

Memories of Ecclestone



Edited by Vicky Griffiths and Joanne Chamberlain,
Joint Curators of the Smithy Heritage Centre
2014

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Memories of Eccleston

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Please note: the comments transcribed in this book are recollections, and so there may be some discrepancies between participants. Every effort has been made to credit the correct participant.

The “Memories of Ecclestone” project

Ecclestone has changed dramatically within living memory, going from a small rural village to a popular leafy suburb. Little has been recorded in writing of these developments, and so the *All Our Stories* “Memories of Ecclestone” project sought to capture the reminiscences of those who had lived or worked in Ecclestone to create a new archive.

People were invited to come along to organised sessions at The Lester Drive Centre, Christ Church Ecclestone, and Our Lady Help of Christians, or to pop into the Smithy, or submit information online. The Curators received an overwhelming response. This book is a compilation of some of the stories, photographs and documents submitted.

A travelling exhibition of photographs and information panels has been produced to accompany the book, which will tour local community venues. A teachers’ pack has also been developed for local schools to learn more about their heritage.

If you would like to see more images and read more of the fascinating memories collected over the course of the project, visit the website: www.smithyheritagecentre.org.uk

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Index

Kiln Lane Smithy	1
Millbrook Cottages	10
Wartime Memories of Eccleston	13
Chorley's, the old Post Office	22
The Rose Queen	24
Social Events	28
Christ Church, Eccleston	32
Chapel Lane School	37
Childhood in Eccleston	40
Marriage in Eccleston	43
Bobby Mounsey	44
Mrs Blanchard and the Turkey	46
Working in Eccleston	47
Living in Eccleston	50

Sports in Ecclestone	54
Ecclestone Hall	55
Captain Frederick Bates	56
Ecclestone in 1998	58
Ecclestone, Ecclestone Lane Ends and Ecclestone Park	69
Harold Wilson in Chapel Lane	71



A young rider bringing her horse to be shod at the Smithy. Photo taken by the late David Mills, courtesy of Joy Mills.

Kiln Lane Smithy



Ellis Hall shoeing a horse, circa 1950s. The United Reformed Church is on the left. Photo, Smithy Heritage Centre's collection.

Joseph Parr - *The last blacksmiths were Peter and Ellis [Hall]; Peter was Ellis's father. There were quite a bit of grounds that aren't there now, with the hooping platform at the front.*

John Stead - *I was only about three when the Smithy moved [in 1937], so I don't recollect all that, but I do remember we used to go and watch – I can smell it now – when I think of it, I can smell the hooves burning. I used to think "Why doesn't*

the horse kick him?"

Ken Chamberlain - It was a focal point of the village for children, because it was something quite strange - first of all there was this great big animal, and you've got to remember we were only so high, and these were big carthorses, shire horses, and here he was, driving nails into it!

We were in our early teens - Bob, his sister Virginia and myself, when we first had the pleasure of visiting the Ecclestone Village Smithy back in 1957-58.

Our love of horses took us to Fairclough's Farm in Ackers Lane. They ran two or three milk rounds and we each went out on cold, frosty mornings to help deliver the milk before school. These milk rounds soon wore away the horseshoes, so every three weeks we had to ride the horses, Bobbie, Blackie and Betty, to the Smithy for new shoes. There was far less traffic back then, so we enjoyed the trek along Ackers Lane, down Alder Hey Road (which was still a dirt track) and left onto Kiln Lane.

We knew when we were nearing the Smithy as we could hear the clang of the blacksmith's hammer working on a job on the anvil. As we turned into the Smithy we were greeted by Ellis Hall, the village blacksmith/farrier, a freckle-faced man with a pleasant manner and a ready smile, wearing his usual "bib-and-brace" overalls which were covered in the dust and grime of his trade. When shoeing, he would always don his leather apron (or brat) to protect his legs from the hard hooves of the horses. We only ventured into the depths of the Smithy if it

was raining, otherwise the horses would be shod outside the big arched doorway on the dirt floor.

We never tired of visiting Ellis and the Smithy. The smell of the sizzling hoof, the clanging of the metal on metal and the roaring noise of the forge when the bellows were being used. All happy memories!

Robert and Rosalyn Gerrard, Australia.

Jeff Worsley - Well I remember the Smithy in the forties, just after the war, 1947/48 that is my memory of it, so it would have been moved by then.

Mike Potter - I was told it was moved when they built the County Library. It looks a lot smaller now than it did when I was a kid. I used to come to the County Library every couple of days.

Jeff Worsley - I just remember looking in, and this being ever so dark above the furnace and that, and seeing horses coming in and out.

*Mike Potter - I know we used come round with chestnuts and get Ellis to put them round the fire. His father, he only had one eye and I think he lost it with a cinder that had supposedly come out of the fire and Ellis then took over. Ellis was alright he was quite funny he was. Had a funny way. He was a typical sort of worker, quite brash. If he got fed up with you he would tell you to go away - "Off you *@#%\$^ go!" He didn't mind a couple of people but didn't want a gang if he had horses in. He didn't want them frightening while he was doing the shoeing.*



Ellis shoeing a horse outside the Smithy, taken a split second after the photo on page 1, facing the County Library, now Ecclestone Village Hall. Photo: Smithy Heritage Centre's Collection

My knowledge of it as a working Smithy, from memory dates back to 1941/42 with the two Blacksmith/Farriers being father and son, Peter and Ellis Hall.

When I was eleven years old, on a Saturday morning I used to accompany old Jack Gore on the Knowsley milk round with his pony, Daisy, and trap. When she required new shoes, I was "volunteered" to take her. I was lifted onto her back with no riding saddle, just a bridle, and no experience of horse riding!

The farm was situated at the top of Longborough Brow on the East Lancs Road, on the north side of it. As we approached Longborough Lodge, I noticed a steam lorry coming towards us. The pony did not like steam wagons, so I turned her into the lodge gates to wait until it had passed. We continued on our journey, turning into Houghtons Lane, then onto the path that starts in the corner next to the cottage which, in those days was Winnie Tyrer's shop, lastly going down Gunning Avenue and eventually arriving at the Smithy where I was lifted off and the pony was shod.

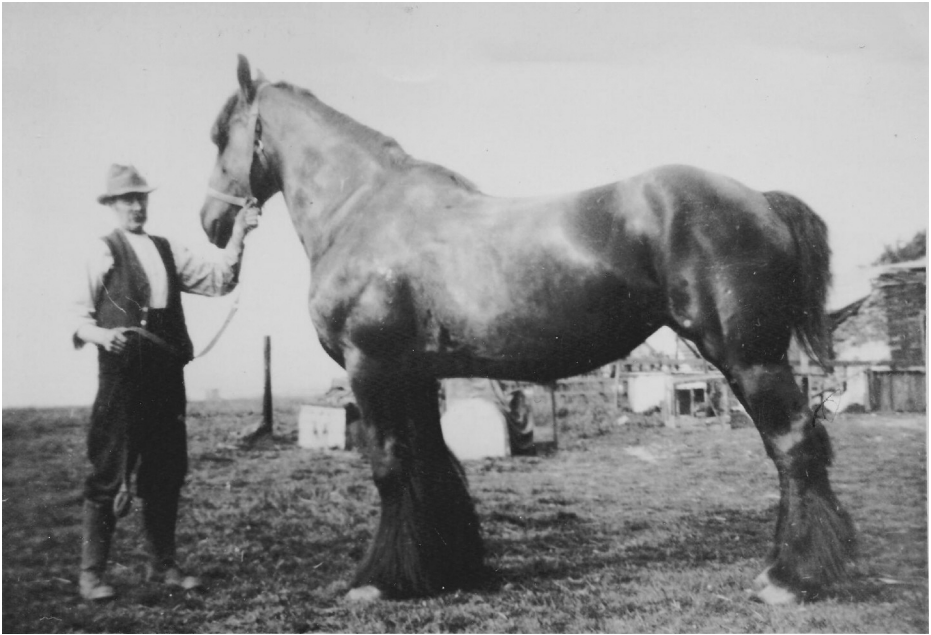
I looked around the Smithy and watched the two craftsmen performing their skills while waiting for Daisy to be shod. The floor was only earth, or it could have been setts with iron bars lying on it. There was the forge, where the shoes were put in the fire to heat up to glowing white-hot metal to allow them to be worked on the anvil, the shoes being placed in and lifted from the fire by long handled pincers. The bellows had been replaced with an electrically-operated fan, and when it was switched on it produced a great shower of sparks from the fire into the air. The fuel for the fire was coke from the Gas Works. At the side of the forge was a small tank of water, used to quench the hot metal. When the shoe was ready to be put to the pony's hoof, a metal spike was knocked into the shoe. When the Smith worked on the front hooves, he had a metal stand consisting of a tripod base and a column upright, about 15 to 18 inches tall, to place the hoof on; when working on the pony's back legs, they were placed between the Smith's legs.

The first part of the shoeing process was to remove the worn shoe and then prepare the hoof to receive the new one. When

the hot shoe was put to the hoof, it produced a lot of smoke and smell, which enabled the Smith to see if he had to trim the bottom of the hoof to get a perfect fit. I think there was also a vice and hand-operated bench drill on one side of the Smithy building.

I was then put back on her back for the return journey, which was uneventful I am glad to say.

John Davies



Bob Rotheram and his horse. Photo, courtesy of Doreen Garner.

This is Bob Rotheram, my grandfather, taken on his farm somewhere up Bleak Hill Road. He loved that horse – it probably got shod at the Smithy!

Doreen Garner

There was a smithy at the bottom of Mill Brow - Smith's. We called it a smithy because there was a smithy there, but it was a foundry, with a huge chimney. He was an engineer, Smith. They had a coach house somewhere in town, the family were coach builders.

John Stead

I used to work for the County on the roads. I came to Ecclestone in the late 1960s when we were widening the road at the top of Kiln Lane and all round there. I saw Ellis working in his forge, and so I went to chat to him. I was fascinated by him. He was so skilled with that hammer, he could make that anvil sing. It was like music.

It was dark inside, and there were piles and piles of old horseshoes and bits of metal all over the earth floor.

I used to pop in often to chat to him and watch him work. We came to be quite friendly and I had a lot of respect for him. I still come back here to the Smithy; I'll never forget him.

Jim Brady

Ellis's wife she was the lollipop lady for the school crossing that was here. She used to bring the lollipop and leave it propped up against the wall inside the door.

Jeff Worsley

We've heard lots of fantastic stories about Ellis and Peter over the years at the Smithy. Peter in particular was a colourful character. He had lost an eye whilst working, repairing a cart, and so he had a glass eye. We were told that the wife of a local dignitary also had a glass eye, and when she got a replacement, she had given her old one to Peter!

Peter won a bet that he wouldn't ride a horse into the Seven Stars. He did, and he drank his prize at the bar whilst still sat on the horse!

Vicky Griffiths

Another great story we heard was from a local Vicar who, as a child used to bunk off from Sunday school to go and watch horses being shod at the Smithy. He was caught out after hurting himself and repeating something rude he'd heard Peter shout at a horse that had leant on him as he was shoeing it (he had questioned its parentage) - he had to confess to his mother where he'd heard such foul language.

Joanne Chamberlain

At the beginning of the 1900s, the Smithy was owned by wheelwright James Ranson. Blacksmith Thomas Hall worked for him, and his sons became apprentices. Thomas's son Peter took over after his death in 1919 and bought the business from Ranson in 1924, who opened another wheelwrights shop just half a mile away.

Peter's sons Joseph and Elias (known as Ellis) were apprenticed as blacksmiths, and Kenneth worked as a wheelwright. Joseph was called up for National Service during the Second World War; Ellis, by this time, had become a skilled farrier and blacksmith, and continued to work in the Smithy.

Peter Hall died in 1957 and Ellis took over the business. By then, the local economy had undergone huge changes: farming was still practised, but far fewer horses were used as processes had become mechanised, and motor vehicles replaced the carts and wains that the wheelwright would have mended.

Ellis continued to shoe horses, but as the years went by demand dwindled. Some horses came to the Smithy to be shod, but Ellis also travelled around the stables and farms in the area with his portable forge. After his death in 1989, the blacksmithing trade at Kiln Lane ended.

The building is now much smaller than it was in its heyday. It stood directly on the junction of Kiln Lane and Millbrook Lane until it was moved stone-by-stone a matter of yards in 1937 to make way for the library and scaled down. The other outbuildings that once surrounded it are long since gone, as is the tying platform.

The neglected smithy fell into disrepair, and was later bought by Ecclestone Parish Council and transformed into a museum. The Smithy Heritage Centre now houses many artefacts and tools which were either used, made or repaired on-site, or in one of the three other forges in the local area.

Millbrook Cottages

Around 1969/1970, my mother needed a new house and those houses, Millbrook Cottages, were getting knocked down and so I asked if I could rent one of the houses, and we did it up. There were no houses down the side, only a wall. There was a hole in the roof and the main beam was cracked so I used thick plywood to brace it. The gutters were made of stone, and there were stone slates on the roof.

There was a frame of a window in the bedroom that looked into next door's, because the other side had been the chapel. The two houses in the middle had been the chapel and the houses on either end had been used by the gardeners. My mother loved it. Chapel Lane used to be called Memory Lane. When the cottages were built with the chapel included, it was renamed Chapel Lane.

It was owned by Greenall's, and it was later bought by a builder. I'm certain if I hadn't done something with that house that they'd have all been pulled down.

Norman Knowles

Millbrook Cottages are also known as Chapel Cottages. When we lived there they were called Chapel Houses, then they were Chapel Cottages, then our address became 6 Millbrook Lane.

The far left one [number 8] was used as a bike shop - Blanchard's. It had a big square window, and there was a bit built on where the old boy used to fix and sell bicycles. His two

daughters lived with him. Florrie Blanchard, well, she became a Gregson, she was a marvellous seamstress; she used to sew for all the nobility of Ecclestone.

There was Annie Smith, she was a milliner; she lived next door the other way, in number 4. The woman on the other end used to take in washing and ironing. This was all happening during the war.

Doreen Garner



The middle two Millbrook Cottages, now 6 and 4 Millbrook Lane, showing Doreen's aunt, Jessie Shawbins and grandmother, Mary Ann Rotheram outside number 6 holding Jessie's twin boys, Derek and Clifford, 1930. Photo courtesy of Doreen Garner.



The junction of Millbrook Lane and Mill Brow, showing two of the Chapel Cottages, now 2 and 4 Millbrook Lane, 1998. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.

There was a little shop opposite Bobby Mounsey's house, one of the Chapel Cottages - they did so much. It was a cycle shop, they sold bits of food, all sorts of things. Most shops were like that.

John Stead

Millbrook Cottages were built in 1815 by Dr Adam Clarke, a biblical scholar. The row of four cottages contained a chapel (the centre two houses) for the local Methodist minister, and the end houses were for farm labourers. In 1816 he established a Sunday School for local children to learn to read and write, as well as providing a home for twenty out-of-work sailors. The generous Dr Clarke even gave his employees a day off with full pay to celebrate the coronation of George IV.

Wartime Memories of Ecclestone

Ken Chamberlain - *During the war years we used to have Warship Week at school, Chapel Lane School, and we sponsored a corvette; a corvette is like a big gun ship, a small destroyer, used to escort the convoys. I can't remember what it was called though. And we also had Spitfire week.*

Joseph Parr - *Windleshaw had a battleship, the Ajax.*

John Stead – *We used to send them messages and have occasional collections. I remember two bombs falling in Ecclestone. They straddled the East Lancashire Road. As you go up Watery Lane along the footpath all the way up to the East Lancs Road, one was just on the right in the field and the other was opposite on the other side of the East Lancs Road. You could see the crater.*

I was 13 when war was declared. I was an ARP cyclist taking messages in Grosvenor Road, by the entrance to Taylor Park. The first house there was made for us to go into, the ARP. I was meant to take messages on my bike from one ARP to another but I was never used.

And I was in the Boys Army, and I was that small that they had to take the belt off the jerkin and sew it on higher up. I was only tiny, and the rifle was too big for me, so I was the hand grenade thrower. We went to the wood by Frith's Farm at Red Rocks and we did our training there, in the woods. We were supposed to be attacking, and they said to me "Hand grenade thrower – put it over there!", I said "I've none left, Sir", so he

said "Find one", so I picked a brick up. He said "You're out!", and I thought "Oh, if this is the war..."

I had my medical at 18, I was 5 foot one and six stone ten. We had to go to Renshaw Street in Liverpool, and the queue was so long it was unbelievable. They turned me down because I had a weak heart.

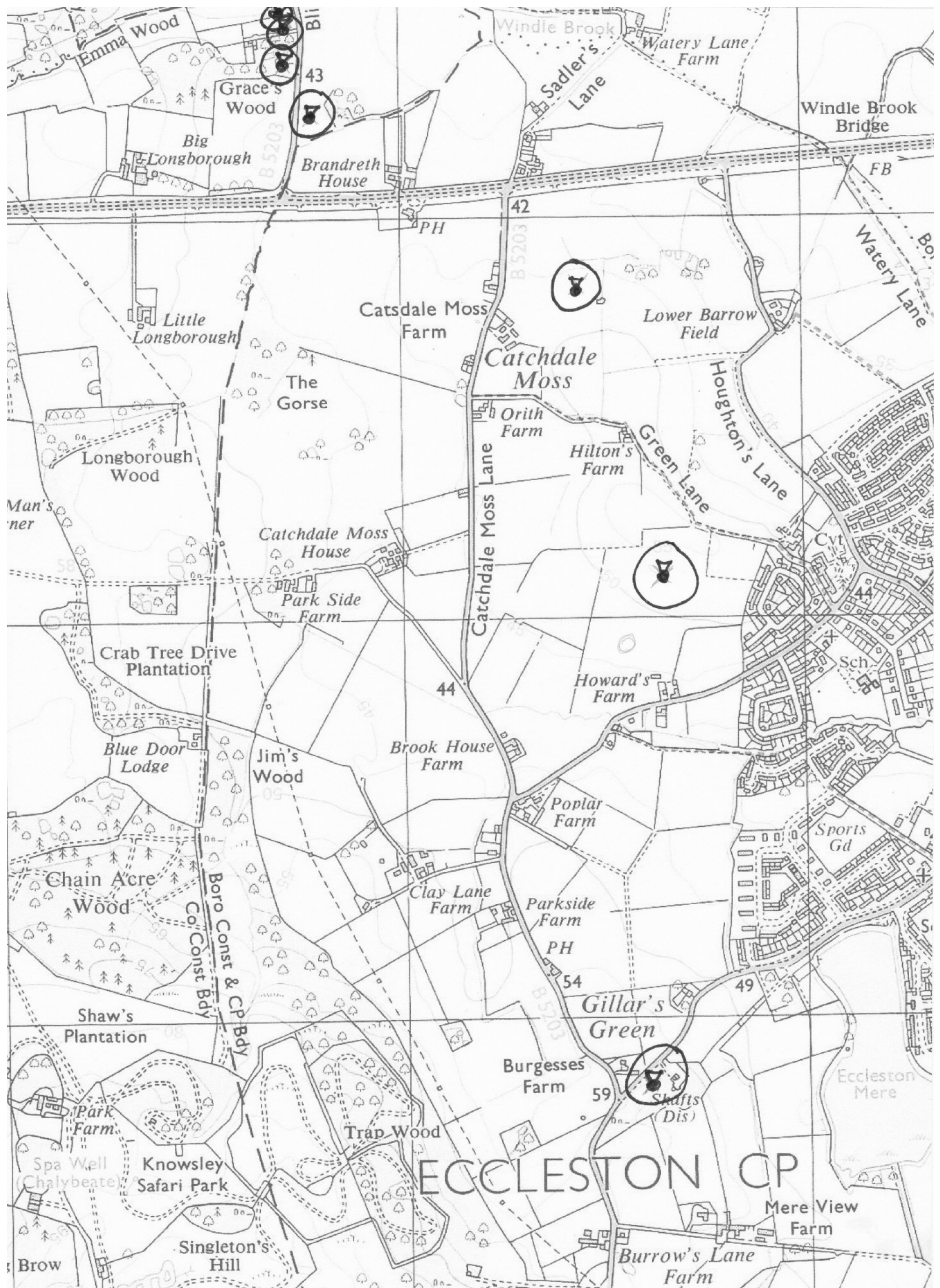
Do you know the gate to the Carmelite? The first bomb was dropped there – the first bombing raid, there was a bomb dropped there but it didn't go off. 20 yards into the gate. We went down there looking for shrapnel. That was in the newspapers.

There was another one that landed in the brook. There was another bomb dropped on Yates Avenue. We were all in school, and so they kept us in the school because it was unexploded and they were going to set it off at twelve o'clock. We all waited and then went round, and there was a hole, but we couldn't find any shrapnel.

One day an oil bomb was dropped and it demolished one of the hedges on Longborough Farm, off Catchdale Moss Road. What they [enemy aircraft] used to do, when they'd bombed over Liverpool, if they had any bombs left, they used to follow the railway and they'd come and drop them over Pilkington's. The timber yard was set on fire. And over Triplex. Doulton Street was full of incendiary bombs.

Another thing - near Eccleston Gardens, at the bottom of Broom Road in Eccleston Park, there was a big wall built and there were anti-aircraft guns there.

Norman Knowles



Locations of bombs dropped in the Eccleston area. Map courtesy of Ken Chamberlain.



Chapel Lane pupils in the schoolyard, 1939. Photo courtesy of Doreen Garner.

When the bell went at playtime it was a race to see who could get on that corner there first. There was a school yard and this garden area, but that had to go when the war started – they had to get rid of the beautiful greenery and grow vegetables.

[Photo, right to left] Pearl Wright, Iris Chadwick, Joyce Dodd, Marie Greaves, Doreen Rotheram, Audrey Heaton from Chapel Lane, Kathleen Grace from Grace's Farm, one of the Friar twins from The Avenue, Audrey Metcalf, and Joan Bates whose family had the Royal Oak pub down the East Lancs. The boy in the dark jacket on the climbing frame is Jacky Railton.

Doreen Garner

- I remember young babies having huge gas masks, the kind they were put in – that's all I can remember about the war. I used to play with it after the war when I was older. I remember vaguely somebody putting me in this thing. My Dad said it was him, and that they had to practise putting me in it, just in case. I must have been very young, but I can remember that; nothing else, just that.

- I remember rationing books. It was great for me because my dad was a sailor, and he used to bring home all these sweets, and you could hardly get sweets.

- And of course vegetables were all seasonal then. All our potato peelings, vegetable peelings, we used to save them, and there was a man that came round, Mr Wythenshaw, to collect them all to feed the pigs.

Josie Foster, Marie Gilchrist and Irene Hobin

[During the Blitz] I remember seeing Liverpool burning one night. My parents woke me up and said "Come and have a look at this", and through the bedroom window, all you could see was red. When you see an old film and you hear the air raid sirens, even seeing pictures of Hitler, and swastikas, it all comes back.

There were two air raid shelters in Brookside Avenue. We shared with our adjoining neighbour on Brookside Avenue - our family and the family next door to us had our washhouse at the back converted – they had to put concrete in the roof and an extra layer of bricks around it. This one particular night we went in, and we had a couple of bunk beds in there and I must have fallen asleep and when I woke up in the morning I was absolutely frozen!

I remember one day coming home from the school here [Chapel Lane School], and when I got to the end of Brookside Avenue on Bleak Hill Road, on both sides of the road, there were soldiers lying down pointing guns up Bleak Hill. I presume they were on manoeuvres. I went home and told my mother and she burst into tears.

John Stead

I remember, during the war, going out one morning with a neighbour and we walked up Green Lane, and there'd been a bomb dropped in the field just off Green Lane - I imagine it was from a stray plane from the blitz of Liverpool. I didn't see it, the bomb dropped during the night. We heard the noise – well, my parents did. We lived on Springfield Lane so we were

near enough to hear it but not close enough to be affected by the blast. We went with my friend's father – he was keen to find it, and we did. The crater was about five feet wide. There was a lot of soil that had been thrown up.

They dug up behind the school [Chapel Lane School] to build air raid shelters, sort of half underground, with benches. When the sirens went, we all went had to troop off to the shelters. They were large, brick with a concrete roof, quite big really – well when you're young things look bigger, but my recollection was that they certainly held a couple of classes.

John Anthony Harrison

There used to be a couple of ponds nearby, just as you go up the bridge into Windle - there was a pig farm and in that field, the huge field going right up to the East Lancs Road, a bomb dropped there in the war. I remember standing outside our house at the top of Coronation Road, and we used to be able to see Liverpool burning, the sky turned bright red.

June Wilton

The local unit of the Home Guard had their headquarters in the old school building on the corner of Chapel Lane and Church Road, opposite Chorley's Post Office. Both have long since been demolished.

One Sunday I was delivering the newspapers from George Eddington's newsagents shop in Knowsley Road by Ellison

Drive to his customers in Saddlers Lane. I was on the return journey with the papers and just entered Houghtons Lane under the Carmelite wall, just about where Walmesley Road is today, and I met the local contingent of the Home Guard marching back to their base after completing the morning's exercises out in the country. As I got further down the road, a lone Home Guard came into view, looking all hot and bothered; I recognised him as being Joe Bates, the Landlord of the Royal Oak.

When my father returned home from the parade, I asked him why Joe Bates was so far behind on his own. He immediately burst out laughing and proceeded to tell me.

Part of the exercise entailed them crawling on their stomachs in the woods, stalking the enemy. The woods in question face the right hand bend between Houghtons Lane and the East Lancashire Road. When the exercise was over and they fell in for the march back to base, Joe was one gaiter missing, so had held back to search for it. When all came to all, his trouser leg had worked its way up and out of the gaiter and when he stood up, it had dropped down over it, hiding his gaiter so it hadn't been lost after all!

John Davies

When the war started, I went to Ormskirk to register for the Army but I was not called up because I was a Farm Worker. We were left to grow more food for the War Workers but one day two men came round to ask us to enlist for the A.F.S.

[Auxiliary Fire Service]. Our job was to watch for any farm fires.

There were three of us, and we had to go to the Fire Office for Whiston. When we arrived, a Fire Officer took us one at a time into another room to answer some questions about how we should tackle a fire and about the Fire Pumps we had. The Officer said they would send us word as to who was to be a Leading Fireman; to my surprise I was the one chosen so I had to have a red stripe on my shoulder.

Jack Gore

Joseph Parr - During the war, there were aeroplanes parked up in the grounds of Knowsley Park. They were supposed to be camouflaged, they were hidden in the woods, but I knew they were there because I'd been over the walls.

Mary Smith - I remember them closing the by-pass in the war. They had tanks on it.

Chorley's, the old Post Office



Chorley's, Springfield Lane, c.1930. Photo courtesy of Doreen Garner.

This is Chorley's – he had a shop and Post Office. He also had hens, chickens, grew all kinds. He had beautiful gardens. A lot of people won't know this, but there was a tin hut [behind building in centre of photograph]. We'd no Sunday school, and there was this Young Men's Club, the Church Men's Club, and so they used it for a Sunday School. The signpost is still there.

Doreen Garner

I remember Chorley's - ooh, Mrs Chorley. It started off as a bakery, we used to go. They had a two-wheeled pony and trap. The house was in a dip where the brook swings round, so

he used to back the horse down the dip to the house from the road.

Joseph Parr

I remember Mr Chorley, with his horse and cart. His daughter Hilda used to work in the Post Office. There was a telephone box and a big copper beech tree [in photo below]. It's changed a lot over the years. They built a new Post Office on the same site. That's closed down too; it's a private house now. At one time it belonged to some structural engineers I think.

I used to play cricket on that field [by Chorley's], just a knock about though, not proper cricket.

John Anthony Harrison



Chorley's Post Office, Autumn 1958. Photo (scanned from a slide) courtesy of John Anthony Harrison.

The Rose Queen

Chapel Lane itself was a big part of village life – the Rose Queen came up there. It was absolutely fantastic. They used to end up on the land behind Christ Church – it was a big thing, because in those days there were only usually horses and carts, but then they used coal lorries - but let's face it, this was the posh part of town, so they were dressed up!

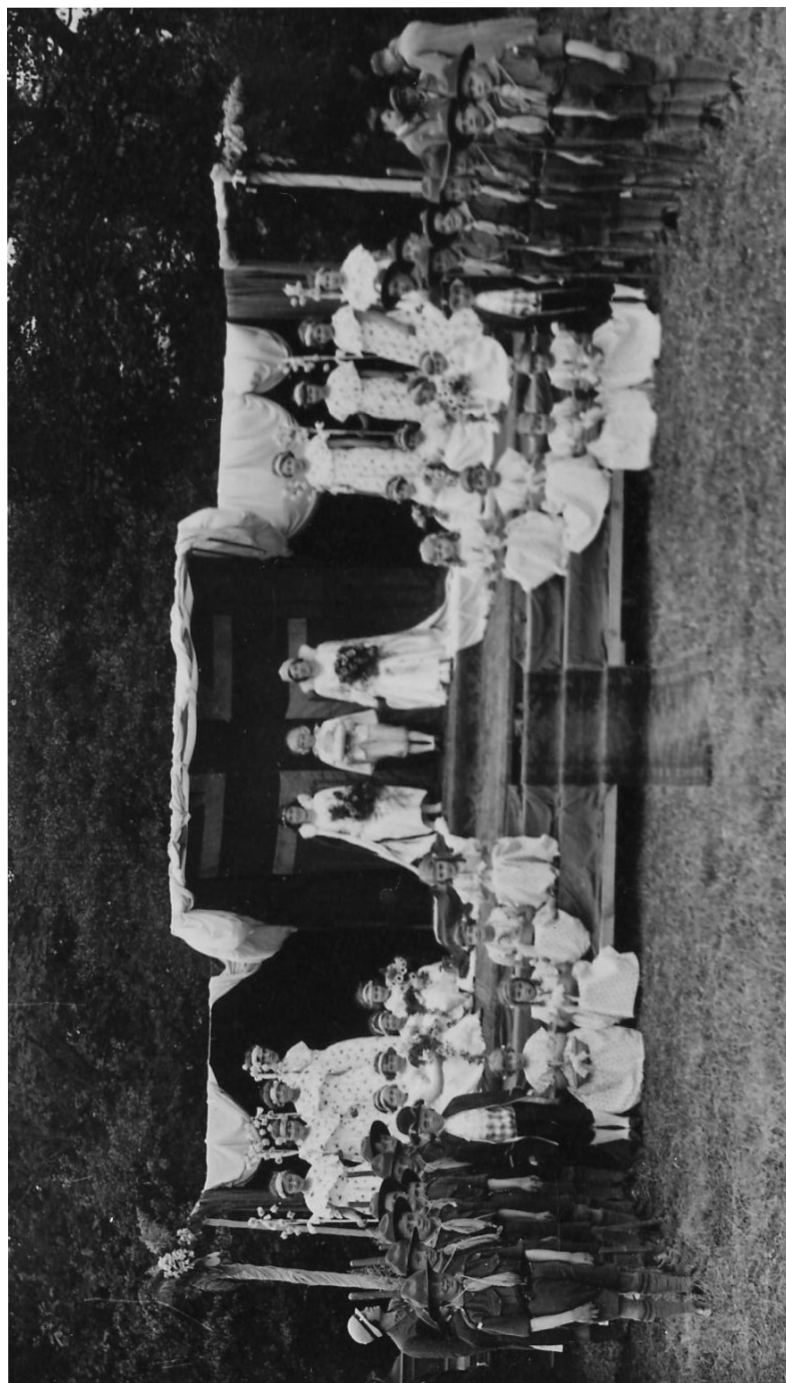
Norman Knowles



Rose Queen Celebrations, 1933: Clipping courtesy of Doreen Garner.

We'd all troop round to the back of Chorley's; it was gorgeous the way they had it laid out, and the photographer would be there. We all thought she [the Rose Queen] was the Queen of Sheba. I'm third from the right on the front row [photo above]. We wore yellow organza dresses. I loved that dress! Some of the others were made of crepe paper. I can't remember the Rose Queen's name.

Doreen Garner



Rose Queen celebrations, featuring the local Scouts. This dates to 1934 as the retiring Rose Queen can be seen. Most of the costumes are the same as in 1933. Photo courtesy of Doreen Garner.

My sister was the Rose Queen but I couldn't say when. It was to do with the church, and there was a procession with carts and wagons all decorated, and it finished up on the big field at the back, with sporting activities and stalls, refreshments. It's not been going for a while now, I couldn't say how long. There was the Rose Queen, the retiring Queen, there were assistants, there was just the one male, a Page Boy who carried the crown, stuck in amongst all these girls!

John Stead



Rose Queen Festival
programme.
Document, Smithy
Heritage Centre's
Collection.



Rose Queen celebrations, year unknown. By the time this was taken, only the crown, Queens' capes and Page Boys' outfits remain from previous years. Photo courtesy of Doreen Garner.

Social Events

We had a big gala to raise money for St Julie's Church. We borrowed one of Rainford's fields and we had somebody on called Julie, she was a singer. It was a great "do", that first "do", in 1964 I think. We made a lot of money for the Church, and later the school. The next one we had, Hughie Green opened it! Mr Greer, he was involved with Beecham's in some way, and he had a connection to Hughie Green, and so he got him to open it. We still have galas.

Mary Smith



St. Julie's Catholic Church, funded in part by money raised by the people of Eccleston. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.

We used to have galas at Rainford's Farm [Catchdale Moss Farm] before the war and even during the war. They had a horse drawn flatbed that they used to collect people who couldn't walk that far to get up there. My father had a grocer's shop on Greenfield Road, and he used to drive the decorated lorries they used for the Rose Queen procession.

Joseph Parr

Ken Chamberlain – *down Bobbys Lane, there was a big gate on the right and there was a big field and they used to have stalls, I think it was in June, on UGB, United Glass Bottlers - that was our sports field. We'd throw balls at coconuts and you'd win glass bowls and things as prizes. Then there'd be a dance that night in the big pavilion. There was a band, Noel Powell's band.*

Joseph Parr – *Mr Jones used to get on the microphone, he lived down Alder Hey Road.*

On sports day, we'd have stalls all the way round the field at Bobbys Lane Sports Club. The seconds from UGB, they'd give those as prizes - fruit bowls and dishes. My husband designed those, at United Glass. We had an outing nearly every month with them; we'd go out somewhere for the day and have a lovely lunch, a 3 course lunch. We'd pay six pounds towards it.

Joyce Holland

There was a big party at the end of the war. We went on a coach and we had it on that field right down by the corner of Burrows Lane opposite Caldy Cottage. We'd already been to see a film up at Prescott, I think it was a cowboy film, at either the Lyme House or the Picture Palace. We had the party tea at the B.I. Canteen.

John Stead



The Rotherams, Field Day, 1930. Photo courtesy of Doreen Garner.

Field Day was held on the huge fields off Mill Brow up Ecclesfield way to the left. You can see Alder Hey Road is being built in the background at the time. From left to right there's Auntie May, her daughter Freda, my sister Cynthia, cousin Alma, Auntie Jessie and her twins, our Jim, cousin Audrey (Melia), Sylvia (Alma's sister), Mother and me. There were a lot of twins in Ecclestone – it must be something in the water!

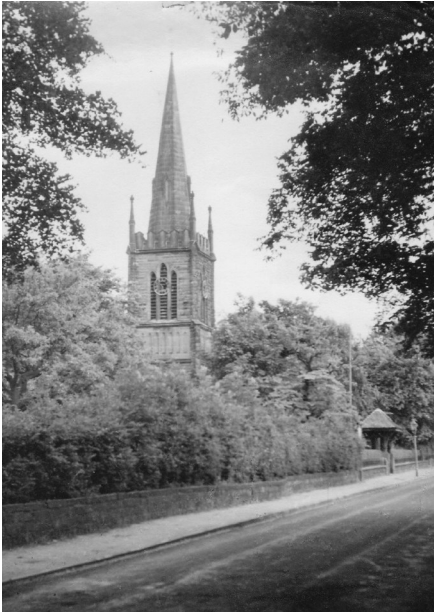
The Mother's Union at Christ Church organised all sorts of outings that we all went on. The Mother's Union members had a badge, navy blue with an "M" and a "U" underneath it in gold.

Doreen Garner



Christ Church Mother's Union trip to Southport, Doreen's grandmother is third from the right.
Photo courtesy of Doreen Garner.

Christ Church, Ecclestone



Left: Christ Church Ecclestone. Photo courtesy of John Stead

Right: View of Christ Church Ecclestone from the old Vicarage, c.1930s. Photo courtesy of Mary Lomax

My father, Canon Lomax, came to Ecclestone in 1933 when I was 19 years old. I had always dreamed of living in the country and when we were moved to Ecclestone I was not disappointed.

There was the typical country church with a little gate leading from the Church yard to the Vicarage. In springtime there was wild garlic and later the apple trees in bloom. The path led to a rustic bridge over the stream. Here and there, a grave stone commemorating some long-lost pet with a Latin inscription.

The old vicarage was made of brown stone and beside it in the same style was the old Village school, not functioning as a

school anymore, but as a cosy place for a social evening such as the Annual Hot Pot Supper after the potato harvest.

The Old Vicarage was quite charming. I had a bedroom over the stables where we kept our Austin 4. The windows on one side were doors to push out feed for the horse. There was a pear tree over the back gate, beautiful when it was in bloom, and later laden with delicious fruit.

Until shortly before we came to Eccleston there was no mains water supply. The local authority were willing to provide water if at least three people wanted it. Dr. Marriot was a candidate, as was Mrs Mercer who had a minute shop in St. Helens, where the best sausages and best Swiss Roll could be bought. Dr. Marriot also put water in the church to make the necessary three. Everyone seemed happy with their pumps.

There were many nice people in the congregation, among them, the Vicar's Warden Victor Stead, his sweet wife Daisy and their son John.

The other Warden was Mr. Giles Lee, who was Lord Derby's Agent. My Father was very fortunate to have two such exceptionally good people to help him in his Ministry. Then there was Mr. Crosby, the Parish Clerk, and his nice wife, two sons and daughter May. They lived in an old cottage full of charm - it was demolished and replaced by something less romantic, but more practical.

My Father loved the garden, and worked hard to keep the lawn in order and the place tidy and grew lettuces and radishes and parsley. My Mother had always been his helper in the Parish; she was very active during the war when the

people streamed out of Liverpool. She was also a speaker for the Mother's Union, and I drove her all over the Parish to speak at meetings.

The Church Hall was built during our time at Eccleston.

Mary Lomax



Mrs Lomax planting a tree. Mrs and Mr Crosby (first and second left), Mrs Lomax (to the right, holding the spade), Canon Lomax (fifth from right). The tree they are planting may be the lime tree which is still standing near to the gate.

Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.



Literally a peek into the past, this image is a glimpse of May Day celebrations at Christ Church, Ecclestone in the 1940s seen through the railings. Photo courtesy of John Stead.



Christ Church Hall and playground, 1998. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.



Left: Christ Church Vicarage grounds. Left to right: Esme Vencoe, Shirley, Jennifer Pilkington (sitting on the grave of George the Persian cat that belonged to Mary Lomax)

Right: Christ Church grounds. Left to right: Mary Lomax, Victor Stead, Daisy Stead, John Stead, Mrs Stead, Mrs Lomax and Canon Lomax.

Photos courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.

Chapel Lane School



Painted for Mrs S. J. Wilton on her retirement from Ecclestone Mere County Primary School, July 1989, by P. L. Wynn. Photo of painting courtesy of June Wilton.

I was the last Headteacher of Chapel Lane School. In 1969 I was the Deputy Head, and we were absolutely overflowing. We had two classes in the church hall across the road, and eventually two classes moved down to the Methodist Church because they had the hall and playground and what have you, and then eventually they built the new school down Saleswood Avenue way, and I got the headship of this school which remained as the infant school and the juniors moved up the road into the new building.

The artist (Mrs P. L. Wynn) was the secretary of the new junior school which then became a primary school, and now it is going to be enlarged again. It was Eccleston Mere Infants and Eccleston Mere Juniors, but everyone called it Chapel Lane School.

We were there until 1984 and then two schools had to close and they reopened the new school as Eccleston Mere Primary School. The original Chapel Lane building opposite the Church Hall stayed there for some time and was used as a teachers' centre.

I went "up the road" to the Primary School for four years. Mr Friend was the Headteacher, and the transition went very smoothly. I retired in 1989 because I didn't want to know about all this technology and computers.

The school before this, I believe, it's only what I've been told, was on the other side of the road, and it was a little school. If I'm correct I think it was a church school. In 1911 the original school opened, and so we had a reunion for all the staff in 2011 and invited anyone back who had worked there, even the dinner ladies, and the children sang for us. It was lovely.

June Wilton

I went to Chapel Lane School. My favourite teacher was Miss Chambers. She was the nicest one, she was lovely. She was a gentle soul. Mrs Bott used to shout at the lads "Go and wash your filthy paws before you pick that pencil up!" and if we

made a murmur when she was taking class, she'd take that wooden ruler...

Doreen Garner



*Eccleston Mere Primary School, that replaced Chapel Lane School.
Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.*

Childhood in Ecclestone

It was good fun living round here. My mother used to let us just roam around, you could do it then as children, it was all fields. There was Cook's Farm where all the new houses are. I remember going there because I lived in Brookside Avenue and I remember you could hear the cockerels crowing of a morning.

They used to bring the milk round after the war. They used to bring the milk round on a horse and cart. I lived with my grandparents and they used to bring the milk round. There was a lad who used to ladle it out of a big churn, ladle it out and put it in your jug as there were no bottles.

My grandmother stopped getting Cook's milk because the lad had warts all over his hands. She reckoned he got them from milking cows, she had this idea that you could get warts from milking cows, I don't know if that is true. I think she was worried about something to do with TB as well.

Mike Potter

Jeff Worsley - We were only talking before, about when they drained Cooks Pond. There was a pond in the fields and they told us they were going to drain it and build a school. Yes, when they told us they were going to drain it and got the Fire Service to do it. All us kids went down to see what sort of fish were in it. There was loads of fish and they let us take as many as we wanted. We didn't have a freezer then so we had to eat it straight away but they weren't very nice fish. There were

fellas with tanks - they used to take some and then they would stock ponds at other places. When they filled the pond in it changed the whole drainage system in this area.

Mike Potter - There were floods after that.

Jeff Worsley - Not far from the ponds there were floods, bad ones in Kiln Lane.

Mike Potter - We used to go to into the brook at the back of Brookside Avenue. We didn't live on the side of the brook, we lived on the other side, and you used to get friendly with people who lived near the brook so you could go down looking for sticklebacks and frogs and take them home. They always died within a day!

Marie Gilchrist - You know Pilkington's Head Office? Josie and I remember that before the Head Office was even there, when it was just a big field, the daisy field, with plots beyond it, allotments. We used to play rounders on there.

Josie Foster - I was backstop.

Marie Gilchrist - My father had a plot on there, before the little stream. I used to go every Sunday morning to get three penneth' of mint, you know, to make mint sauce. If you needed flowers to take to the cemetery or that sort of thing you could get a bunch there for sixpence.

There was a great shop, Winnie Tyrer's Cottage. On the way round the back from the Carmelite going out to the East

Lancs, on the corner. We used to get all Oxo cubes, and you could get ice creams there, around the 1940s.

John Stead

My grandmother used to take me to a little sweet shop halfway down Bobbys Lane, near UGB, on the left hand side. I'd have to pick something Grandma would like rather than something I wanted. So she'd take one, and give you the bag back, but you'd be thinking "Oh, I wish I'd got what I wanted!"

If you had a penny for sweets, you'd think you were a millionaire. We used to get a Saturday penny, but we had to save a ha'penny for our holidays. There was also Almond's sweet shop, across the road from the Griffin.

Doreen



Almond's, 1970. Photo courtesy of John Anthony Harrison.

Marriage in Ecclestone



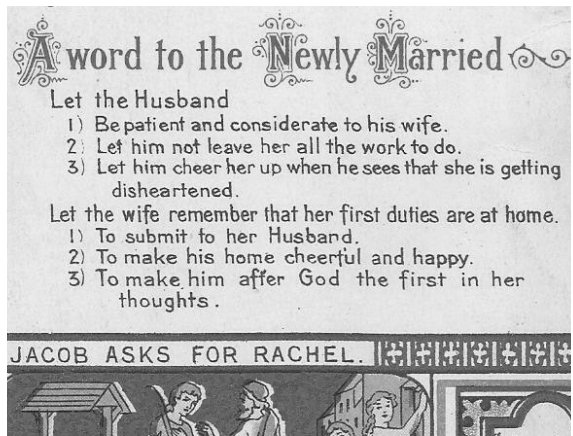
Nancy and George Shewell's wedding portrait. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Rogers Ross.

Ann "Nancy" Bates had poor eyesight - it was considered disastrous for a young woman to wear spectacles in the 19th century - they could spoil your chances of marriage! She loved dancing, and worked in a ladies shop in the then fashionable Southport, selling accessories. All her life she maintained a good appearance even when times were hard; despite her sharp tongue and manner, and the dreaded spectacles, she married George Shewell in 1895.

Elizabeth Rogers Ross

Excerpt from illuminated wedding certificate of Thomas Robinson and Elizabeth Fishwick, 25th December 1918 at Christ Church, Ecclestone.

Document courtesy of Len Robinson.



Bobby Mounsey

Ken - *You must remember Bobby Mounsey, the Policeman, his house was on the corner of Chapel Lane as it turns to go down Mill Brow, the big house right on the corner. Bobby Mounsey the Village Bobby with his black leather spats on. He used to cycle everywhere. He wasn't a slight man, solid.*

Joe - *There was plenty of him. I think when he left they closed the station down. My brother and I did most things together and my Dad had a rhubarb patch, and so we decided to get some manure. We lived on Kiln Lane opposite Kiln Close, and we went onto the field at the back – it was all fields at the back, but there was a section at the end of Ted Cook's house where there was a break with pillars, and we used to squeeze between them and onto the field.*

We took a bucket with us and helped ourselves to horse manure or cow manure and then came home and scattered it all over the rhubarb patch. Then, tea time, there's a knock at the door: Bobby Mounsey. The first thing he did was take a kitchen chair and got hold of it by the bottom of one leg and held it straight upright in the air and stood like that until he'd said everything he had to say. He didn't shake, head straight. He got my Dad in, and told him the tale. He asked us where did we get this manure from and whose was it? I said it was the cows'.

"Who did it belong to?" he said.

"Mr. Cook, Ted Cook." I said.

"That's stealing. Now what I want you to do – where is it?"

"On the rhubarb"

“Go and get the bucket and the spade and get it back off the rhubarb and put it back on the field. And the next time you go on there I will kick you all the way back to your father to tell him what you’ve been up to. Bye now.”

But he held that chair the whole time. He was a great fella.

Ken - That chair trick was a test of strength, I remember people doing it. You have to put your elbow so it’s flat on the floor and then raise it up. They were strong people then, it was a farming community, the majority of it. Just think - the change in the duties of a Police Officer today as opposed to running round after horse manure.

The Police Station, it’s a house now isn’t it? What was the Bobby’s name? Bobby Malsey? Bobby Mounsey. He caught me once. Oh God he was rough with kids. He sorted me out though, put me on the right track.

I pinched some apples, about half a dozen - don’t tell my mother - from a little orchard not far from the Police Station. I wasn’t very bright!

Anon

Mrs Blanchard and the Turkey

Mrs. Blanchard's shop was just opposite what was the Police Station. They sold bikes originally. The Father had died and so they stopped selling bikes and started selling general groceries. We had a fun time with a turkey. She had this chest freezer in the shop - we had never seen a freezer before. She said that she wanted us to clean the freezer out so we did, and we found this turkey at the bottom; it had something like "Mrs. Smith" written on it.

We asked her what she wanted us to do with it and she said she had bought it in for someone who never came to collect it, so she put it in the freezer. We asked how long ago it was and she said, "Ooh, about 4 or 5 years".

So a friend and I went up behind the field and started playing Rugby with the turkey.

We were just throwing it round and it was all full of mud and everything, so on the way back we thought "What are we going to do with this?" - we decided to wash it in the sink and put it back in the freezer!

That must have been in the late 1950s. These things happened then.

Anon

Working in Ecclestone

Joseph Parr - *I used to spend weekends and holidays working for Joe Rainford's, at Clay Lane Farm opposite the Stanley Arms, then I worked there for two years before I did my National Service. I used to be a milkman for Rainford's, so I know a lot of the area well. I learned to drive on the milk round. Clarks Crescent was on one of my rounds.*

Mary Smith - *Ooh - I'd have got my milk from you! I used to get filthy going pea picking on Rainford's Farm. I'd have a big basket, and the women that were there picking peas would say "Oh, you'll never fill that, put some stones in the bottom!" Another thing I remember from when I was there was I used to go sliding down the hay in the barns!*

Joseph Parr - *when I did my National Service, I asked to go anywhere they'd send me - I thought I was going to see the world, and I finished up in Surrey working in a TB hospital in the operating theatre! I had all sorts of tests in my medical and was found to have a strong resistance to TB so I was sent there. I used to lay out all the surgical instruments, and clean them all afterwards, do all the running about. I finished my National Service on 5/5/55.*

The main employer was Pilkington's, and when the hooters used to sound at 8 o'clock for work and at dinner time, it'd be like a human river coming down the road with the workers.

There used to be a proper surgery down there at the sheet works, if you couldn't see a doctor you could go down there.

There was an operating theatre, dentists, ophthalmology, chiropody - you'd go in your dinner break.

Every site had a surgery with a nurse, and if any accidents happened in work, you'd be seen, and if you needed any further treatment you'd go down to the main site that was the sheet works.

There was a strike in 1972 over pay. We didn't get any money after the strike was over.

Marie Gilchrist

My father worked in Pilkington's. He was the Safety Officer. My mother was a teacher before she married but the habit in those days was to stop work when you married.

John Anthony Harrison

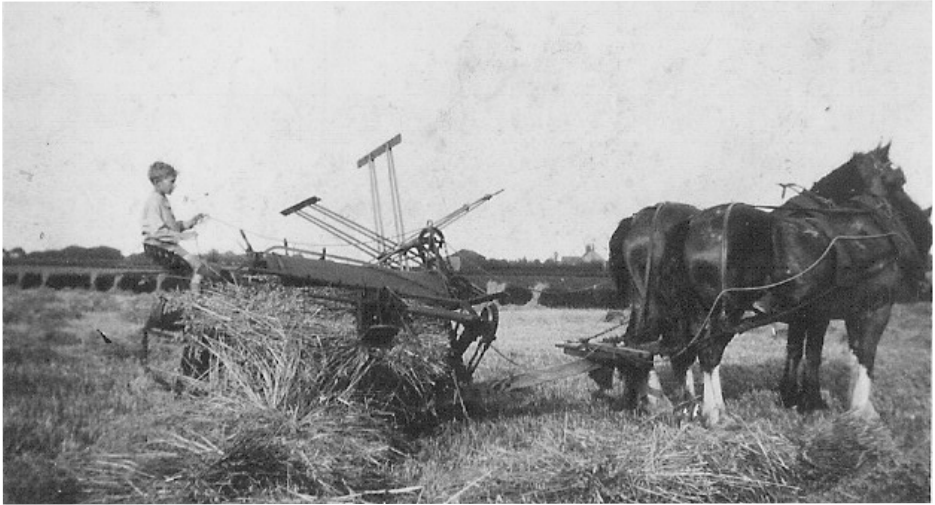
Jeff Worsley - We both worked at the Co-op, but at different branches. The carts that he and I used to pull around, they wouldn't let youngsters do it now. Do you know I had to pay for a badge to put on my arm to be employed? You could be employed at 12 or 13 then, but you had to be licensed. My Co-op was at Mill Brow so that was St. Helens and I had to have a badge. It cost me five shillings! We used to pull these carts around, and there was a little light for when it was dark. They taught me to wrap parcels in brown paper with string.

Mike Potter - The string, you used to have to pull it because there were no scissors - we used to wrap it round our hands

and pull it. We were quite tough - you had to be, growing up round here. Happy Days

We used to walk around all the field when potato picking had been done, picking up the odd ones when I was a girl.

June Wilton



Ray Crosby as a child, working on land in the area where Broadway is now situated. Photo, Smithy Heritage Centre's Collection.

Living in Ecclestone

I grew up in Ecclestone, moved away and then came back. After I graduated, I got a job on the Wirral – not very far way, but far enough, and then three years later I came back.

The first house we bought was in Cecil Drive, one of the little detached bungalows. The interesting thing was I played in the foundations of those houses as a child before the war, and then they didn't finish them, I presume because of the war, so it was just foundations for some time. I think the house were completed in the mid-1940s.

John Anthony Harrison

I was four when we came to live in Coronation Road, when the houses there were first built, four days before my fourth birthday.

I was taken to school at Rivington Road rather than Chapel Lane school – I think it must have been because there were no houses along where we lived, it was just fields and perhaps my mother thought it was too isolated.

When I was older I moved to Ashton-in-Makerfield and hated it, so I moved back. I wouldn't move now because my neighbours are brilliant. We all look after one another.

June Wilton

I was born in Rose Bank, opposite Kiln Close, then we moved

to Fernleigh, which was two doors further up. It's not there any more; there are two bungalows there now.

I live in Dentons Green so I'm not officially in Ecclestone now. The Windle post used to be on the corner of Coronation Road, on the North side, one of those three-sided posts.

Joseph Parr

I only go back as far as 42 years when I moved here. They'd just about built the Hawthorn estate. The Burrows Lane houses on the left hand side, they'd just been built, and what I call the Nissan houses in The Avenue, they were there, the prefabs. They've been knocked down now. There were Council houses too.

Judy Stead

I've lived in Ecclestone Park for 50 years, but I previous to that I used to live in the town centre, but then when they knocked Glover Street down in 1958/9, they moved us out. When you think, that whole area was full of people, and now they're just on the outskirts. There wasn't much social mobility then, so really people knew everybody – my mother was born in that street, and then she lived next door to her mother.

Marie Gilchrist

Jeff Worsley - *Did you know that Alder Hey Road wasn't a*

proper road until 1952? Before that it was just a dirt track and I used to ride my bike down it. Cars couldn't go down it.

Mike Potter - Hang on though, when I used to go to Scouts Hut in Alder Hey Road, it was still a dirt path. From the top bit to above Dodd Avenue was made up, but the bottom bit below Dodd Avenue wasn't. When I used to come back from school on our bikes it was still not a proper road, big potholes, and there were great big boulders. The top end was in St. Helens Borough and the bottom end wasn't. There was an argument about the split in the road or something, the boundary, and I think that is why it was never finished. It wasn't laid properly at the bottom bit until about 1959.

Jeff Worsley - I used to remember riding my bike down there, my mate used to live right at the bottom of the road, Bob Yates, so I used to ride my bike down there. Oh well, the bit I remember must have been the top bit. The bridge by the way, do you remember the bridge? It was only over half of the road!

Mike Potter - Yes, that's right, and it was wooden.

Jeff Worsley - It was a most peculiar arrangement. You could get across but it was only over half the road. You couldn't drive a car over it. It was just like two planks

I came to Eccleston in 1955. There was a Co-op that opened there in 1955 if not before (where Kiln Lane shops are). What is now the Co-op was a Nevins. All of the area by Gunning Avenue and over that way was just fields.

Mary Smith

About 1947 one of the first things I remember - 1947 was the worst winter the country had ever seen, and my mother and father decided to move house from Hewitt Avenue to Alder Hey Road at the time of the deep snow. right in the middle of all of this deep deep snow. I remember walking along in a trench that they'd cut out and I was looking up and could just see the sky, the snow was that deep. I'd have been five years of age. We didn't have a car, so we must have used a cart. I know I had to walk!

Mike Potter



Postwar housing in Ecclestone. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.

Sports in Ecclestone

When I first used to come to Bobbys Lane Sports Club, there were no buses that came here. I used to get off by the Triplex place, and walk up a little path there - you couldn't get cars up there, you had to walk up the little path.

I formed the women's hockey team there. My husband played in the men's team, and he played for England. He played for UGB [United Glass Bottles], Lancashire Northern County and nationally.

At UGB I was the head of the sports club. In my keep fit class there were at least 30 girls and I made all the tunics they wore. There's no sports club now. They used to have dances up at the hall there.

Joyce Holland



Ecclestone Badminton Club. Photo courtesy of John Stead.

Eccleston Hall

John Stead – *Eccleston Hall was a sanatorium. There were wooden buildings on the left hand side as you went down the drive. It's houses now, but there was a period when it was just left, it was nothing. I can't remember how long it was derelict. There was also a sanatorium on Rainford Road, that was for children.*

Joseph Parr – *I got caught with my brother and cousin in the grounds of the sanatorium, we shouldn't have been there at all; we were taken into the Hall and given a telling off. "Don't ever come this way again!"*



Eccleston Hall, 2004. Photo, Smithy Heritage Centre Collection.

Captain Frederick Bates



Captain Frederick Bates, centre. Photo courtesy of Norman Knowles.

Frederick Bates was Captain of a Cunard Liner in Liverpool, doing trips to Constantinople, taking teachers to see the pyramids, and he used to bring animals back to zoos.

He was a cabin boy on a sailing ship going to Buenos Aires in Argentina, and he witnessed a murder. In those days there was a special court in England for anyone at sea, and he was sent back to England with this suspect to be a witness. The ship he was on went out and was never heard of again, so the only two people living were these two. Whether they hung the other one I don't know.

When he was in the 1914-18 war, he was doing a lot of Mediterranean trips, and while he was there, a French vessel

was sunk by a submarine, and he stopped his ship and he took all the 700 crew on board. He was given a gold medal by the President of France for saving the 700 lives, and he got an award from Liverpool too, all fancy.

He lived on Prescott Road near Beecham's, and he's buried at St Thomas's, Eccleston. He was also torpedoed later on, and he and another Captain were taken prisoner on a German submarine, and they were questioned but released. His son married Annie Smith who lived in Millbrook Cottages.

Norman Knowles



Left to right, Captain Bates' sons, Annie Bates (nee Smith), Mabel and Joe Smith, and Edith Smith. Photo courtesy of Norman Knowles.

Eccleston in 1998

In 1998, David Anderton, Reverend Brenda Parker and the Ministry Team produced a survey of the Parish of Christ Church, Eccleston to mark 160 years since the creation of the Parish in 1838; it maps the development of the Parish boundaries and records the then-current socio-economic status of those in the Parish, and the amenities available to them.

To illustrate the survey they photographed places of worship, public buildings, schools, shops, streets and housing. Although only 16 years have passed, Eccleston has changed considerably in that time.



*The vast Triplex site and Social Club, 1998, It has now been demolished and is being replaced by a new housing development.
Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.*



The Methodist Church, Burrows Lane, 1998 [building on the right of the photo]. It has now been demolished and is to be replaced by a new housing development. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.

The Methodist Church was opened in June 1967, and was actually a replacement for St Helens Methodist Church, Westfield Street. was sadly closed in May 2006. It had a bold design, with a “folded” angular roof, triangular walls and blue-glazed windows; an interesting example of architecture in the local area.

An old sandstone pinfold, used for housing sheep, still stands on the paved area between the houses and Methodist Church site, just out of shot on the right. Pinfold Farm occupied the land on the other side of the road, and Pinfold Drive takes its name from it.



The United Reformed Church, Kiln Lane, 1998. It closed in 2005, and has now been demolished and replaced by Henbury Court retirement flats. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.



Eccleston Library and the doctor's surgery to the right, [now a private nursery], 1998. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.



De La Salle School, 1998. It has recently completed a new building programme to re-develop the site, so it is now substantially altered. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.



Entrance to Carmel College, 1998. The complex has since undergone significant alterations. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.



Kiln Lane, showing the junction with Millbrook Lane / Bleak Hill Road, 1998. The Smithy Heritage Centre had only been open for two seasons. The shop on the right of the photo, now the Co-op, was Nevin's at the time. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.



Kiln Lane, showing the junction with Bleak Hill Road, and Gunning Avenue in the background, 1998. The bus stop area now includes a shelter; the Drinks Cabin off-licence and Flix video hire shop have been replaced by BocBoc. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.



The Seven Stars, 1998. It is no longer a Greenall's pub, and is now part of the Flaming Grill chain. The front of the building is now all painted cream, covering the original brickwork. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.

The Seven Stars has been documented as a central part of life in Ecclestone for at least 150 years. In 1841, James Ranson was the Publican; he lived there with his wife and five children. His brother George was the Innkeeper at the Griffin just down the road at the same time.

It passed to James' son James, who was also a wheelwright. His sister Margaret married Thomas Hall, an agricultural labourer. Their son went on to be an apprentice wheelwright working with his uncle at Kiln Lane Smithy.



The Griffin Inn, Church Lane, 1998. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.

The Griffin Inn is built from the same red sandstone as the Smithy and Christ Church, Ecclestone, from Taylor Park quarry.

Originally, it was called The Magpie, after the magpie on the coat-of-arms of Hugh de Ecclestone, Lord of the Manor.

When Samuel Taylor bought the Ecclestone Hall estate and became a generous benefactor to the local community, the name of the Inn was altered to reflect the creature on his family crest, the Griffin.



The Stanley Arms, Gillars Lane, 1998. This is one of the few buildings photographed that year that is largely unaltered. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.

The Stanley Arms takes its name from, and bears on its sign, the coat-of-arms of the Stanley family, the Earls of Derby. The Knowsley Hall estate borders Ecclestone, and the Stanley family own a considerable quantity of land in the north west, including much of the local farm land.



The East Lancashire Road, with the Royal Oak pub visible on the left in the background, 1998. The Royal Oak has now been re-named The Game Bird. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.

The East Lancs Road (the A580) was officially opened on 18th July 1934 after years of construction. It has the honour of being the country's first purpose-built intercity highway. There were special lay-bys with water points to allow steam-powered vehicles to re-fill their water tanks, reflecting technology at the time, and the amount of agricultural vehicles in this rural area.



The gates to the Carmelite Monastery, Green Lane, 1998. Photo courtesy of Rev. Brenda Parker.

The Carmel of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour was founded at Ecclestone in 1914 by a band of sisters from the Carmelite Monastery at Notting Hill, London.

Eccleston, Eccleston Lane Ends and Eccleston Park



The old sandstone cottages on the junction of Burrows Lane and St Helens Road, January 1959, now demolished. The shadow on the road is being cast by The Dairy Shop, which stood opposite the Wellington pub. The war memorial on the other corner is just out of shot to the left. Photo (scanned from a slide) courtesy of John Anthony Harrison.

The wider area around the busy crossroads of Burrows Lane, St James Road and St Helens Road is known as Eccleston Lane Ends.

The boundaries of Eccleston and Eccleston Park have changed numerous times over the centuries. In 1827 it spanned an enormous area, with the boundary starting at Bleak Hill bridge, following the course of the brook to cross Kiln Lane and up towards Cowley Hill, back down past Ravenhead, through Thatto Heath to the Black Horse at Rainhill.

It then follows the footpath connecting to Two Butt Lane, and halfway up, the brook heads across the fields to Portico Lane, before looping around what is now called Eccleston Park to the junction of St Helens Road, High Street and Warrington Road at Prescott. It then goes right up through the Knowsley estate across the East Lancs towards Blindfoot Road, then across to Sadler's Lane, crossing back over the East Lancs Road back to Bleak Hill Road at the bridge.

HAROLD WILSON IN CHAPEL LANE

By Andrew Brownlow

©MMV

‘You’re always in the wars,’ she said.

I like the smell of TCP. She swabbed it on. It stung - still smelled nice though. When it dried, she put a plaster over.

I said, ‘Going to show Dad now.’

I ran down our hall, then remembered to limp. He didn’t really look though. Mr Wooldridge was talking to him, frowning like something was all dead important.

‘Right here,’ he went, ‘in our own back yards. Imagine it, George!’

‘*What* is?’ I asked.

He turns his head and looks right at you. You hear him in sermons every week. You think he’ll talk about God all the time - the good book George, the Lord’s own will - a big hand patting. He doesn’t though - not always. He talks to Mum and Dad like they’re proper people.

He went, ‘Ever heard the adage, ‘children should be seen and not heard,’ young man?’

You never know when he’s joking either. I just blinked back - it’s not his house. I went, ‘*What’s* in our back yard?’

You see his mouth twitch. He likes you talking back cause he’s sort of rude too. And David gets away with loads, so you think it’s alright to do it as

well.

‘The election,’ he said. ‘You’ll find it quite boring.’

Saying what you’ll think so it makes you want not to. It didn’t make sense though.

Dad - ‘For the Labour Party - they’re holding a meeting, at Chapel Lane.’

‘Church Hall?’

‘In the school.’

- ‘The *infants* school?’

‘Not for you lot though - for grown-ups,’ said the Vicar.

- ‘Why Chapel Lane, though?’ It seemed stupid.

Dad said, ‘Schools are publicly owned.’

‘Let this shower carry on and everything not nailed down will be publicly owned. Churches next, you mark my words George. And that man’s the *worst*.’

‘*Who* is?’ I went.

Dad said, ‘Harold Wilson.’

I sat on our modern settee, picking at my plaster. ‘You mean - Harold Wilson at Chapel Lane School?’

Then I felt all stupid. I knew I’d sounded stupid - he’s on the telly, in London. Only Dad just smiled. ‘Right here, in Ecclestone.’

‘In our own back yards.’ The Vicar, grinning. ‘Tell you one thing, George. I’ll not have that lot parking on Christ Church grounds. They can leave their cars in the road. I’m locking the gates!’

~

Harold Wilson in Chapel Lane is a short story written by Andrew Brownlow, based on his experience of growing up in Ecclestone during the run-up to the general election of 31st March 1966. Harold Wilson was MP for Huyton, but at the time, Ecclestone was within the constituency's boundaries.

Read the complete story on our website:
www.smithyheritagecentre.org.uk



Chapel Lane (Ecclestone Mere Primary) School, Spring 1974. Photo (scanned from a slide) courtesy of John Anthony Harrison.

We hope you have enjoyed reading this book.

*If you would like to share your memories
of Ecclestone, submit them via our website:
www.smithyheritagecentre.org.uk*

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