harriet and Harold who was now retired. It was also about this time that Keith Phillips started coming into the pub, it was obvious that he was after

a job. Although a character, he filled the post at the time. I started him waiting on in the rooms at weekend, and he progressed to working behind the bar.

When I took over the Navigation, the Marple Prize Band, which had been reformed a couple of years before, were using the room above the garages. It had been used for several things from the time when Samuel Oldknow had built them along with, the pub in 1793. It had had several uses over the years, one of which was that at one time it had served as the mortuary in Marple, and in the 19th. Century it had seen plenty of use, a lot of them being fatalities along that stretch of canal, and the building of the locks. The garages had been stables at one time, where they stabled the horses that pulled the narrow boats on the canal. The garages, or stables, I rented out.

I had rented one at one time, to garage my van, first off Millington's who had the pub when Jean and I married. Then it was people called Fletcher, but they were only there about 12 months. Then it was John Braddock

Charlie Ingham rented the one below the band room as a workshop, when he was joinering on his own. Then his brothers joined him and formed Ingham Brothers Builders, so they moved to other premises. This was then rented out to a lad called Pete Bramhall, who at one time had been a member of the old Marple Prize Band before it disbanded in 1958. He had joined the Army and was in one of the Guards bands. He came out of the army about that time, and joined the Fairey's band on cornet. He had also served his time as a motor engineer before joining the army, so he rented the bottom garage, after Charlie, as a repair shop. Pete Bramhall started taking a learners class of band juniors, who were coming round from the Willows School. The other stables were rented out to George Dawson. I collected the rents, they being part of the Navigation.

I had always had an interest in listening to brass bands. So on rehearsal nights, if it was quiet in the pub I would go up and listen to them rehearsing. There would only be about a dozen up there. The names of some of the people up there at the time have been associated and friends of mine ever since, to name a few, Tony Carter, Ray Ward, Charlie Ingham, (who died in 1984), Colin Ingham, Ray and Dennis Noble, Frank Magher and his two sons Francis and Chris, Dave Bromwich, Ken Hulme, Sid Simpson and others who have passed on long ago.

It would be about April 1966 and a Sunday morning that a chap who I knew as Ray Noble came into the pub when we were still cleaning up to get ready for opening. He asked if I was going to come up to the A.G.M. of the band, which they were holding up in the band room at eleven o'clock that morning. I attended and learned that the band were struggling to keep going, not many reliable players, no money, not enough instruments, and those that they had were in need of repair. The chairman of the band was Frank Magher and Charlie Ingham was the secretary. After the business of the band had been completed, it came to voting on the officials and committee. Frank and Charlie remained as chairman and secretary, the rest of us up there were voted en

block onto the committee. That was the start of my association with Marple band.

It was also about this time that the Thornsett Band was starting to do well. They had never disbanded like Marple, and, they also had their own band room. Under their conductor Brian Taylor, who also played with Fairey's, they were doing well in the contesting field. So, they were after poaching any good players in the area. They poached Tony Carter and Ray Ward. That was a big loss to Marple Prize Band, even if it did save Ray Noble from sticking Tony Carters bass over his head for messing about during rehearsals. Tony, like Ray Ward would only be sixteen, Tony thought it fun to mess about during rehearsals, to the annoyance of Ray Noble.

I was still waiting to hear from the hospital about my operation for ulcers. It was June 1966 when they sent for me. It was worrying at the time, by the fact that Michael was only three months old, and Jean of course was unable to give any assistance in the pub. So what staff I had, carried on between them, the catering was put on hold, and Maureen stepped in to do the books.

The operation was a big one and involved cutting the duodenal part of my stomach away and joining it up with my lower bowel. It was a new technique, which had been developed by Mr. Carr, who did the operation at Stepping Hill. Although the operation was bad enough, the worst part was getting over the anaesthetic, which settled on my chest, due to me smoking for so many years. I was in a fortnight and was glad to get out and get back to the pub. Although I could not do much for the first week or two. I got over it. I got my appetite back and I was able to eat anything. When I went back to see Mr. Carr for my post operative check up, I asked him if I needed to still diet. It was then that he told me that it was a new type of operation and there was no need to diet, my stomach would tell me what not to eat. I started eating things I had not had for years like chips.

The Marple carnival up until a few years ago was always held in July. I had only been out of hospital a few weeks when the carnival was upon us. The secretary of the carnival committee then was Stanley Knott. The carnival committee had done all the planning of setting the positions out of where all those taking part would form up round the recreation ground, and all those in the parade were given a number and notified of the number a week before. Apparently, the Marple Prize Band had led the parade the year before, 1965. They had only been reformed one year before and none of them, except Charlie Ingham, had any idea about marching, I believe it was a complete shambles. So this year (1966) they were supposed to be somewhere at the back of the parade. Charlie Ingham told the chairman, Frank Magher, who in turn called a meeting of the band committee with the carnival secretary, Stanley Knott. Stanley said that the carnival committee ran the carnival, not Marple Prize Band. So a vote was taken, and if Marple Prize Band did not lead the carnival they wouldn't take part. Stanley Knott gave in otherwise there would have been a gap in the parade without a band. Talk about children "I will take my ball home if you don't let me play".

I started back at the shop, but soon realized that I could not carry on doing the two jobs. I wasn't too happy about the way Bramwell & Singleton was going. Derek was spending more of his time up at the Buxton shop. I decided to call it a day and pull out of the business. I finished taking an active part in August 1966, but it was a few months after that before the books were closed and Derek paid me out.

I now concentrated on running the pub, and increase the turnover with the catering side. I first of all had to acquire some catering equipment. I had taken over a small amount of white crockery from John Braddock. It was only cheap white stuff consisting of just dinner plates, side plates, cups and saucers, and some cheap cutlery. I bought a gas catering cooker, with six burners and a large oven. I got the cooker from the catering division of the Gas Board. As far as I know it is still there in the upstairs kitchen. I also bought some good quality catering crockery, a two-pan deep fat fryer, and a solid plate griddle. It was then that I first launched into doing a simple menu, consisting of steaks, sausage, beef burgers, fish, etc. It was also at this time that basket meals were starting to take off in the holiday resorts of Wales and the South. I included chicken and scampi in a basket on the menu. They went down well and you could serve them in any part of the pub. The meals had to be a reasonable price. For example an 8 oz. Sirloin steak, with all the trimmings, chips and veg was 8/6d. (42p.). 8 oz. Gammon steak was 6/6d (32p.) Chicken or scampi in a basket was 4/6d. Sandwiches were still 1/6d.

### **MY DAD DIED OCTOBER 1966**

In October 1966 my dad died. He hadn't had a very good life. He was seventy when he died, and until he became ill when he was sixty-two, in 1958, he had always done a hard manual job. He had never earned enough money to be able to save anything. There was no such thing as company pensions, so he only got the state pension, which wasn't very much. Mum was going out doing a few hours a week in a restaurant near the Rising Sun. There were no rent and rate rebates. It was then that somebody from the British Legion told my mother to apply to the ministry for a pension for Gordon. They considered that she should be entitled to £1 a week. She drew that £1 a week until she died in 1977. Work it out; 19 years at £52 a year equals £978. That's all a seventeen-year-old lad's life was worth to this country. Now you hear of a female in the army who gets discharged because she was pregnant, and the country has had to pay her over £200,000 because she lost her career, not her life. Where is the justice?

Dads funeral was on the 1st. November 1966, Mum and I would have had him cremated but, Maureen thought it was too final and wanted him buried. There was already a family grave in Norbury churchyard, with my granddad in it. Maureen said she didn't want him buried with his father because he was a boozier and my dad didn't really drink, (he could never afford it). So he is buried on his own, about fifty yards away from his father in row "G" plot 168. I don't think my dad would have been worried about the fact that his father was

a boozier; it would have at least saved one grave space in Norbury churchyard.

At the time my dad died they were living at Hazelwood Road in Hazel Grove, which was a council house. The first time my mother ever lived in a council house. I think Maureen persuaded her to move from "Sirestan", after Maureen and Ronnie got married, which would be in October 1963. Jayne was one of her bridesmaids. So she would be four, coming up five. Maureen picked her up in the morning and took her to have her hair done. She looked like a little princess at the wedding. I have scanned some pictures of Maureen's wedding, if I ever have this part printed, the pictures will be included.

When we moved into the Navigation, Mark would be three and half. I sent him to the nursery school on Arkwright Road. It was also a preparatory school for children up to eleven. It was known as Brabyns School, and at that time, people called "Seed" ran it. Mr. Seed would pick the children up in a car and return them home after their session. Mark went five mornings a week.

Mr Seed did a bit of buying and selling of cars. It so happened that the car he picked Mark up in was a Hillman Minx saloon, and it was for sale. Not having any transport when I left Bramwell & Singleton, I bought the Hillman Minx from Mr Seed. It was a good car, and I had it for about four years. In fact, after I bought our first caravan, which was a "Sprite Major" 16'- 6", one of the biggest caravans you can tow on the road, I had a tow ball fitted on it, and towed the caravan to Wales. The Hillman Minx wasn't big enough for towing a big caravan, so I bought a Zephyr six at Pilkingtons Auction rooms in Manchester for £275. That would be sometime in 1969.

I think it would be in 1966 that I had a phone call from Billy Croft to give me the sad news that his wife Audrey had died. It was a shock; I don't think anyone knew she was ill. It must have been a brain haemorrhage or heart attack; she was still only a young woman in her forties. In the first part of my story I said about being best man at their wedding in Liverpool in 1952 so they only had a married life of 14 or 15 years, and for most of them, Billy, had been at sea. That must have been the time that Billy gave up the sea to come ashore to look after his family. He started working at a factory in St. Helens. Like me it was a big change in his life coming ashore to a mundane job after being a chief cook on Blue Funnel ships that carried 36 first class passengers.

It would be 1967 that I thought about having Billy Croft and his family move to Marple, and having him as the chef at the Navigation. (The food would have really taken off with an ex Blue Funnel chef doing the cooking). Billy and his children came over to see me, and after talking it over, it would not have been practical, he needed to get an exchange from his council flat in Huyton, a suburb of Liverpool, with someone in a council house in Marple. Not many people in Marple would want to move to a council flat in the suburbs of Liverpool. Billy and his family would have loved it in Marple, but it wasn't to be. He died a few years after that. I don't think he would have been 50. It was Hughie Cleary that informed me he had died. Very sad, he was a good bloke; he didn't see much home life.

**THE MARPLE BAND MOVE INTO THE NAVIGATION**

Going back to the end of 1966 and winter was setting in. One afternoon I saw Charlie Ingham going up to the band room to light the coke stove to warm it up for the rehearsal that night. At this time the band had acquired the services of Arnold Hall as their conductor. Arnold was the "G" trombone player with the Fairy Aviation Band, and with Charlie being the "G" trombone with Marple; he was in awe of Arnold. The band room was a very dismal place, and in winter it was very cold and foreboding.

I said to Charlie that we are never going to keep a band together in this place. I invited them to come upstairs into the Navigation and rehearse. That was the start of the band using the upstairs room as their band room, and they were there except for a few short periods, for the next 25 years.

Tommy Walsh, who was the licensee of the Sportsman's Arms at Strines, was also the foreman on a building site at the time. He was able to get us one of the cupboards that were going into the houses. Charlie Ingham erected the cupboard between the chimneybreast and the rear window. That was the band cupboard for the library and other equipment. It has been moved twice since then, the first time was when we had to have the fire escape put in the upstairs room. It was then moved behind the door to the entrance of the upstairs room. When I had the new double doors were put in upstairs in the early eighties, it was moved over to the pillar near the bar, where the old entrance door was. As far as I know the cupboard is still there and probably used for storing crockery.

Still with the band, in 1967, players were coming and going. One who started to attend rehearsals was Bill Plover, who I have already mentioned. His wife had the shop on the Hollins, (High Fashion). They had immigrated into Marple from Glossop. Bill had played with Glossop Band, and like I mentioned early on, he started Garry Cutt playing on the cornet. He also started giving lessons to kids in the beginner's class, one of whom was Paul Beetham.

Two others, who came to Marple and made their mark, were Gordon Nelson, and Stan Rodgers. They both lived in the Stockport area. Gordon had played with one of the Stockport bands, before going into the army to do his national service, where he took the opportunity to join the 17/21st. Lancers Band. When he came out of the army he joined the Romiley Band, where he met his wife, Vera. Stan Rodgers was in the Stockport Borough police, who had a band. How Stan and Gordon got to know each other I do not know. It could have been that they met up in one of the many curry restaurants that had opened up on Portwood at that time. Anyway they both turned up at the Navi one rehearsal night to have a blow with the band, and were welcomed with open arms. Gordon was a very good Eb. Bass player, Stan was a welcome back row cornet player.

By 1967, Frank Magher, the Chairman, had not been seen for some time through ill health. His sons, Francis and Chris still put in an appearance. Charlie was struggling, trying to do the chairman's, secretaries and treasurers job, plus running his own builders business. I had become a member of the

committee, and became directly involved with the band by being the licensee of the Navigation. I could see that Charlie was struggling to keep on top of it all, and a lot of things concerning the band were being passed on to me. Consequently come the annual general meeting in the spring of 1967, Charlie became the chairman, I became the secretary and Jim Noble (Ray and Dennis Nobles dad), became the treasurer.

At that time, to my knowledge, the Marple Prize Band had always been considered a public band. Members of the public of Marple were involved in the running of it, and were welcomed to help to run the band, and raise funds to help finance it. There had always been an open annual general meeting, where members of the public, who were interested, could attend.

The Marple band was formed in 1900 after a public meeting had been called, and a committee set up to raise money to buy instruments, music etc. and to generally promote and run the band.

In 1967 the public of Marple were starting to become interested again, and quite a few people attended the A.G.M. in the upstairs room at the Navigation. After the officials were elected the committee consisted of, Mike Jackson, Gordon Nelson, Bill Plover, Ray Noble, Dennis Noble, Dave Bromwich, Ken Hulme, some of them playing members. Then we had John Voisey, Keith Phillips, and Dora Rowbotham, a couple of others whose names I can't remember. In all we had a substantial committee of about twelve.

The instruments that the band possessed were the ones that had belonged to the old Marple Prize Band before it was disbanded in 1958. They were handed over to the Willows School in the hope that young people would become interested in reforming Marple Band again. Certain ones became interested. These included Colin Ingham, Ray Ward and Tony Carter.

There were other youngsters who had become interested in the band before my involvement. Two of these were Phillip Woodhouse and John Richardson. It was also about this time that Albert Bradley brought his son, Kevin down to join the band. Kevin would be ten or eleven then. He was given one of the old cornets and turned up for tuition in the beginner's class. It soon became obvious that Kevin was a natural; he received a lot of support from his parents. They bought him his own cornet and he started having private lessons with Les Hall, who at the time was playing with Fairey's band.

One of the things the band had to do was, raise money. This became the main responsibility of the non-playing members like myself. A lot of the instruments were unplayable when they were returned from the Willows school, and needed repairing. The main instrument repairers in the Manchester area were Barrett's, who had a shop on Oxford Road, Manchester. They also were the biggest instrument repair firm in the area, and at that time they had a repair workshop on the main road at Denton. It actually stood near to where the big roundabout at Denton, where the M60 joins the M67 and close to where Sainsburys Denton store stands now. Charlie and I took some instruments to them for repair estimates. The chap



who was in charge was a chap called Fred Rhodes, a real good band chap who apart from playing with different bands, he conducted a few bands. In fact when the Telecom Band first started way back in 1968, they were then known as the Post Office Engineering Union Band, Fred Rhodes was the first conductor they had.

We had to open an account with Barrett's in the name of Marple Prize Band, with the address of The Navigation, Marple. We got a letter the following week giving an estimate of the repairs to the instruments we had taken to them. Also a letter to the effect that there was an outstanding account from Marple Prize band from 1958 for £30 something that the old band owed them when they disbanded. We were honour bound to pay this account off.

The main purpose of the none playing members, like myself, was to raise money from the people of Marple to get the band on a sound financial footing. To raise money we held coffee mornings and jumble sales in the upstairs room at the Navigation.

The playing standard of the band was improving under the conductor, Arnold Hall. Engagements were very few and most of them were parades for churches and carnivals. We started promoting our own concerts, some of which were successful. The band was beginning to become more popular, and not just in the Marple area, but we still did not have a full band, and except for a few on the principle players, the majority were youngsters or others who were slowly improving.

It was at this time that Bill Plover introduced me to the Glossop band club and Peter Cordey. Peter was a stalwart of Glossop Band at this time, he was secretary of the band and the club, and he was the person who was responsible for starting the Sunday evening band concerts off, with no admission fee, relying on raffle and collection to raise funds for the band giving the concert. In those days (1967/68) raising £20 at one of these concerts, was considered good and worth doing. The concerts were proving to be very popular, and bands were queuing to get a Sunday night engagements at the club. The concerts were every other Sunday. I was beginning to be a regular at the concerts, becoming well known with the regular members, like Bob Bradley and his wife Mary, Bill and Marie Bentley, Walter Bottoms and a lot of others. I got to know a lot of players from other bands, who started visiting the Navigation bringing with them their friends and families. There was a hide away jukebox in the Navigation in those days, and I insisted with the firm who owned it that a third of the records were brass band. It started to become a brass band pub, with the Marple Prize Band (as it was known then) rehearsing upstairs, and brass band records being played downstairs.

With me being secretary of the band and booking their engagements, if we were short of players I was able to get players from other bands. They would be players from the good bands in the area like Fairey's, the C.W.S. Manchester band, Fodens, Glossop, Stalybridge, to mention just a few. It encouraged the young players in our band to be playing with bandsman of

that quality. A regular who helped the band out was Norman Ashcroft who was a friend of Arnold Hall the conductor. Norman at that time was the principle cornet with Fairey's and was the finest cornet player in the country. He was a grand chap and had no edge on him, it wasn't beneath him to come and help a band like Marple. He handed over his top seat at Fairey's to a very young chap from Scotland whose name was Phillip McCann.

Mark would be five at this time in 1967 and was starting to take an interest in the band. When they turned out on marching engagements, Dave Bromwich, who was supposed to be playing principle cornet at the time had Mark marching next to him, this gave me the idea of having him as the band mascot to add some attraction to the band when they turned out. I was ordering uniforms for new players in the band from a firm in Leeds, sending the orders in with measurement slips. I took Marks measurements and they made a uniform for him, complete with peak hat, which all bands wore in those days. It became an immediate success; people would cheer him as the band went past on parades with the small mace I had made for him alongside Ray Noble who was macebearer at the time.

It would be in the early part of 1968 that I had a phone call from an office somewhere in the midlands enquiring about hiring the band to open a supermarket in Stockport, (I don't know who put them on to me, and gave them my phone number) the engagement was to lead a parade, Coco the clown was to be the celebratory in an open top car, and civic dignitaries, in open top cars behind him. The person on the phone (a female) said that the supermarket opening was a weekday morning, also asking what the engagement fee would be. I told the lady that I would have to phone her the next day as to whether we could do the job or not.

That night I got in touch with Charlie Ingham and a few more of the band to see if it would be possible to turn a band out on a week day morning. It was agreed that it would be a good publicity job for the Marple Prize Band. It was left to me to phone round to see how many of our players we could get and then to make up a band with my friends and acquaintances from other bands, like, Fairey's, Fodens, C.W.S. Manchester, Glossop. As regards the fee Charlie said that we couldn't ask for more than £50, which was a lot of money in them days, equal to more than £500 in to today's money. It was also agreed that the fee would be divided up amongst the borrowed players. The band and our own players would get nothing except the pleasure of playing with some top class players on a prestige job.

Next day I phoned the contact person to tell them we could do the job, and asked for a fee of £75. They agreed that straight away. I could have kicked myself afterwards, what I should have done was ask how much they were prepared to pay. I would think that they would be paying a hell of a lot for Coco the clown, I think if we had asked for £300 we would have got it.

The parade was to form up at the bottom of Princess Street and Lancashire Hill, march down Princess Street, through Mersey Square, past where the fire station used to be, up the hill to St. Peters Square, turn left down St.

Petersgate, towards the market. The supermarket was on the right hand side, a new building where they had demolished some shops, (one was the U.C.P cafe and shop) and other buildings.

The opening had been well advertised and a lot of people turned out to watch the parade, which was headed by Ray Noble with the mace, and Mark by his side with his small mace. They seemed interested in Mark in front of the band. It seemed I was right that people showed a lot of interest in Marple Prize Band's mascot. The band reached St. Petersgate, and at that time the Stockport Express offices were on that street, their photographer was on the street covering the opening of the first supermarket in Stockport. Then the first slip up came! Although the police were leading the parade, Ray Noble saw this row of new shops, which had been built recently, and thought that they were the shops that were being opened and turned the band on to the pavement. Luckily only the band followed, the rest of the parade stopped on the road. Ray realized his mistake and led the band back onto the street again. They arrived at the right building and the supermarket (Victor Value) was opened by Coco.

After the opening, the Express photographer asked if he could take some pictures of Mark, I went with him to their offices where he took a few pictures of him. The one that got into the paper was of him sat on a desk with his legs crossed holding his hat in a tilt from his head. Marks granddad (Harold Torkington) had the original of this picture in his house. When he died it was passed back to Mark, a copy of it is here.

I collected the £75 cheque from the person who had engaged us. We all travelled back to the Navigation for sandwiches and some celebratory drinks after completing a very successful prestige engagement. I shared the £75 out amongst the guest players. It worked out at about £4 or £5 each. There would probably have been about 12 to 15 of our own players who of course got nothing except a free drink and sandwiches, but it proved a good publicity job for the band. I started to get a few enquiries for their services. The Marple Band was starting to take off and attracted some new players like Dick Rodgers, a police sergeant, and his brother David. Sid Simpson and his daughter Caroline. We also got a few youngsters coming to the junior class. The Taylor brothers, David & Steven, plus Gary Thelwall and Gary Murphy. These people were the future Marple Band. When the Stockport Express came out that week it had a double page about the opening of the supermarket, with pictures of Marple Prize Band leading the parade in front of Coco. Mark is on the photo with Ray Noble leading the band, and a separate picture of Mark taken in the Express offices.

Two or three weeks later, the Manchester Evening News was delivered on a Saturday night, and right on the front page was the same picture of Mark sitting on the desk. The photographer had obviously sold the picture to the M.E.N. with a story. A couple of weeks later, I got a phone call from a chap somewhere in Yorkshire who wanted to come and take a series of pictures of Mark. He said he might be able to use them sometime. It turned out he was a professional photographer, he sold them with a story to magazines all over

the continent, America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and probably some I never knew about. He gave me copies of the photos. Mark has them hanging up in the Hatters.

A year after that, John Houlton, (remember him mentioned earlier) had opened a shop in Marple, selling toys. He called it "Toy Inn". He then took over Bill Plover's "Hi Fashion", and sold off the clothes. He opened it up selling prams etc. and he called it "Baby Inn". He also started to take an interest in Marple Prize Band. When it was coming up to carnival time, he suggested that he dressed the window of his "Baby Inn" shop with a display of Marple Prize Band. I gave him the phone number of the photographer of Marks pictures. John contacted him and asked him for a very large copy of the one with Mark sitting in front of the march drum, playing a cornet. We chose that one because it was the only one that depicted Marple Prize Band on the march drum. That picture has been hung up in the Square & Compass at Darley Dale for 10 years; it is now hung in the passageway of the Hatters. The rest of the display of the band in the shop window was a couple of trophies they had won, a couple of instruments, and a uniform on a tailor's dummy.

In the late sixties brass bands were converting their instruments from low pitch to high pitch. All new brass instruments were being manufactured in high pitch, which allowed brass bands to play with orchestras, pianos and organs. All the top bands were already purchasing the new instruments and, when we were getting players from these bands helping out, tuning slides had to be adjusted to be able to get in tune with each other. Marple band were of course unable to buy new instruments, so, it was decided to have the best of them converted. This required a piece welded on to the main tuning slide. Barrett's carried out the conversions, but the instruments were still old and we had to seriously consider getting a new set, which would require a lot of fund raising.

I think it was in 1968 that the National Boat rally was held at the top lock in Marple. The reason that Marple was chosen was to draw attention to the derelict state of the locks that were not navigable. It was now the only obstacle that stopped the navigation of the Cheshire Ring. In the early sixties the aqueduct at bottom lock was in a bad state of repair. It was touch and go as to whether to repair or demolish it, which would have put paid to the canal in Marple ever being navigable. Opposition to the aqueduct being demolished was very strong and Marple council contributed £50,000 to having it repaired. British waterways provided the rest of the money and the same contractor who built the shops on the Hollins carried out the repairs.

The boat rally attracted two or three hundred boats from all over the canal system. Thousands of visitors came to Marple over the weekend. The band was engaged to play two concerts, Saturday and Sunday afternoon plus the hymns for the church service on Sunday morning. All this took place on what was then land belonging to the British Legion which had been donated by the Jinks family who at one time had boat yards there for building and dry-docking the canal narrow boats. It was before the new British Legion club was built. The Legion only had a small wooden structure that Major Hill had paid to be

built in the 1920's. It was built on the top of the old limekilns, and was beginning to hang in a dangerous way over the side of where the kilns had been.

Marple Prize Band were engaged to play at the Top Lock so we had to put on a good show. I was busy getting some good players in to help out. Once again Norman Ashcroft was the top man who carried the band, with Arnold Hall conducting. Dave Bromwich, who thought himself a good player, sat himself next to Norman. This next bit has always been considered as one of Dave Bromwich's dry humour, but a lot of older people in the band like myself remember this and thought he was serious when he said to Norman Ashcroft "don't worry Norman if you can't manage it leave it out, I'll shovel it in". We old timers have had many a laugh over that since. Norman Ashcroft was the finest cornet player in the country, if not the world.

Fund raising became as much an obsession with me as running the Navigation. I was always thinking up ideas, and we were short of players. But how do you try to attract players? You have to get the word about somehow. Advertising in the press was expensive and a little advert in a local paper, if seen, would be lucky to get a result. There was the Brass Band press. At that time there was only two of them, The British Bandsman, which was a national journal and The British Mouthpiece, printed by Ted Buttress at Ramsbottom. Both these journals had a lot of adverts in from bands wanting players; so the chances of someone coming to Marple (an unknown band, who hadn't even started contesting then) were very slim.

I thought up the idea of having some posters placed round the immediate area. Jeff Turner printed them and I delivered them to shops all over the district. One of the WANTED posters is the picture of Mark sat by the big drum. It did attract one of the old players back to Marple Prize Band. That was old Jim Sweeney, who had played bass with the old band and with High Lane band, when it was going. Jim was well in his sixties, with a bad chest and arthritis but he could read music and put the odd few notes in. It got him from under his wife's feet and gave him an interest. I also got him sorting and looking after the library, for which he got 10/-d a week from band funds. (It was a week's beer money for him). Jim was bad at walking, so I would go and pick him up one morning a week, and bring him down to the Navigation to spend a couple of hours on the library.

By 1968 the band had about twenty-two players. Those who had come from other bands wanted to start contesting, but first we had got to get the band registered at Belle Vue Brass Band Registry. That job fell to me as secretary. The first contest we entered was the Belle Vue May Festival, which at that time was one of the biggest contests in the country, with a total of six sections. It attracted about 120 bands from all over the country. The management of Belle Vue always arranged the May festival to coincide with the cup final at Wembley. It guaranteed filling the Belle Vue gardens with a 120 plus bands with up to 28 players in each band plus supporters. This amounted to a few thousand people, without which the place would have been nearly empty on cup final day. The top section was held in the Kings

Hall, and was of course the “Grand Shield ” for the trophy, plus £1000 prize money. (The winner of which went forward to compete in “The British Open” in September, which at that time was held every year in the Kings Hall at Belle Vue). The rest of the prize money was rubbish. In the sixth section the first prize was £10, then £8, and £5, for second and third. Marple of course were entered in the lowest sixth section playing the test piece “Beautiful Britain”, which at the time was playable by fourth section bands. It had a good melody, so was easy listening. Marple came nowhere in the prizes, which wasn't surprising, it being their first contest, but it gave them the contesting bug. The week after Belle Vue had become the Buxton contest annual date. They always made the test pieces the same as those for Belle Vue, so it attracted the same bands from the week before, and they did not need to rehearse a new piece.

Marple entered the Buxton contest the next week playing, of course, “Beautiful Britain”. They didn't play it as well as the week before. A record firm were making records of each bands performance, (tape recorders had not come out then). I ordered a copy, which I have still got, and it is terrible. (Anybody want to borrow it?).

Everybody in the band had now got the contesting bug. Scanning the brass band journal, I read that a local contest was coming up at Chesterfield organized by the Midlands Brass Band Association, and so Marple entered. Arnold Hall went through the library and came up with a piece (forgot the title), which was simple and only lasted four or five minutes. I think there were three sections in this contest. We entered the third section, which was the first section to play. Not many people were in the hall, which was just as well, because, the piece that Marple played, I don't think had been heard before and, being a very short piece, those that were in the hall didn't realize that the piece had finished, it was a complete disaster. The remarks on the results proved that.

Ernie Ledson was playing soprano cornet at that time and he was trying to get his son interested in playing. While we were at Chesterfield he bought a soprano cornet off one of the trade stands, on hire purchase. This cornet was the one that went on to be the “Stead & Nelson Trophy” when I had it made in 1980.

### **NEW STAFF AT THE NAVIGATION**

One of the sets of friends who followed us down to the Navigation from the Ring O Bells was Tom and Violet Parker. I got Vi helping behind the bar. When we decided to have a holiday and get away from the pub for a week in 1968, I showed Tom what to do in the cellar and we went away to Jersey and left them in charge.

A young man I started working behind the bar in 1968 eventually led to his mother and sister working for me for a number of years. He was Barry

Ashworth. He was in his late twenties and was always clean and smartly dressed. At the time he worked for Post Office Telephones. (For the past 30 years or more they have been known as British Telecom) At the time he lived with his wife, Linda, (who was expecting their first child), in the next to last terraced house on Hollins Lane, opposite the now new Co-op store. Barry had ambitions of getting into the pub trade, so he took a great interest in every thing that went on. He told me his mother, Ann, was looking for a part time job, so I started her behind the bar. She was in her fifties and very nervous but had a wonderful sense of humour. The customers loved her. They could have a good laugh with her. She was so naive she would soak up anything they told her. I also later had Barry's sister, Sandra working for me. Ann and Sandra worked for me for a number of years after Barry had left to start his career in the licensing trade. At first he was a steward at a big golf club, and then he went as a manager in Greenhall's managed houses. He did very well, and left Greenhall's to manage the "Puss in Boots" on Nangreave Road. A Robinson's pub, but at the time it was leased, like four other Robinson's pubs, to Hazel Grove Music Hire.

In later years, Barry developed diabetes, and had to have is lower leg off about 1997. Jayne was going to the pub dressing his leg when she was on the district nursing staff in that area at the time. I last saw Barry at Withington Hospital, when I was car driving for the ambulance service. He was being fitted for an artificial lower leg.

***Whilst I am compiling this part in January 2003, it has been noted in the local press, that Robinson's have now taken back the leases on these pubs and put tenants in, and the tenancy of the "Puss in Boots" has been taken over by Linda Ashworth, (Barry's wife), so at the time of writing it is a bit of mystery as to what has happened to Barry.***

### **MARPLE BAND BOXING DAY CONTEST**

It was suggested at a committee meeting in 1968/9 that to give the youngsters in the band some competitive interest and that we started a junior contest. All the committee was wholeheartedly behind this. Boxing Day each year was suggested. We of course needed a trophy for the winners. Ken Hulme, who played second trombone with band said he had a small trophy which was suitable to be presented to the winning youngster, along with a cash prize of £3, with £2 going to the second and a £1 to the third, all-out of band funds.

The first contest proved a success, the upstairs band room was full with parents, friends and relatives, plus our own band members and members of other bands. We had an adjudicator, it could have been Arnold Hall.

Band members got together after the beginners had finished, playing carols. Sandwiches and mince pies were served courtesy of the ladies committee.

The success of this first contest extended the following year to another section for the juniors in the band, like Kevin Bradley, Gary Thelwall, Gary Murphy, the Taylor brothers and others. Jim Noble supplied a second trophy. The room upstairs was packed.

Les Butterwick, who at the time had become secretary of the band, added another trophy the following year. The following year I provided a substantial trophy to be competed for by any band member. The trophy was engraved "The Navigation Cup", it was an open section for juniors and seniors. I provided the prize money, £10 for the winner, £3 and £2 for the runners up. The winners name was engraved on the plinth of the cup. There were several names on the plinth, from memory Kevin Bradley, Helen Fox, Mark Singleton to name just a few.

Sadly the contest came to an end about 1988 or 1989. New blood had come into the band after Gary Cutt took over in 1983, The junior band, which was originally intended to be a feeder band for the Marple Band, became the Marple "B" Band. They were joined by a few members of the senior band, who found it to much pressure playing in the higher sections of the contests. I am jumping ahead at this point so I will come back to the fortunes of Marple Band later.

## **THE START OF CARAVANING**

**It would be about 1969 that we decided to buy a caravan, it would give us the freedom to go away for a few days without having to book anywhere, it would also be cheaper.**

We visited a caravan firm on the A6 at Great Moor called Davenport Caravans. I was ignorant at that time about caravans, but I did realize that for five of us a reasonable sized one would be needed. I took their advice and was assured by the salesman that my Hillman car would be able to tow the Sprite Major, so I bought it. I had a tow bar fitted to the car and went to pick the caravan up. I parked it in between the garages on the car park at the Navigation.

Come the summer we loaded the caravan up and set off for North Wales, leaving Barry Ashworth and his wife Linda in charge. We stayed at a couple of caravan sites; one of them was a municipal site on Black Rock sands. The weather was really hot and even with all the windows open it was like an oven inside the caravan, but we all enjoyed it, and so I decided to look for somewhere where we could leave the caravan for the summer, and would not have to tow it back. I found this farm site near Pwllheli, it was up a narrow country lane, and had only basic facilities, but it was cheap and didn't cost much to leave it there unoccupied. Some cine film that I took at the time and had transferred onto video shows the kids playing on the field with Shep (the collie dog).



There was a country pub in a little hamlet about a mile down the lane from this site. I had been in there on the Saturday night. The locals told me that if I wanted a drink on the Sunday, (pubs in Wales didn't open on Sundays) to knock on the back door after 12 o'clock. It must have been about 1 o'clock when I knocked on the back door, when they let me in the place was full. So much for the religious welsh people and no opening on the Sabbath. I got talking to this farmer who had a sheep dog with him, and I was making a fuss of the dog. He had a farm just a bit further on than the caravan site, He said his farm was half dairy and sheep, the other part was arable, and he grew vegetables for market. We left the pub together and went to his farm to buy some of his veg. When I got out of the car, a sheep dog came crawling along the floor wagging its tail. When I started to make a fuss of it the farmer asked me if I wanted it, followed by the words that he was going to shoot it because it was useless as a farm dog, it would not work. I went back to the caravan, picked the family up and went to the farm to show them the dog that was going to be shot. That was how we came by Jess. We now had two dogs myself Jean, Jayne, Mark and Michael to take back to Marple in the Hillman, a bit of a crush.

It was after we got back that I found out that towing the caravan with the Hillman Minx didn't do the car much good. It burned the clutch out, which was a costly repair. So I decided to get a bigger car. I went to Pilkingtons car auction rooms in Manchester and bought a Zephyr Six for £275. It was a good buy, it had been a company director's car, and for a 1965 model it was in good condition. There were a couple of drawbacks. One was, it had very soft rear springing so I had to have extra leaf springs fitted on the rear to stop it sagging when the caravan was hitched up. The other one was it was very thirsty, and only did about 20 m.p.g. When towing the caravan it only did about 16 m.p.g.. I had that car until 1975, and got rid of it when there was trouble with the world oil producing countries, and petrol doubled in price. I got rid of the last caravan I had, (which was a Bailey I bought new in 1970), in 1973, so I no longer needed a big car.

Before the alterations at the Navigation there was a room between the bar and the kitchen, which I used as a storeroom. In there was a fire extinguisher, which was waiting to be recharged. Michael, who would be about three, was playing in there and pulled this fire extinguisher over. It crushed his finger on his left hand and I had to rush him down to the Infirmary to get his finger stitched. It left him with a flat finger and it is the only one now that he can't pick his nose with.

**BACK TO MARPLE BAND**

Early in 1969 Gordon Nelson left Marple Band and joined Poynton Band. It was a blow to Marple as he was one of their best players. He still came to Marple because it was where all his friends were, but Poynton at that time were a far better band and he registered with them for contesting. This meant he could not contest with Marple, not even as a borrowed player because Poynton were in a higher section. We did register John Drury who played double bass and Andy Aldhorf, who played baritone. Both were professionals who played with Sheps Banjo Boys and at that time were the resident band at the Golden Garter in Wythenshawe. John played Sousaphone. Andy played Trombone with Sheps. At that time the rules were that professionals were not allowed to play or register with any brass band, but I never declared them as professionals.

The following year 1969, Marple entered Belle Vue again. The test piece this time was "London River". John and Andy played with Marple. The band played well but unfortunately did not get in the prizes.

The following week it was the Buxton contest. Marple entered again playing "London River". This time we only had one Eb. Bass player (Sid Simpson) who had not been playing long. The other Eb. Bass player was an old chap called Sid Astley who for some reason was unable to play, but had already signed the contest sheet. Arnold Hall, the conductor, said we couldn't go to the contest without a decent Eb Bass player. I asked Gordon to play and had him practising Sid Astley's signature. When we arrived at the contest, when getting off the coach, one of the persons who saw Gordon was a policeman who played with Poynton. He said to Gordon "I hope your not thinking of playing with this lot"? Gordon replied that he had only travelled up on the coach with us. It unnerved him and he said he couldn't play with us. Arnold Hall said if he didn't play the band could not go on. So Gordon nervously approached the signing on table. As secretary I was handing in the registration cards. I watched him sign, he did it perfectly, but the incident unnerved the band so the performance was not good.

A week after that I got a letter from Belle Vue Registry saying that Poynton Band had complained that we had played one of their registered players at Buxton. I vehemently denied it and sent in Sid Astley's registration card for them to check against the registration sheet. They accepted that it was genuine. We had got away with it. You could have understood Poynton Band reporting us if we had been in the prizes, but it was pure bloody-mindedness, which caused a rift between the two bands. Charlie Ingham put a letter together to Poynton Band, saying that he could not understand why a band like Poynton would want to put down a struggling band like Marple. He ended his letter with words that I have never forgotten "Be kind to those you meet on the way up, because you very well may meet them again on the way down".

Later in the year it was the Manchester districts contest, which was held at Stretford town hall, and Arnold Hall again conducted "London River" and by coincidence Norman Ashcroft was adjudicating. He was in an enclosed box and did not know which band was playing, and Marple Prize Band won its first

prize since 1938. They came second and won the Reporter Cup. Marple Band had arrived on the brass band scene.

Later that year it was realised, particularly among the younger players, that Arnold Hall had taken the band as far as he could. They wanted somebody younger with a wider musical knowledge. It was left to Charlie Ingham as chairman of the band to tell him. Arnold was a very decent chap and I for one was sad to see him go.

Someone told us of Maurice McLean who at the time was a professional, conducting and writing the scores for the pit orchestra at Blackpool's Opera House Theatre and also at Belle Vue Circus. He was approached to become the conductor of Marple Band. It was a challenge for Maurice and he was very keen. The band got used to running through several pieces in one rehearsal by Maurice's method of topping and tailing.

Marple Band was now starting to get recognized by the public of Marple. We now needed a known person to front the band as president. That is where Monty Burton became involved. He was already a councillor on Marple U.D.C. and the next year he was going to be chairman of the council. At this time our new instrument fund had been started and we were thinking up all kinds of ideas to raise money. The new instruments that were badly needed would cost in the region of £3000. It was thought that if we could raise £1000 we might be able to get a loan from the bank

### **THE START OF THE FIRST BIER KELLERS**

On one of my trips over to Glossop band club, Peter Cordey had organized a Bier Keller. Peter had thought up the idea, with every one dressing up in Tyrolean dress. It packed the band club, and they raised a lot of money. I came away with the idea that we could do it in Marple. The only place big enough in Marple was the Baths Hall. I put it to the committee; they thought it was a good idea. It was going to take a lot of organizing, plus the band would have to rehearse a whole new programme, including pieces that could be danced to.

We put it to our president Monty. He agreed to use the band as one of his charities during his year in office as chairman of the council. This meant that we would get the use of the baths hall free of charge.

It was now full steam ahead to get the Bier Keller organized during the winter months, when the baths were not used for swimming. We needed a bar, you can't have a Bier Keller without a bar. That was left to me to organise. I thought up the idea that if we got all the bottled beer and spirits donated we would make a good profit. Ray Noble John Voisey and I went all round the pubs in Marple and Marple Bridge, cadging. Asking for a couple of cases of beer, some spirits, mixers or soft drinks. We had a good response, very few refused, (ask Ray Noble who did). Those who gave to the bar were given two free tickets for the event, but they were also asked to spare a bit of time

behind the bar, because no body was being paid. The only licensee that did help all night behind the bar was Ken Moon, who had only recently taken over the "Sportsman's", Strines. He had just moved from Blackpool, where he had run a boarding house.

I am writing this part on the 4th. December 2002. Eight days ago, on the 26th. November 2002, I went to Ken's funeral, He was a very good bloke and one of the very few friends I had in the licensing trade, he will be sadly missed. He was only sixty-three.

The Bier Keller was a great success. The band performed very well, thanks to Maurice McLean who scored a lot of music, which was not familiar to brass bands. He joined pieces together to give continuous music for dancing, Bavarian style. Nearly £300 was raised towards the instrument fund.

It was about 1970 that a chap with lots of playing experience in some of the top bands, including Mirleess, started to take an interest in the band. His name was Dennis Langley and at the time he was working at British Aerospace, Woodford, and was playing with Poynton Band. He started playing with Poynton because he became interested in a young woman who was playing with them. They were married and lived in Hazel Grove. Dennis was a very good bandsman, soon to make his mark on Marple Band. He came on to the committee with some good ideas. He and I put our heads together thinking up ideas to raise money.

I mentioned to Dennis about this idea I had of doing a five-mile sponsored march, non-stop playing all the way. We knew that one band could not do it on its own; so, we enlisted the help of Glossop and Chapel-en-le-Fifth bands, making a total of about seventy players. Dennis went round in his car looking at several routes which would clock up five miles, and at the same time take in the residential areas of Marple where parades would not normally pass. It had to be on a Sunday and we would need the permission of the council and police. I obtained the permission of both, and a date was set in the summer of 1971.

We had by this time a very strong ladies committee consisting of people like Shirley Bradley, Millie Jackson (Mike Jackson's mother), several bandsmen's wives, plus mothers of the junior bandsmen. They were raising money all the time with coffee mornings; jumble sales etc., besides doing street collections when the band was playing anywhere. (In 2002 what has happened to it all?)

Come the day of the sponsored march, leading the parade was the Marple Carnival Queen sat in an open top car with the chairman of the council. Leading the band was the two Sheps banjo boys (John Drury and Andy Holdorf) both dressed in their stage outfits, John playing his sousaphone, Andy playing his trombone. The ladies committee and a few others were shaking collection tins en route. We started outside the Navigation, then up Hollins Lane, left at Station Road, right at Manor road, left onto the Norbury estate, Buxton Road, Dale Road, round the Marple Hall estate, up Stockport Road, round the Rose Hill estate, Hibbert Lane to Hawk Green, down Ridge

Road and Church Lane, left at Church Street where all three bands struck up with "The Standard of St. George". This must have been heard in Marple Bridge, Dam Bank, and probably Romiley. We finished outside the Navigation where we all retired to a buffet that the ladies committee had provided, plus a keg of beer, provided by yours truly.

With the street collections and sponsorship we raised well over £300, which in 1971 was a lot of money. We were now reaching our target of £1000, and we had approached the National Westminster Bank for a bank loan (The manager at the time was Roy Andrews, who is still a V.P. and a member of our 200 club), to cover the balance of the new instruments. Marple U.D.C. agreed to stand as guarantors for the band because we had no collateral.

The two main instrument suppliers in the Manchester area at the time were Barretts, and Reynolds. We asked for a quotation for a total of twenty-one instruments. (A full complement of brass instruments for a band is twenty-five plus percussion). We had a Euphonium and Baritone which were fairly new, and some of the cornet players had their own instruments.

### **EVENTS IN 1971**

The first family event of course was Tim being born on the 10 January at Tameside General hospital in Ashton-Under-Lyne.

Jean was having high blood pressure, so the doctors decided to induce her. Consequently Tim was born about four weeks premature, with a birth weight of only four and a half pounds. He was put directly into an incubator in the high dependency unit. Jean was allowed home after about a week, but we were travelling to Ashton every afternoon and evening for a few weeks until Tim started to gain weight. When he reached five pounds we were allowed to bring him home. He became quite chubby, but not in length. When it came to choosing a name to have him christened, we decided to call him Timothy, (Tiny Tim) and gave him Gordon's second name, John. He was a fat little lad until he started walking, then he lost his pudg, but still didn't shoot up too much. He still is the smallest of the three lads and just slightly taller than Jayne. Jayne was one of the tallest in her class at school until she reached the age of ten or eleven, then she stopped growing.

To come back to the Navigation. The favourite place for the band members to congregate after a rehearsal or after coming back from an engagement, was round the bar. It then became a bottleneck with people wanting to gain access to other parts of the pub, like the upstairs function room, the ladies toilet, or the passageway leading to the gent's toilet and the back room. This was used as a dining room or small function room for meetings etc.

It was on one of these occasions, and probably after closing time that a few of the older members of the band plus a few other customers were still in. It had been a busy night with people having to squeeze past to get to the toilets. I

mentioned that we could do with a couple of walls knocking out so as to open up the room behind, which was only used as a junk room for storage. It was then that those in the band that were in the building trade, (Charlie Ingham, Gordon Nelson, Ray and Denise Noble) suggested that between us we could do the bulk of the work after closing on a Saturday night, propping the floor up and putting a couple of R.S.J's up.

I would need the permission of the brewery. I wrote on 10th. April 1971 explaining what I wanted to do. I received a reply a couple of weeks later saying that one of the company's architects would call to see what was requested and submit a plan. I still have the letters appertaining to the alterations. I am copying some of them to enclose in this journal. The alterations took two years to complete so I will come back to this later.

### **MARPLE BAND GET NEW INSTRUMENTS**

Dennis Langley and myself did the negotiations with Barretts and Reynolds about the purchase of the new instruments. Some of the old ones we were trading in. The rest we were keeping for the learners and junior band, which was being formed by Dennis Langley.

All the instruments we were to purchase were to carry the Boosey & Hawks name on the bell, but at that time, this very well known firm were purchasing instruments manufactured by other companies, some of them foreign, so you could not rely on the true authenticity of their origin.

From memory, I think that quotations for the 21 instruments started around the £4000 mark. Both Barretts and Reynolds were keen to secure the order, so we were trading one off against the other. When we had got Reynolds down to £3,300 Barretts pulled out, so, Reynolds secured the order.

At this time we did not have a secure solo cornet player. The most promising of all the youngsters was Phillip Woodhouse. It was agreed by the committee that we got him private tuition as well as being tutored by Dennis Langley. So when the time came for the instruments to be officially handed over to the band from the public of Marple a concert was organized in the Baths Hall. Charlie Ingham had prepared a brief history to run through during the concert. The programme was to consist of music which the band had played over the years starting with the march "Marple Hall" which had been composed by George Longdon who was a native of Marple and was conducting the band at the time (late 1920s) when he composed this march. This was officially supposed to be Marple Band's signature march. George Longdon was appointed the professional conductor of the Brighton Police band and he moved down there. As far as I know he never returned to Marple.

After the first couple of numbers, the then Chairman of Marple council, Councillor Jack Brady did the official hand over of the instruments from the public of Marple, by presenting a top of the range cornet to Phillip Woodhouse, (who was now the principle cornet player), on behalf of the

public of Marple as a token of the public support for the new instrument fund. Mrs Millie Jackson presented a cornet to Kevin Bradley (the youngest member of the band), on behalf of the ladies committee. Millie was the daughter of the late Alf Fernley, who was a former trustee of the band. A Flugel Horn was handed over to David Taylor by his father, Jack, whose relatives had raised the highest individual amount for the instrument fund. Mrs Dennis Noble of the bands ladies committee handed over a soprano cornet to Barry Large, and Mrs Jimmy Noble of the bands ladies committee presented a "G" Trombone to Charlie Ingham. Councillor Monty Burton, as president of the band, thanked the 300 plus people for attending the concert lending their support to the band. He said the band was going onward but the public's support was needed He congratulated the band, its committee and the ladies committee for their sterling work, which had resulted in the purchase of the new instruments. In closing his speech Monty Burton pointed out that the bank loan had to be repaid and appealed to everyone present for his or her continued support to enable the debt to be reduced. (It was a different story a few months later when the A.G.M. was being organized).

### **THE START OF SUNDAY EVENING BAND CONCERTS IN MARPLE**

The new British Legion Club opened in 1971. I had been a member since leaving the Merchant Navy in 1956. The new club, though not very big, seemed a good place to try out running Sunday evening concerts, like Glossop band club. I put it to the Chairman and secretary of the Legion. They thought it a good idea, and agreed to try it out once a month. It was left to me to organise.

Marple did the first concert. I then organized Glossop band to do the next one. It was made a civic occasion, with Monty Burton who that year was chairman of the council, inviting the mayor and mayoress of Glossop in their official capacity to attend. The concert was a complete success, with the result that a return concert at Glossop band club, by the Marple Band, with both mayors attending was organised.

I then organized concerts at the Legion Club by various bands in the area once a month. The bands were Thornsett, Whaley Bridge, Burnage (Manchester). The concerts at Glossop Band Club were every other Sunday, so I arranged them so that they did not clash.

### **POLITICS IN BRASS BANDS**

For the five years that I had been involved with the band, a notice had always been placed in the local paper announcing the annual general meeting. When this was brought up at the committee meeting prior to A.G.M., it was voiced that the public should not be invited to attend. To say I was shocked was putting it mildly; I could not believe that the public were being excluded. The committee consisted of about twelve people, of which more than half were playing members. The non-players on the committee (that I can remember

after all these years) were Jim Noble Ray Noble John Voisey, Jack Taylor, and myself. A lot of debating on the issue followed, when a vote was taken on the issue it went through on one vote, myself being the Chairman could only vote if the voting was equal. So it was passed that the public of Marple would not be invited to the A.G.M. I could only speak after the meeting was closed and I said that they were making a big mistake in excluding the public because the band depended on their support, particularly repaying the loan for the new instruments

The next day I contacted Monty Burton, who had not been at the meeting, and told him of what had been passed through committee. I also contacted Charlie Ingham, and the three of us met that night. I told them that after what had happened at the meeting, my conscience would not let me continue as chairman of the band, and that I was resigning. It followed that the band moved out of the Navigation to a room above the launderette, which is now the Italian restaurant. They held the A.G.M. in that room, and Monty Burton published a piece in the paper saying that the public were welcome at anytime to listen to the band rehearsals in their band room. He was trying to cover up the fact that the band had cut the public out of any involvement with the band, and this was before he had started the vice presidents organisation.

### **MARK AND MARPLE BAND**

I had tried to get Mark interested in the band. He first had a go on a cornet, which I had originally bought for Paul Beetham to learn on. When the band got the new instruments I took this cornet back for another learner. This happened to be Mark He was not getting anywhere with it, and soon lost interest. Then he moved from All Saints school to the Willows, where they were trying to form a brass band. Dennis Langley managed to get the job as a part time teacher, doing a few hours a week teaching a few kids on some old brass instruments that they had.

The youngsters he had in the school band were the ones he had been teaching at Marple Band. Kevin Bradley, Gary Murphy, Gary Thelwall, Paul Beetham, the Taylor brothers Steven and David, plus a few others.

Mark realised that the kids who were supposed to be in the school band were excused lessons to attend rehearsals, so he took the cornet along to get into the band. Dennis Langley realised that Mark's omburture did not suite a small cornet mouthpiece, so he found him an old tenor horn out of the Marple bandroom cupboard.

I could see that he wasn't getting very far with the tenor horn. I said to Dennis that I thought his instrument would be a trombone, with a bigger mouthpiece. Langley said that Mark would never play a trombone, as his arm movements would not be quick enough.

I borrowed Colin Ingham's trombone (which he had before the band got their new instruments). Mark was able to get a good sound out of it, it suited him. That's when he got the incentive and interest in brass bands and music. He



proved Dennis Langley wrong. He was playing second trombone with the band before he was fourteen.

The rest is history with Mark and brass bands. It has become one of his main interests, and still is. He has played principle trombone with several bands, at present (2005) with Hawk Green (Marple) Band and he is always totally committed.

### **THE ALTERATIONS AT THE NAVIGATION**

The architect at the brewery, Hilton Walker, submitted some plans to the directors at the brewery. Then Sir John Robinson and his son Peter paid a visit to see what was proposed to be done. This had only to be the two walls knocked out as I proposed in the first place. Sir John started going round the place and Peter was taking notes of what Sir John wanted. It turned from knocking a couple of walls out to a reconstruction of the ground floor. The two front rooms were to be knocked into one. The stairs were to be turned round, which meant that a new cellar entrance had to be made, which entailed digging out and making a tunnel entrance under the front room. Taking out the two front bay windows, and making them flush small pane windows, and new windows all down the side of the building on Canal Street, plus all the upstairs windows at the front and side elevation. The side passage on to Canal Street was blocked off and the space used to extend the gents toilet. The original entrance into the toilets I turned into a telephone kiosk. The original floor leading to the back room had sloped upwards, so it was knocked out, and a step was made into the back room.

We were now into 1971 and Shep would now be fourteen, he was suffering with arthritis in his back legs, you had to lift him up and it must have been giving him a lot of pain. I got Mr Oran, the vet to come and have a look at him. He advised me to have him put down, which I consented him to do. Poor Shep, he had been a lovely dog, he was nasty with strangers, but a good guard dog. Harold and Harriet missed him the most, he, like the kids were always round at Turner Road. If he was down stairs in the pub he could tell as soon as either of them, Harriet or Harold, turned the corner from Market Street onto Stockport Road, he would go running to the front door wagging his tail and barking.

The builders had already knocked the doorway out to the back room and part of the wall as well as the chimneybreast in the unused room. One morning a bricklayer was starting to brick up part of the entrance to the back room, and I told him to stop as I did not want it bricked up with a doorway, I wanted it open plan. So I phoned Hilton Walker and told him that I didn't want the room separating. He told me in a very nasty tone that it had got nothing to do with me. So I thought I have got to get hold of Sir John to inform him what is so called architect was about to authorize the builders to do. I thought the only way to get hold of Sir John was to send him a personal telegram, which I worded, (please attend the Navigation, a big mistake is being made to the alterations). He came up that afternoon with Peter, and he agreed with me

that the room should be left open with a supporting pillar. Whilst he was there he looked all round and wasn't too pleased with some of things he saw. He was giving notes to Peter; he wanted the full urinal stone (which had only just been put in) knocked out and vanity bowls put in. I told him I wanted the gents toilet in the games room blocking up, (it was getting vandalized all the time) and turning it into a storeroom with entrance from the outside yard.

I asked him for the private downstairs kitchen to be turned into a catering kitchen, and a small bedroom upstairs to be made the private kitchen. I told him that the bar was inadequate and out of keeping with rest of the place, so Hilton Walker designed a new bar, which when fitted was totally useless, and it took Mr Broster (who was a partner in the building contractors, Steward and Broster) about three months to alter it, hiding the cost in something else to save Hilton's neck, because he had made a complete cock up of designing the new bar, in fact he had made a complete cock up of the whole alteration. When it was finished it looked a complete mess and remained like that till the brewery put a new bar in 1999, which was eight years after I retired from there.

After the alterations at the Navigation were finished, Hilton Walker had a heart attack, he blamed it on me. I found out afterwards that he wasn't actually an architect, his previous job before the brewery was as a quantity surveyor. He has been dead a few years now, I know it sounds cruel, but it's a pity he didn't go before the alterations to the Navigation started.

### **WHALEY BRIDGE BAND REQUEST MY SERVICES**

Peter Cordey and I had become good friends, so when he heard that I had resigned from Marple Band, he asked me to join the committee of Whaley Bridge Band.

I should mention here that Peter finished with Glossop Band sometime in 1969. At the time I understand it was some bad feeling with the band committee and the club committee. Peter was piggy in the middle; at one time he had been secretary of both. There had also been a bit of infighting in the band over conductors that had been sacked and new ones appointed. Peter had also been doing some peripatetic band teaching at Glossop School and had also started teaching brass at Broken Cross School at Macclesfield. This was at the time that Barrie Hinde had been appointed conductor of Glossop band. Barrie had previously been the conductor of Whaley Bridge. Barrie's father had conducted Whaley Bridge for years before that. However it all ended with Peter taking over as conductor of Whaley Bridge. He brought in pupils that he was teaching at Glossop School, two of whom were Gary Cutt and Peter Bowd. He was also bringing pupils from Broken Cross. So he had got a young band at Whaley Bridge who he had brought into the brass band movement. One of whom has made a name for himself in banding, "Gary Cutt".

I started attending the rehearsals at Whaley Bridge, consequently when it was there A.G.M. I became their engagement secretary. The thing about Whaley Bridge band was that their title was Whaley Bridge Public Band. The majority of the committee were non-playing members. They had a good organization like we used to have at Marple, and which the present Hawk Green band has in 2003.

I was still organizing the concerts at the British Legion, and after the last one that I had booked had done there concert, I asked the chairman when he wanted the next one booking in, he told me that the committee had said to leave it for a bit.

I just could not understand why, because on the Sunday nights that the concerts were on, the place would get packed. I found out the following week that it had been said "him from the Navigation was taking over the place to run his band concerts". I thought I had been helping the club to get on its feet, because they took a lot of money over the bar when the concerts were on.

When I mentioned this to Peter Cordey, he said well why don't you organize them upstairs at the Navigation. I did mentioned to Peter that I thought it was too small, but he pointed out that the room was about the same size as the Legion Club, and it was. So it was in 1971 that the first Sunday evening Brass Band concert took place at the Navigation, Whaley Bridge Band did the first concert. The concerts proved a great success, the rest is history. I continued to run the concerts till I retired from the Navigation in 1991, a total of twenty years. It became known as the brass band pub of the North West. Bandsman would come from all over the area because there would always be bandsmen in from different bands; in fact I did a lot of bands persons weddings giving them a discount. I HAVE A LOT OF FOND MEMORIES.

The alterations at the Navigation were proceeding very slowly; at times they were at a complete standstill with the workers being taken off to do other jobs. There was plastic sheets covering up the work that was supposed to be going on, bare brick walls showing. Acro props holding the ceiling up. It was a nightmare, I had to keep the place open, so after the builders had finished for the day, (if they turned up), I had Joan Close coming in at 4-30 to help me clean up so we could open at night.

The firm that were doing the alterations had this young joiner, who would still be an apprentice. One day the new stairs arrived to be fitted, so they sent this young joiner up on his own to fit the new stairs. He first of all knocked the old stairs out, which meant that we had no way of getting upstairs, which in turn left a big hole in the floor which led down into the cellar. I had to stay closed at lunchtime because it was too dangerous to let customers in. When this young joiner came to fit the new stairs, which was at least a two handed job, that he was doing on his own, they would not fit properly, so, he started hitting them with a sledge hammer, which displaced some of the bricks to the front room. The results of which can still be seen to this day. The stairs going up to the first floor are twisted, which are noticeable when you stand at the top of the

stairs and look down. The wall in the front room bulges when you put your eye to it.

We were now into 1973 and the alterations were coming to completion, it came to the time for Hilton Walker to present me with his plan for furnishings, tables, chairs, curtains, window pelmets, carpets etc.

### **JAYNE GETS HER FIRST PONY**

Jayne would now be about fifteen, and a couple of her mates had got ponies, it was one day when I was looking out of the bedroom window that I saw her mates on these ponies, Jayne was running alongside them. I thought, well, I am not having that, so I started looking through the papers for ponies for sale. I came across this one that was in Haughton Green, near Denton. I took Jayne down to have a look at it, I knew nothing about horses, to me it looked a bit moth eaten, but Jayne wanted it, so I got it for her, it was named "Galvin" and cost £75. I then of course had to buy all the tack for it before we could bring it back to Marple, and to Strines Road, where we were going to keep it.

It must have been about twelve months after buying "Galvin", and it was a Saturday night that Bill Moores (Christine's then husband) came in late in the evening with Martin Ellwood. They had been in the pubs in New Mills in Bills car. Bill said they were just coming along Strines Road when a horse jumped over the fence right in front of them and that they had hit it and it ran off. I thought that it seemed a bit of coincidence because Calvin was in a field down Strines road, and Jayne had said that he was a good jumper. Jayne was upstairs with Ian. (Jayne was only fifteen and I wasn't too happy about it, but look now thirty years later, you couldn't wish for a better son in law and two wonderful Grandsons).

I went upstairs and mention to Jayne what Bill had told me about a horse jumping in front of his car. So Jayne, Ian and me went down in my car to see, hoping that it wasn't Galvin. We found Galvin in the lane leading up to the farm where he was stabled. When Jayne called him he came running to her, she checked him over and he appeared to be all right. So she put him back in the field. Next day was Sunday so we went down first thing to check him over in the daylight. Jayne called him and he started to run towards her. When he was a few yards from us, he just collapsed, Jayne screamed and went running towards him. He died there in front of her, I had to get her away, she was going hysterical.

I phoned a chap in New Mills to come and take Galvin away. I had got him insured with Trevor Owen, so the insurance company paid out. But, I had to get Jayne another horse right away to take her mind off Galvin. I saw one advertised in the paper, it was at the vicarage at a church in Gee Cross just down the road from Aspland maternity home, where Jayne was born. The horse was a beauty, three years old mare named Rhythm. The vicar's daughter who she belonged to had outgrown her and needed a bigger horse.

Jayne wanted her, so I got Mr. Oran the vet to come and check her over. I paid £275 for Rhythm. Jayne had her until just before she got married to Ian.

At this time I was dealing with the bookings for Whaley Bridge band. They had already done a Whit walk for a big catholic church in Gorton; at the time I didn't realize how far the walk was otherwise I would have asked for double or treble the fee. I played the bass drum and I had got Ray Noble on the mace at the front. Gary Cutt was on Solo Cornet and Peter Cordey played a bass. It was easily a six mile round trip, and we were all completely knackered when we got them back to the church. But there was a club attached to the church and they opened the bar and all our drinks were free.

Shortly after this I had a phone call from someone on the carnival committee at Shiffnall in Shropshire for a band to lead their carnival parade. They were paying a good fee for the band to play a concert in the middle of Shiffnall, after the parade, where all the carnival activities were taking place. They also wanted a girls Morris dancing troupe in the parade and to perform a routine in the town centre in the afternoon. So I got John Voisey and his Jonnettes for this. They sent two coaches up to pick the band and the Jonnettes up. There was plenty of room on the coaches for band supporters, which included Howard Mills, Nellie and Tommy Holmes, Cliff and Edna Goodwin, Bill and Marie Bentley. Plus a lot of the parents of the dance troupe.

It would be in the middle of summer when all this was taking place, and I had arranged for a relief to take over so I could take the family on holiday. Jayne didn't come; she wanted to be with her horse. Jean came, this was the last time she ever had a holiday with us. I also took my mother because I intended to go down to Norfolk. That meant that there were six of us, so I borrowed a sleeping tent to ease the sleeping arrangements. We went down to Norfolk but we didn't stop at North Walsham because there wasn't a decent site near there, so mother never got to see North Walsham for the last time.

We travelled up to Lincolnshire and we parked up at a municipal site, which was near a RAF base and by the side of a river. There were plenty of things for Mark and Michael to do but mother was getting a bit stressed with cramped conditions in the caravan, plus her and Jean were not getting on (she was then coming up to eighty), so we all returned home leaving the caravan on the site.

I took mum home to Hazel Grove and Jean and Tim went round to Turner Road to stay as I had got relief's living at the Navigation.

I travelled straight back to the caravan with Mark and Michael and stayed there a few more days, before setting off for Shiffnall, where Whaley Bridge band were booked for their carnival. It coincided with a caravan club rally that had been organised there, which I had already booked into through the caravan club. We arrived there the day before the carnival, so we were already at Shiffnall before the band and John Voisey's Morris dancers arrived on the Saturday.

It is about 85 miles to Shiffnall from Marple and Whaley Bridge, so the coach firm that they were sending up with two clapped out coaches had to cover a 170 miles, round trip. They only just arrived before the parade started. It was a lovely warm summer's day. The band led the parade, after which they played a short concert in the town centre, and the Johnettes did their routine. A meal and drinks was laid on for them. Also a fair was in the main wide street, plus all the pubs were open for the day. Michael and Mark were on the fair ground, and the bands with all the supporters were in the pubs.

The two coaches left in the early evening, without Peter Cordey, Peter Bowd, and Garry Cutt, They were going to stay in the caravan with us three, travelling back with us the next day. The two lads enjoyed themselves on the fair, whilst Peter Cordey, Gary, Peter Bowd and me were in the pub. The landlord of the pub questioned Gary's age, (he was actually 14 at the time, but his voice had broke) Gary said he was 21 but he was a dwarf, the landlord accepted it, but I don't think he believed him.

Back at the caravan it was a bit cramped, six of us in a 14'6" five berth caravan, and Peter Cordey is no small guy, somebody slept on the floor, I don't know which one. The toilet in the van was being used all night, but I insisted that there was to be no George the thirds in there. Next morning we were all up early, while I was cooking breakfast, Cutt's and Bowd were outside with the toilet paper at the back of the van. We were just clearing up after breakfast when the caravan club tanooy blasted out to every body the day's events, starting with a treasure hunt. I said "Christ lets get this van hooked up and get off here before they see that lot at the back of this van, they will kick me out of the caravan club", Gary Cutt's famous words were, "ah, they'll think its doggy biz". I replied "what, with paper on top".

We hooked up and were off in double quick time on our way home, we stopped at a pub on the top of some moors for some lunch. It had a big car park, but I had to back the caravan into a space, Peter Bowd was supposed to be guiding me back and backed me into a wall, which knocked in the back panel of the caravan, (thanks Peter). We did make it home, "what a weekend".

### **RE-FURBISHING THE NAVIGATION**

The alterations were finally completed in 1973; the decorating, carpets curtains and furnishings were all installed. The kitchen cupboards and working surfaces were all fitted out by Gordon Nelson. I already had a catering cooker, griddle plate, deep fat fryers and infrared grills, the most expensive piece of equipment I bought was a catering microwave oven. Microwaves were just coming in then and were very heavy, and very expensive. The best make at the time was "Sharp", and it cost £720. (That was thirty years ago, you now could get the best catering microwave these days for less than £200.).

The place looked good with all the new carpets, curtains and furniture installed, after being like a bomb site for two years with all the dust, bare walls and floors, plus most of the tatty old furniture which I inherited when I took

over from John Braddock. I had had some of the best of the small round tables fitted with hammered copper tops, and had bought 12 spindle back chairs and 12 stools to match. These had refurbished the second room on the right not long after I moved in. I had the old wooden fixed seating which went all round the room taken out, it must have been in their for a 100 years or more. The copper top tables, chairs and stools I sold to the Andrew Arms in Compstall, I think they are still there. The best of the other furniture I used upstairs until I was able to refurbish up there.

It was at this time that I took on Liz working every lunchtime and some nights, behind the bar. Along with Christine Moore's (now Lee), they had both worked for me for some time, but I now found it nesserary to employ more staff. Joanne (Spanner), at this time had not started school. So, Liz would leave her with Annie Nolan (John's sister) from about 11-30 a.m. until 3-00 p.m. Then pick Julie up from Ludworth School on her way home.

The paragraph above has got me thinking about how many people worked (or helped me, as I prefer to refer to them) to run the Navigation over the years. So I have dug out all the old wages records, so the list below refers to them from 1966.

Keith Phillips, Gladys Large, Brenda Hayton, Christine Moores. Old Mr Fallows (who used to come once a week to clean the pumps out), Sam Cross (odd job man), Brenda Pratt, John Robins, Jean Singleton, David Turner, Jill Turner, Sylvia Cartner (Hong Kong Sylvia), Ray Noble, Dora Rowbotham, Barrie Ashworth, Linda Winterbourne, Joan Close, Pat Close, Elizabeth Nolan (14th. August 1971), Liz started working nearly full time from the 6th. October 1973, Tony Thelwall, George Webster, Ian Henderson, Beryl Noble, John Voisey, Jayne Singleton, Pauline Becker, Elaine Mulligan, Tina Houlton, Shirley Bradley, Eileen Thornton, Jillian Henderson (one night), Pamela Bradley, Joan Murray, Kay Theabold, Kay Richardson, Nell Holmes.

That is the list from 1966, up until the end of December 1974. From January 1975, other names on the wages list were Ann Ashworth, Sylvia Masters, Jill Bradley, Edna? , Mike Singleton, Edith Houghton, Julie Thornton, Sandra Andrews, Lorraine Richardson, Sandra Clements, Lynn Dewar, Karen Webster, Robert Curtis, Anita Brown, Ruby Charlton, June Whalley, Lesley Kerney, Sandra Gawlak, Sharon Pratt, Sandra Gordon, Eileen Murphy, Judith Childerstone, Doreen Curwell, Kim Scholl's, Nick Bishop, Viv Stonehouse (26-07-80), Helen Murphy, Julie Nolan, Jackie Park, Joanne (Spanner), Simon Stonehouse, Helen Henderson, Tim Singleton, Sarah Hayes, Carol? (Cleaner), Marilyn Walsh, Sheila Hayes, Jane Cleasby, Elaine Beck (Houghton), Ann Webb, Tracey Thorpe, Norah (Organist), Lynn Proctor, Anne Bates, Julie Haslam, Barbara Webster, Allison Cleave, Sue Noble, Carol Brown, Malcolm Bennett, Jane Tipler, Maureen Warhurst, Janet Armstrong, Derek Greasby, Val Oldfield, Jane Bailey, Kate Walsh, Debbie Carter, Jane Lilford, Deborah Sharp, Sarah Kite, Linda Holland, Sylvia Austin, Katherine Haworth, Sara Williamson, Andrew Holland, (Bottle Boy) Gail? (Bar Person) Tracey Walsh (Kitchen Assistant), Michelle Taylor, Judith Hulme, Lynne

Chaney, Marion Moss, Penny Kay, Sally Simcock, Joanne Young, John Cordey.

A lot of the names at the later end of this list are persons that Mark and Anita started, so a lot of them I don't remember, also the names run up to May 1990. Liz took over running the books again after that, and the wages were entered into a new wages book, which up to now (19th. May 2003) I haven't found. The last name (John Cordey) was Peter Cordey's nephew who I took on to replace Mark. The total number of names above is 109, some of these were very casual, just helping out, and also there are others who just helped on weddings and parties. Over the years the total wage bill must have run into a lot of thousands of pounds.

To come back to 1973, after I had refurbished it was a case of getting the place running to its full potential. A fuller menu was introduced and I was doing all the cooking. Lunch times were very busy with all the local business people etc. starting to use the place. I was of course kept busy in the kitchen with hot meals. We were still preparing freshly cut sandwiches behind the bar. So Liz was kept busy serving drinks and trying to keep the sandwiches supplied. I had employed Tina Houlton (John Houlton's new wife) to help in the kitchen and also to help Liz behind the bar, but all she was interested in was chatting to the business customers that were coming in, like solicitors, estate agents, bank managers etc.

In 1973 there was no other pub anywhere in Marple doing food, and apart from fish and chip shops. I cannot think of any restaurants of any kind either Indian or Chinese in the village except the Copper Kettle, which was opposite the entrance to the park. That had been sold to Chinese and was the first Chinese take away in Marple.

I applied to the licensing magistrates for a supper license, which allowed me to serve drinks with meals for one hour after normal closing time. This proved very popular at weekends especially on Saturday nights. The place would be heaving with people queuing up for tables. I was doing all the cooking and at first I only had Christine and Joan Close helping me, Joan was the best washer up anywhere in Marple. The menu mainly consisted of fish, scampi, chicken, but mostly steaks, (sirloin, rump and fillet). We would do anything from between 40 to 60 meals on a Saturday night, sometimes still cooking at 12-30 in the morning. Liz was left in charge of the bar with a couple of others helping her out. It was a very busy place, but then again it was something novel in Marple. By 1975 other places started to open up, the Crown and Ring "O" Bells had changed hands a couple of times with more adventures licensees, who also introduced food. By the late seventies and early eighties most pubs were trying to introduce food, in fact I think the only two that never attempted it was the Bowling Green and the Hatters, in the case of the later, food was introduced their when Mark took over.

After the initial boom in food it started to slow down as more places opened up, but the advantage with the Navigation was the big room upstairs for weddings etc. plus the side room at the front where we did a lot of private



dinner parties and weddings catering for up to 30 persons. At times we could have a wedding or some other celebration going on upstairs, a dinner party in the front room, and people dining in the back. It looks like all that has gone now and as I write this part, 20th. May 2003, the Navigation is about to change hands again. That will be three tenants in 12 years; I was there 26 years.

Liz's mum, Dot, did not live to see us married she died on 21<sup>st</sup>.February 1975, but, I think that she died in peace knowing that her daughter and grandchildren had a future, even though it meant a lot of hard work for all of us including Liz's dad Joe. He was always at the Navi by about 11-30, and would sit outside in the yard, winter and summer, preparing all the veg for the weddings and dinner parties etc. He had about six plastic buckets, all different colours. If any of his buckets went missing he would get upset. (Joseph and his many coloured buckets). Joe was lonely after Dot died but he filled his time in at the Navigation. He would sit with old Fred Samuels, and a few other old blokes that came in every lunchtime; the main topic of conversation was stocks and shares, of which I don't think Joe had any. He went over to America a couple of times to stay with his cousin Sid. What a character Sid is, there will be more on him later; in fact you could do another book on tales he would tell us. We went over to see him in America in 1988, more on that later.

The year we got married, 1976, we had two holidays, as well as a short honeymoon up in Cumbria. The first one we went down to Mevagissey, in Cornwall. There were seven of us, Liz and I, Julie and Spanner, Mark, Michael, and Tim. It was a bit hectic keeping five of them happy. It was while we were away that Harriet died, the boy's grandmother (Jeans mother), It was sad, especially for the boys. They were all very close to her, they never saw her again.

The second holiday that year was up to Nairn, in Scotland, Michael and Tim didn't come this time, we took Joe and Mark, Jayne and Ian followed us up in a van that he had at the time. It was September 1976 when we were in Scotland, the weather was beautiful, in fact it was the hottest summer we had had since 1958.

There were now six of us living at the Navigation, Jayne had her room at the end of the passage way, the other big bedroom opposite Jayne's, I had divided into two to accommodate Julie and Joanne in one part and Mark in the other. Gordon Nelson did the joinery and John Drury did the plastering.

After we married things settled down at the Navigation, the restaurant had gone down a bit except at lunchtime, which was usually busy; we started advertising weddings and parties in the upstairs room, which became popular through recommendations.

Early in 1977, after a few visits to Appleby to visit Gilbert and Shirley. We thought about buying some property in Cumbria. We visited a few estate agents in Penrith, and came across this property in Lazonby, which was about five miles out of Penrith and about twelve miles from Appleby. Lazonby was a

beautiful little village which sloped down into the Eden Valley, with the river Eden running through the bottom of the village which was next to the Lazonby open air swimming pool. The village also had its own cattle market, Co-op society that was a small shop and warehouse with travelling shops, which went out to all the small villages in the area. It was also where the bakery and headquarters of "Bells of Lazonby" were situated. Also there were two nice little pubs in the village. The real bonus was that the Carlisle/Settle railway runs right through the village, which had its own station. At the time British Rail were trying to close the line down completely. But the pressure group which had been formed by rail enthusiasts to save the line from closure and desecration, finally won through and was declared the most scenic railway in the UK. In the late seventies or early eighties, it was returned to full working order with several trains running through each day, but except for the main stations like Appleby, the rest were unmanned, so they had a guard on board to collect the fares.

### **MY MUM DIES 31ST. JULY 1977**

Mum was now coming up to her 83<sup>rd</sup>. birthday, and for her age she was quite sprightly, but she did suffer from angina and had been having one or two blackouts. She should not really have been living on her own. Earlier she had had a spell in St. Thomas's but she hated it in there, and before Liz and I were married I had brought her out of there and she was living in the big back bedroom at the Navigation before I had it made into two rooms. Joan Close and Liz helped me to look after her.

When she started to get better she wanted to get back to her own house in Hazelwood Road. The lady who lived next door had a key to her house and she kept an eye on her, calling in every day and doing her shopping. She called on her this particular day, sometime at the beginning of July, and found her collapsed on the floor; god knows how long she had been there. Her neighbour first called the ambulance and then she called me. I went down to the Stepping Hill; they had put her in one of the geriatric wards. She had had a stroke and she was paralysed down one side.

I went down the next day and they had got her propped up with pillows and she was trying to talk to me, but I could not understand what she was trying to say. She tried to write it down but she was paralysed down her right side and it was just scribble with her left hand. Either Liz or I was down their afternoon and evening, all we could do was just hold her hand. Her eyesight went but she knew we were there; she would squeeze your hand. After a few days she had another stroke and she just went into a coma, they had her on a drip and were turning her over every couple of hours.

It was a Sunday night and we had got a band concert on upstairs when a phone call came through from Stepping Hill to say she had passed away. It was just as well because she was never going to come round. I came off the phone and told Liz, there was nothing we could do that night. I had to put on a brave face and try to keep the concert going with the raffle and collection.

I contacted Marshall Shaw, he went and collected her from the hospital and had her in his chapel of rest, which at that time was a building behind the Albert School.

Come the day of her funeral, which was at the beginning of August. I closed the pub at 2.00 and the funeral left from the Navigation. There were only three of us at the crematorium, Liz, Mark and me. Mum was very fond of hymns, but there was no point with only three of us there. She died a lonely old woman; she had alienated herself from her remaining family, Nancy, Maureen, her sister in law, auntie Ann, (my dad's brother's wife, who lived in Widnes).

That is why I am so keen on keeping our family together. I have never ever really had a close family, and even though we are two families come together, I don't like any falling out. The one who keeps himself apart, and he wants it that way, is Tim, but I will always be there for him. If only he would try and straighten himself out, he probably will one day. I hope so even if I am not around to see it.

### **OUR FIRST PROPERTY IN CUMBRIA**

The cottage we bought was in Lazonby and was named "Greenbank", It had a fair sized lounge, a nice sized kitchen with a stable back door leading out to the garden, which we had landscaped with mostly lawn. It was Liz's first garden of her own, and she took a keen interest in it. There were two bedrooms upstairs and the bathroom, which had been built over the kitchen extension. We altered the small bedroom into the bathroom, which necessitated altering all the plumbing and drains, which then gave us two decent sized bedrooms.

We were joined to two cottages next door by what was their back entrance, which gave them right of way round the back of our property. These cottages had been empty for some time and had become derelict, they were called Millstone Cottages. A chap who was the licensee at the Crown & Cushion pub in Appleby bought them very cheaply and started to convert them, and made them into one cottage, which was a decent size.

### **AMERICAN COUSINS VISIT**

One afternoon we had a phone call from a chap with an American accent asking for Joe. It turned out to be his cousin Sid from America, but, he wasn't in America, he was on a narrow boat on the canal, and they were just starting up the locks. How they knew Joe was connected to the Navigation, I cannot remember, but Joe told them to moor up in the basin at lock four and they would see the Navigation from there.

With him on the boat were his daughter, Cathy with her husband and their two daughters. That was the first time Liz and I had met cousin Sid. They were doing the Cheshire ring on the canal. They had booked it all at home in

America. They stayed that night in Marple and then continued on their way round the Cheshire ring.

After they had picked up their hire car they dropped Sid off back in Marple to stay with Joe, the rest of the family made their way back to America. Sid stayed with Joe for a couple of weeks and then he went back.

After that Joe went over to America a couple of times. Sid came over a couple of times in the following years and Joe went over a couple of times to America. They travelled about the east coast, visiting Sid's relations and visiting his daughter Cathy who at that time was living in New Foundland.

### **LAZONBY**

We enjoyed Lazonby, it was, and still is, a lovely village, boasting its own swimming pool, railway station, two small supermarkets, its own cattle market, two pubs and its own village hall, which was opposite our house. Liz and I went up to Lazonby nearly every week, if we didn't have a dinner on at the Navigation. We would stay overnight and come back the next day, winter and summer. Joe would stay overnight in the pub, lock up and do the till. In the school holidays the whole family would come up. I usually got a relieve in to look after the pub. Always making sure that we had no dinner parties or weddings etc. booked. It was a bit awkward with only two bedrooms. We bought a fold up bed for Joe; he slept on it under the open plan stairs. Now into 2005, I have not added anything to this autobiography for nearly twelve months and things are rapidly changing. A few people have passed on, I am not getting any younger so I must press on and try to concentrate on this more instead of getting on to the Internet every time I power up the computer, so back to Lazonby.

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We were there for more than four years. In that time various people visited and some even stayed their (Ernie and Doris Mayers). Brian Stead, who was a keen fisherman, paid us a visit and went fishing in the river with Mark. The Murphy family came up and spent the day round the swimming pool. We became known in the village and made a lot of friends.

Mark finished school at the Willows, and we had to discuss what his future was going to be. I had then been at the Navigation for 15 years, with the two youngest (Michael and Tim) being born while we were there. Michael upstairs in the pub, Tim in Ashton General Hospital. So in my mind then I wanted to keep the pub in the family after all the hard work I had but into it.

Mark had shown an interest in the kitchen and I had had him working in the kitchen on Saturday nights and helping out at parties and weddings. So we applied for him to go to go to High Peak catering college at Buxton. He attended there for two years and acquired all his city and guilds qualifications.

His first job was at a big hotel in Bramhall, it was split shifts, which most hotel jobs are and for a young lad of eighteen it wasn't to his liking. He then started at St.Thomas's hospital as a chef.

Jayne and Ian got married on the 4<sup>th</sup>.August 1979. At the time we were on our holidays up in Lazonby, so we all came back for the wedding, which was at the Methodist Church on Church Lane. It was a lovely summer's day and a lot of locals turned out to see the couple, (both born in Marple) on their wedding day. The reception was at the Davenport Park Hotel in Heavily. Ian's family had arranged the evening reception at the Ridge school, Ian's sisters did the catering, which they are very good at.

Jayne and Ian had already bought a house in Macclesfield where Jayne was doing her nurse training. She was in her final year and sitting her exams when she became pregnant with Jordan in 1981. He was born at the Macclesfield Hospital, where Jayne had done her training, on 25<sup>th</sup>.September 1982. I remember Liz and I going over to Macclesfield one day and taking Jordan out in his new pram, I was so proud to be pushing my first grandchild out.

### **MARPLE BAND 1979**

The ladies committee was still operating under the chairmanship of Millie Jackson, but did not have the same support of previous years. Two persons who were on the ladies committee and at the time were working for me, which brought them into direct contact with the band, Sandra Clements and Eileen Murphy. Sandra had been working for me for some time doing bar work. Eileen and her husband Kevin had been attending the Sunday night band concerts. It would be at one of these concerts in 1978 that Kevin asked if I needed any staff, as his wife (Eileen) wanted work. At the time I had no vacancies but I would keep it in mind. A couple of weeks later I had the annual hot pot supper booked for the North East Cheshire Drag Hunt, (who entertained the farmers whose land they rode over), catering for about 80 people.

Our hot pot suppers were 3 courses plus coffee, (hot pot, apple pie with fresh cream, cheese and biscuits, and coffee), all served at table. I never liked to be short of staff so I thought about this woman whose husband asked if I needed any staff. I didn't know her name or where she lived, but I remembered that she told me that she worked at the Catholic school in Marple Bridge at lunchtime supervising the children in the schoolyard. I went down to the Catholic school and contacted her, asking her if she could help out that night.

That is how Eileen Murphy came to work at the Navigation and got involved with Marple Band.

Kevin Murphy had in the past played guitar with a group who had a regular gig at Bernard Manning's Embassy Club, so he had musical talent. Brian Stead was one of the stalwarts in the band, started giving tuition to Kevin on a Bass which he picked up quickly. Brian and Kevin were both keen fishermen, so they spent some time together.

Conducting the band in the late seventies was Maurice Maclean, but he found it was too much on top of his professional commitments, so he left after the band were able to find someone to take his place. After auditioning a few potentials they settled for Alex Ashworth. Alex had played with a few top bands and at the time was solo horn with Stalybridge. In his mid thirties and a bachelor, he was very keen and did have a certain amount of success with the band, but he was not able to take the band back to the standard of Maurice Maclean, so they auditioned other potentials. In the meantime Brian Stead started conducting the band and proved to be doing a good job.

### **MARPLE BANDS SAD LOSSES**

The first sad loss to Marple Band was the death of Gordon Nelson on Sunday the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1979. Gordon had taken some washing to the laundrette on Stockport Road. (The Italian Restaurant is there now). He collapsed and died in the laundrette. It was a big shock to everybody, no more so than to his wife Vera, son Andrew and daughter Kim. Gordon was one of the stalwart players of the band, he could play any instrument in a brass band including trombone. The next sad loss was Brian Stead, just ten months after Gordon, on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 1980. Brian had been dedicated to brass bands from an early age and was an accomplished musician, he taught a lot of youngsters, arranged music and at the time was conducting Marple band. Before Brian came to Marple, he and his wife Mary played with Chapel-en-le-Frith band. Mary was principal cornet player with Chapel as well as secretary and Brian as musical adviser and Soprano Cornet player. Brian's death was very sudden, just like Gordon Nelson, his wife found him dead in the bathroom of their house.

It was after Brian's death that I organised a mass brass band concert at Stockport town hall, in memory of Brian Stead and Gordon Nelson. I recruited players from six of the High Peak bands to play with the Marple band a total of 75 players plus soloists from the William's Fairy band. The proceeds which in total with other donations totalled approximately £1500. After purchasing a bass trombone, inscribed with Brian and Gordon name on the bell, for Marple band, I had a special trophy made of a soprano cornet mounted on a plinth, inscribed with both their names. It was handed over to High Peak brass band association to be the top prize at their annual May contest.

The balance of the money raised, which was about £600 was put in an investment account with the post office. The trophy along with extra prize money of £50 was presented each year to the band winning the trophy. The King trombone that had been presented to the band with Brian and Gordon's name inscribed on the bell, for some reason became unsuitable and they were going to trade it in for a different one. The trustees of the Stead and

Nelson fund would not allow the band to trade in the trombone because it belonged to the trustees of the fund. It was therefore handed back and was sold back to Reynolds, who had supplied it for £700, this was added to the investment account and the prize money at Buxton was increased.

First it was increased to £75 then to £100. It was increased in the year 2000 to £200 until 2004, when the balance of the money was handed over to the High Peak Brass Band Association. The Stead & Nelson trophy is still, (and I have been promised that it always will be) the top prize at the Buxton Contest.

The next loss was Sid Simpson, Sid had been with the band about ten years, he played bass, he was also bandmaster, his daughter Caroline played tenor horn. Sid's wife was on the ladies committee, they lived in Cheadle Hulme.

## **COLBY**

We decided to move when we saw a newly converted corn mill at Colby, a mile and half outside Appleby, up for sale. We fell in love with it as soon as we visited, and rushed to buy it before somebody else stepped in.

A daft thing we did was asking Norman Gibson to sell Lazonby, because we actually sold it ourselves for £23,000, double what we paid for it. We paid Norman his usual commission.

The Corn Mill was in a lovely spot. Being a corn mill dating back some 400 years, it had been powered by a water wheel. So it was only fifty yards or so from Colby beck which joins the river Eden. It had a fair sized garden with a detached garage, the garden had been an orchard but was completely over grown. We got one of the local farm contractors to turn it over with a tractor and plough; another local chap built a retaining wall with local stone because it sloped down from the road. Then when the family were up there with us we laid out the lawn and flowerbeds. Michael and Tim worked hard with Liz and I to get it right. We have pictures, before and after, with the tractor doing its job.

We would travel up to The Corn Mill nearly every mid week, unless we had something on at the pub, bank managers dinner or some other function. Joe was still staying over night for us but it was getting a bit too much responsibility for him so it was at this stage that we started having Viv to stay overnight with Bert and Simon. During spring, summer and autumn, we would spend a lot of time keeping the garden up to scratch. The lawn was large and the electric mower we had was not good enough so we bought a new petrol mower (which we still have).

We let friends and customers use the Mill, free of charge, from memory they were Norman Gibson and Pauline, John Blake and Maria, Alan Wittcherly had his honeymoon there after having his wedding at the Navigation, the Murphy family, Chris and John Leigh had their honeymoon there, others who we cannot remember. We had hard standing laid down next to the garage to accommodate a caravan, which we bought off Shirley, to provide an extra bedroom when we had visitors.

Our summer break was always a big event. We did not have any band concerts in August and we did not take any bookings (weddings etc.) and spent the whole month up at the Corn Mill, arranging for professionals to look after the pub. August of course is Lisses birthday and on a couple of summers up there we set the village of Colby aglow by inviting the whole of Marple Band up for a b.b.q. They came up in a coach with their families and supporters. A lot of the locals were invited as well as Appleby band. I rigged up coloured lights all over the garden. The garage was the bar with a couple of (18 gallons) of Hartleys best bitter, wines, spirits, lager, fruit juices and everything to make a full bar.

All the tables and chairs were borrowed from Appleby civic hall, a B.B.Q. (Half an oil drum) from one of the local institutes. Every thing was laid on, the farmers wife from next but one, came round with a massive big trifle. Tony Carter conducted the band the first year and Allen Witcherly played Soprano. The second year, Allan Witcherly conducted. The residents of Colby could not believe what was happening, as they heard the band and came to listen they were invited to join in, and there was plenty of everything for everybody. They were very good memorable days.

Even in the winter we went up to Colby, Joe used to think we were fools travelling up there when it was thick with snow, we did have one or two hairy does travelling over Orton Moor when it was thick with snow.

In 1982 the Falklands war started and in the April Mark and Anita married in the June. It was a gorgeous day on the wedding day, the temperature was in the 80's, the band played in the Methodist church for the service, then after the photos outside, the band formed up in front of the wedding car and played them through Marple, (with Charlie Ingham in front stopping the traffic), to the Navigation. We were taking a risk because we had not informed the police to get permission.

The reception was at the Navigation. I had arranged the menu and all my staff, who were the best to do the catering. I changed the menu on the Friday when I realised it was it was going to be a hot day, to prawn cocktails, cold meat salad (silver served), the usual cold sweets, cheese and biscuits, coffee with mints. Everything up to Blue Funnel standard.

The usual evening reception upstairs with our top buffet, and the Disco by Rocking Robin. Mark and Anita left on their honeymoon that night.

The big news the next day was that the Argentinean heavy cruiser "General Belgrano" had been sunk in the south Atlantic by a British nuclear submarine, and the battle to take back the Falkland Islands was about to begin, which took about six weeks. Once again the Merchant Navy was involved as well as Royal Navy ships and men, a few merchant ships were sunk with the loss of civilians, "the Merchant Navy conveniently forgotten again".

The Falkland's war in 1982 was one of the main events in Margaret Thatcher's period as leader of the Conservative Party and from 1977 as Prime Minister. In 1980 Margaret Thatcher took on the domination of the unions by breaking the National Union of Mineworkers and their leader Arthur Scargill.



I don't want to get into politics, but at the time, the unions were becoming militant ruining the economy of the country. I had first hand experience of this with the dockers union in Liverpool. I mentioned in the first part of MY LIFE STOREY, when the Lycaon was finishing loading the outward gargo of Asian toilets in Birkenhead, they would not load them until they were paid embarrassment money. They were left on the dock and we sailed without them.

This enhanced the introduction of containerisation in the late sixties, which led to the demise of the traditional merchant ships and the closing of most of the Liverpool Docks, with the loss of thousands of docker's jobs and the decline of the British Merchant Navy. Now we have massive 100,000-ton container ships, which can do the work of 10 to fifteen traditional ships with a crew of about 20 foreign seaman, which is less than half the crew of a traditional merchant ship.

Traditional merchant ships, trading round the world, would vary in size. A typical tramp ship would be 5,000 to 7000 tons with four five or six cargo hatches with at least two, sometimes four sets of derricks at each hatch, for loading and unloading cargo where their were no port facilities for ships to go alongside and use the ports cranes.

In fact many large ports like Singapore had few cranes for loading and discharging cargo. So the ships own handling gear had to be ready when entering port. This required at least 12 deck crew to keep the watches, at sea, three to a watch, the other three would be on day work, overhauling the ships handling gear plus general maintenance.

Today, the main ports around the world are equipped with huge overhanging cranes to handle the container ships. Some of these giant monstrosities can carry a thousand containers and can be discharged and reloaded in a couple of days. A typical Blue Funnel Ship could be anything up to a month to discharge and reload, longer if the dockers were militant.

Air transport was making passenger ships redundant, except for the latest QM11 and QE11 there are no passenger ships as such, just numerous cruise ships, all manned by foreign crews, and massive roll on roll off ferries transporting inter continental cargo, also manned by foreign crews. No passenger/cargo ships anymore like Blue Funnel had. Infact Blue Funnel made all their passenger accommodation into crew facilities in the late sixties or early seventies, which started the decline of the catering department, which would be about the time that Hughie Cleary was given a job ashore looking after the linen department until he was made redundant. Which was not long before Blue Funnel ceased to exist.

Containers and the 100,000 ton container ships would have come in eventually together with the demise of the Merchant Navy, but the militant dockers hastened it, like other unions, they have hastened the closure of our major industries.

## **MARK AND ANITA**

They set up home in Woodley, Mark was working at St. Thomas's hospital as a chef, Anita was working in Manchester using computers, which in 1982 were very basic. Their first child and my first granddaughter, Diane was born 30<sup>th</sup>. May 1984. My second granddaughter, Jennifer was born 30<sup>th</sup>. December 1985, while they were still living in Woodley. It would be about 1986 that we decided to take a holiday abroad. We booked a two weeks self-catering in Lanzarote. Mark wanted to get his hand in to running the pub, so instead of getting professional relief's in we lets Mark and Anita take over.

The following year, 1987, Mark was getting frustrated with his job at St.Thomas's, which involved a lot of responsibility for little reward. So I brought him into running the Navigation to ease the pressure on me. At first he was commuting to Woodley every day until we sold Colby and moved back to Marple.

## **MARPLE BAND 1980**

Before the sad loss of Gordon Nelson and Brain Stead, there had been some changes in the people helping to run the band. The ladies committee was still operating under the leadership of Millie Jackson, but did not have the same support of a few years previous. Two persons who joined the ladies committee and at the time were working for me, which brought them into direct contact with the band, Sandra Clement and Eileen Murphy. Sandra had been working for me for some time doing bar work. Eileen and her husband Kevin had been attending the Sunday night band concerts regularly.

I mentioned earlier how Eileen Murphy came to be working at the Navigation. Eileen first of all she got herself onto the ladies committee along with Sandra Clements. Then she got onto the band committee, with Sandra as secretary and Eileen as contest secretary. That now is all history, and I do not wish to go into great detail.

## **CHARLES INGHAM**

It is now April 2006 and I have not added anything to this journal for 12 months or more. I must get on and skip some of the finer details, otherwise it will never come up to date, so we will come to 1984 and Charlie Ingham..

Charlie was the person who was responsible for reforming the Marple Band in 1963 after it disbanded in 1958. I think it is safe to say that if Charlie had not reformed the band there would be no brass bands in Marple today.

After Charlie retired in 1983 he took up playing golf, he was no longer a playing member of the band, but was still the figurehead. Other people started to take a more leading roll through the then committee, which saw new people becoming involved like Eileen Murphy, Sandra Clements, Peter Ward, Ralph Stevenson and others. It was also about this time that Charlie's health started

to deteriorate, he had a few spells in hospital one of these periods was over Christmas in 1984 and on Christmas day about a dozen band members went to the hospital and played in the ward that Charlie was in.

### **GONE BANDING**

In the 1970's Charlie had started to research the history of Marple Band from it's beginning in 1900. He recorded it in a notebook, when he came to the period that I became involved with the band (1966) he showed me his writings, for me to confirm they were a true record. His record of events was up to 1983, which included bringing Gary Cutt into his writing. Gone Banding has pictures of Gary taking the band at rehearsal.

Charlie arranged for Peter Ward to put Gone Banding into print in 1984, it has a 113 pages which includes lots of pictures. It had to be produced as economical as possible and to cut down on the cost, Peter Ward had all the pages printed off for a 1,000 copies and brought them to the band room at the Navigation to be collated. It was a big job and a dozen or so of bands persons and committee spent a couple of days putting the pages in order. Peter then took them away to have them ring bound. The profit from the sale of the books went to band funds.

We had a special night for the book launch in January 1984 with some 80 people present, unfortunately Charlie at this time was too ill to attend. I announced that night that the main theme running through the book was that Marple Band had never had a permanent home of their own. I asked those interested to help me set up a committee to raise funds to built Charlie's band room. A raffle that we held that night was the start of the Charles Ingham Band Room Building Fund.

The interest in the book was far and wide, copies have ended up all over the country, some abroad. We could have sold a lot more copies put a reprint would have been too expensive.

### **OCTOBER 2006**

I have decided that I will have to skip detailing this last part of my life storey as I feel that my health, which includes my eye site and hearing are beginning to get worse.

### **JANUARY 2007-01-09**

I AM GOING TO PRINT A COUPLE OF COPIES OF THIS PART AND HAVE THEM BOUND. IF I EVER GET ROUND TO DOING MORE ON MY LIFE IT WILL BE ADDED AT SOME FUTURE DATE.

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