

‘DELIVERING THE GOODS’.

*By
Dave “WAMMY” Walmsley*

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Dave Wammy Walmsley

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Yours sincerely,

Dave

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During the years; 2011/12, nine or so months had passed by as I waited patiently for my ‘Critique’ Ken to fulfil the arrangement that we had previously made. I had almost hit rock bottom so decided to give up the idea of continuing with my almost finished autobiography. The title of the book was to be called; ‘Wammy in Wonderland’ but that was to be superseded with a suggested name by the ‘initial Critique’ Ken.

After some research I found that the name; ‘How Not to become a Famous Rock Star’ was already being used somewhere in the pipeline and it was at that point that I decided to give the whole idea a miss, I was simply and sadly going nowhere.

Then from ‘out of the blue’, during an afternoon session at the Benidorm Heartbreak bar, appeared this wonderful person called Jan Ryan. I had previously noticed her scribbling away as she attentively listened to my show and having later explained the encounters of my ‘former critique’, with no hesitation whatsoever, she immediately offered to take over and started on the real thing. Within a month or

so, with her help, she proudly presented me with a more-or-less completed book which was ready to finalise. I was back on track!

I endlessly thank Jan Ryan for her dedication, patience and encouragement; she surely is a star and true to her word.

Jan Ryan's Website - www.jansbooks.net

Contents

Chapter 1 -----	9
Goodbye to Burnley -----	9
Chapter 2 -----	18
Hohner Thy Music -----	18
Chapter 3 -----	25
Boys will be Boys! -----	25
Chapter 4 -----	29
Doctrin Days -----	29
Chapter 5 -----	33
Dancing to the Dansette -----	33
Chapter 6 -----	38
Jellybean & The Bantam -----	38
Chapter 7 -----	43
Viking Vaughan & Loser Newsham -----	43

Chapter 8 -----	51
The Court, Grand Cinema & The Brogues Brigade	51
Chapter 9 -----	57
Move It - Movers! -----	57
Chapter 10 -----	62
Supreme -----	62
Chapter 11 -----	66
Ride ‘em Cowboy!-----	66
Chapter 12 -----	67
Top of the Shop!-----	67
Chapter 13 -----	69
Utility at its Best! -----	69
Chapter 14 -----	72
On the Crest of a Wave -----	72
Chapter 15 -----	74
The View is Blue! -----	74
Chapter 16 -----	82
Our Marriage -----	82
Chapter 17 -----	88

Georgie Fame at the Marquee London -----	88
Chapter 18 -----	97
Glastonbury Fair (Festival) 1971 -----	97
Chapter 19 -----	101
Spain -----	101
Chapter 20 -----	111
Home Brew -----	111
Chapter 21 -----	115
Deia -----	115
Chapter 22 -----	120
Parenthood -----	120
Chapter 23 -----	125
USS Forrestal (Vietnam) -----	125
Chapter 24 -----	134
Homeward Bound -----	134
Chapter 25 -----	142
New Faces T V 1976 -----	142
Chapter 26 -----	150
Keeping the Wolf from the Door -----	150

Chapter 27 -----	155
Holland-----	155
Chapter 28 -----	161
Germany-----	161
Chapter 29 -----	167
Mother-----	167
Chapter 30 -----	172
The Little Big Band -----	172
Chapter 31 -----	178
Brain Haemorrhage -----	178
Chapter 32 -----	184
Polyps & the TT -----	184
Chapter 33 -----	191
Our Silver Wedding & The Bike Smash-----	191
Chapter 34 -----	197
Rob Ashworth & Mr Timms-----	197
Chapter 35 -----	205
Spain Again-----	205
Heartfelt Thanks -----	217

Chapter 1

Goodbye to Burnley

It was in 1947 when we said our farewells to 40 Rose Hill Mount, Burnley Lancashire and made the 13 mile journey to our new abode situated in the small town of Earby in West Yorkshire. I assume that this was the birthplace of my first memories because I was probably just three years old and you don't really remember anything before that, do you? My first ever recollection was being afraid of a massive deafening vehicle that was tearing up the nearby ground. I ran into our new house screaming for all I was worth, convinced the biggest monster on the planet was heading my way ready to eat me up. Of course it was all rather innocuous. I later found out that the land was being prepared for a new housing estate.

Another early memory is of an old terraced house that we used to visit, it had a unique blend of dampness and old age and even to this day I have no recollection of the people that lived there, but we frequented the house on so many occasions, so I was told, maybe the occupants were related to our family? Who knows, but now it is too late to find out.

In the house there was a circular front room table that was covered with a draping tablecloth under which we used to hide. There were old playing cards, coloured building blocks and I remember trying to scratch out the white paint that covered the dimples in the pack of dominos. Such simple things that captured our imagination for hours and hours!

The move to Earby was unfortunately just another temporary roof over our heads, just another stepping stone for my ambitious father, who seemed determined to climb the professional ladder. Every time he gained a significant promotion we were once again, on the move.

I'm told he was waiting for an interview result for a position at the Town Hall in Great Harwood, he was to be the Sanitary Inspector which at that time was quite some promotion. Previously, he was simply a plumber but with high ideals and a positive ambitious direction.

Photo-courtesy of Vaughan 'The Viking' Whitaker. (2009)



The Great Harwood Town Clock with its
Mortise and Pestle Weather Vane.
The market area still retains its name-The Town Gate.

My father had an elder brother, my uncle Frank, but I only recall seeing him on one occasion, I think that tells you something about inter-family relationships. Uncle Frank lived on Walney Island, better known as the Isle of Walney, which lies off the west coast of England at the tip of Morecambe Bay, the name Walney is derived from an Old Norse name, so I am led to believe.

Frank and his family probably moved there because of the abundance of work that was provided by the Vickers Ship Building & Engineering Company and according to the historians, Walney Island was developed for this sole purpose.

My father had yet another brother, Wilfred, better known as Wilf and I have many more memories of him. My uncle Wilf was the youngest of the three, his wife was called Peggy. (Just as a matter of interest), her name had derived from Margaret, which was later nicknamed Meg, then became Peg and latterly Peggy, but nevertheless, I saw her as a domineering person and I didn't like her. Next!

A big isolated green coloured wooden hut was my uncle Wilf's workplace and was visible from the main road, quite near to Blackburn's Ewood Park, (Blackburn Rovers' football ground), where he performed his daily duties as a cobbler. Repairing shoes paid good dividends which enabled their family to mortgage a large house in Brownhill near Blackburn. This was quite up-market at that time, considering that we only occupied rented accommodation, the family competition was on, or at least it was for our Dad. The position at the Great Harwood Town Hall gave my father the opportunity to step on the lower rungs of the so-called social ladder; yes my father was ambitious and was climbing fast.

So in time, another removal van arrived, this time to take us to our new home in Great Harwood a mere 26 miles away. In complete darkness, my brother Ray and I travelled in the back of the van for the whole trip, which was a terrifying experience that I will never ever forget.

The van was packed with all our household goods which tumbled about crashing into us more times than I'd care to remember. Chairs slid about and wedged us to the sides of the van whilst we were constantly bombarded with pots and pans. We screamed and shouted for the driver to stop but he never heard us and eventually we gave up.

The journey to Birtwistle Street seemed to go on forever.

The daylight was so bright when the rear doors of the van were eventually opened and as we were both carefully lifted out from the disarray of our worldly goods, I heard my mother say,

"A brand new house!" as she tried to avoid the soft clay that covered the whole of the front garden area.

Some time later, after we had settled in, my father had the challenge of building an asbestos garage at the rear of the house, which at that time was quite an accomplishment. He was to spend most of his time there, away from our so-called family as he tinkered for hours with his pride and joy, a Ford Anglia car. When my father was away from our house, I later found him to be a socially calculated sort of character and he soon made friends with the local garage lads that used to congregate at the rear of our house in a really large garage owned by an animal feed salesman and his wife, Bob and Bertha Hoyle. Car bonnets were always open revealing their well-maintained engines and spanners were always to the ready. Laughter wasn't uncommon, the lads and my father got along well, like a good old bunch of mates, but nobody knew the real Mr Gerard Walmsley!



The arrow points at the four semi-detached council houses.
We lived in the second house down on the row showing my father's car that he parked outside No 33.

Photo-Courtesy of Mrs Pollard.

Birtwistle Street itself was a playground for us young 'uns, there were only ever three cars parked on the street, our Ford Anglia, a Jowet Javelin, I think owned by Mr Dunn (if my memory serves me well!) and finally a V8 Pilot, which belonged to an elderly man by the name of Mr Mc Glynn. Because of this, we played on the street in more or less complete safety.

Fully occupied rows of pre-fabricated houses were situated across the road from us, as you can see in the previous aerial photo.

These wonderful little abodes were primarily built for temporary accommodation after the Second World War, but it turned out that was not to be the case as they were still occupied well after the mid-1960s.

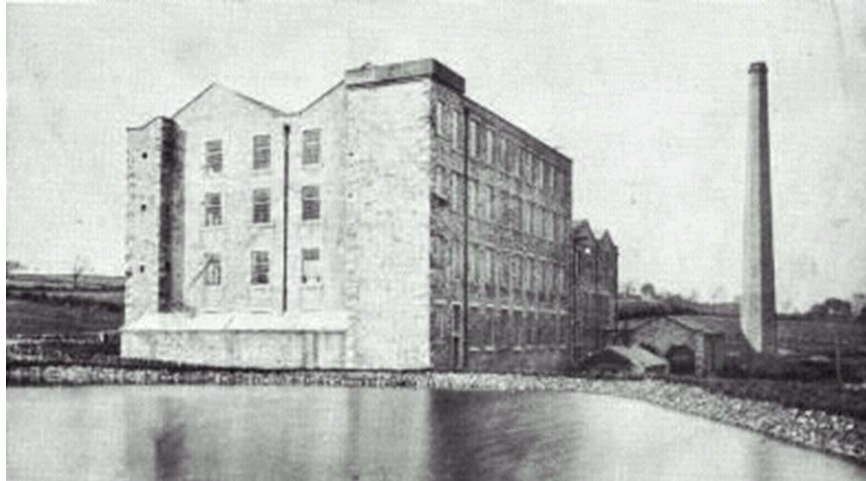
The appearance of these small buildings was somewhat unconventional but they proved to be quite popular. The out-buildings, which were called coal sheds, were fabricated from sheets of pressed steel, all painted green and built uniformly, not unlike military air base units.

The intermittent sounds of coal shovels scraping the concrete shed floors were heard even late at night, as the chimneys belched out the smoke from these little asbestos dwellings. Our house, number 33, belonged to the local council in those days and was one of the four, three bed-roomed, semi-detached houses on the row. When we arrived, father told us not to get used to it, as it was just a temporary location. Yep! My father was now the Sanitary Inspector with Visions of Grandeur! By the time we arrived the top semis, numbers 35, 37 and 39 were already occupied.

The whole row of houses at the bottom of the street previously belonged to the local Butts Mill textile factory and housed many of the workers at that time. The houses were traditionally built using the famous Nori brick, the same type of bricks that were shipped to America and used for the foundation of the Empire State Building back in 1931. Well I never! I should imagine that someone got a rollicking for spelling IRON the wrong way round?

The backs of these red bricked houses had long gardens that overlooked two lodges or pools, the smaller of which was quite shallow, making it possible to wade out in our Wellingtons into the thick clumps of Iris. There were frogs, newts, black snails and a whole host of other creatures that fascinated us as we played. The water in the top, or smaller lodge, was quite warm, it was being re-cycled for the cotton mill and although we were very young, we had the sense not to venture too near the larger lodge; the very sight of the overflow water disappearing into the deep was enough to scare us away. We didn't know at that time how dangerous it was, but nevertheless, we kept away.

Photo-Courtesy of Mrs Pollard.



The nearby Birtwistle and Fielding's (Butts Mill)
Showing the large deep lodge that we later swam in.

Always inquisitive, I would peep through the curtains of the front bedroom window as the workers from the mill paraded down the street. They all dressed in dark blue overalls, which were coated in cotton waste from their previous shifts. The sound of the workers' clogs echoed down the whole of Birtwistle Street as they made their way to and from the cotton mill; it was the strangest of noises, not unlike horses on parade.

Clogs were the customary wear in Lancashire weaving sheds in those days, where the weaver stood on flagged floors that were dampened to keep the humidity high. The clog iron lifted the wood base clog clear of the damp floors by a simple one-eighth of an inch, or 3mm and this was the salvation to the weaver from a health point of view. Clogs were cheap and easy to repair, but when the mill eventually closed down, the street went silent and sadly clogs were never to be heard again.

Everyone but everyone smoked in those days. Tobacco was reasonably inexpensive with pipes and cigarettes being the 'order of the day' and on occasion, I would watch the workers puffing away on their cheap Woodbines and Park Drive cigarettes as they clattered through the cotton mill gates, slowly disappearing into the darkened atmosphere of the spinning or weaving sheds.

I was told by a good friend of mine, John Morton that the Butts Mill closed down in 1968. He had worked there from leaving Accrington Technical College back in 1954 and stayed on for a while to move all the machinery, after which, in 1969 he went working at the Blackburn Mullard factory, situated on Phillips Road near Whitebirk.

Later in September 1971, John took over The Weaver's public house in Great Harwood and recently informed me that in those days a pint of bitter cost 13 pence. Bloody Hell! Let's get back to the pub!

The Weaver's is and always was, a little back street pub situated on Cross Gates and was previously owned by the Dutton's Brewery, but quite some years later, it was taken over by the Lighthouse Pub Company which unfortunately went into liquidation in Feb 2010. (What a poor do!).

The Weaver's pub was one of my underage drinking haunts, I don't think that 17 years of age was a bad age to start drinking beer, or was it? It became my local and resulted in many stories that I will reveal a little later in the book.

In 1974 John was offered a job as a salesman for a pneumatic company and provided me with my yearly calendar for quite some years. (Don't tell anyone!). John was and always will be, a dedicated 'Snuffy Arroder'. Confused? Yes, I was when I first heard it, but now it makes perfect sense.

I was amazed to find out that Snuff powder originated in the UK town of Great Harwood and was famously ground in the town's monument. There were two major varieties: European dry and American moist, though American moist was often called dipping tobacco.

The Great Harwood's Snuff factory gave birth to the name 'Snuffy Harwood' or 'Snuffy Arroder' in local dialect and the people who live in the town are still addressed even to this day as 'Arroders'. Many of the locals still assume that the domed roof on the Town Hall Clock supports a weather vane in the form of a snuff box, but after much research I have found this theory to be untrue, it is a mortar and pestle, nothing more nothing less. Unfortunately as time went by for some reason the Snuff factory was transferred to somewhere in Scotland, but the legend lives on!

Let me take you back to Birtwistle Street. The Taylor family occupied the top semi at number 39 and had this terror of a dog called Bragg. All the family thought it was funny when it jumped over the Nori red bricked garden wall and bit my ankles. The bloody thing would wait in the porch and then make a beeline for me every time I walked past their house, I was being stalked and bitten and I was geddin' at th'end o' mi tether or (running out of patience!)

I'd had enough of the spoilt temperamental mutt, (sorry all you Taylor's) and was sick to death of being belittled by the local residents that thought it was so funny.

"Bragg is a great little dog isn't he?" I would say to the youngest daughter of the Taylor family), but little did she know that I was biding my time and waiting for the ideal opportunity for revenge.

I waited until there was no-one around and didn't give Bragg the privilege to stalk me that day and by chance, as it was gnawing on a bone, its exposed 'sweetbreads' came into perfect view. The target was just like a bull's eye on a dart board as I aimed a hefty, well weighted kick right between the rear end goolies.

The yelp echoed down the street and as faces appeared at the nearby windows, I simply shrugged my shoulders and walked away. But I lingered, just long enough for Bragg to be well aware who exactly it was that had inflicted so much pain to his bobby dazzers. After that, it never bothered me again; it was definitely an 'Airborne Airedale' when I'd finished with it!

Bragg was a nasty, disobedient, useless mutt and did very little 'bragging' after that, I smiled as I remembered saying,

"Bragg is a great little dog isn't he?" and thought to myself, 'Oh yeah!'

At the next door down lived the Connell family at number 37. I remember Roy, the only son, he was such a gentleman. The Jones family occupied 35 and we lived next door at 33. Shortly after we settled in, our new neighbours arrived together with a host of musical instruments and I remembered being fascinated as I stood and watched them being unloaded from the furniture van. They were the I'anson family, they moved into the next semi down at number 31.

I'd never heard of the surname I'anson before, but later found out that this unusual name is mostly English, it is said to be cognate with the Scottish patronymics Ianon and Iainson. It derives from the male given name Iain. What a great surname I thought to myself, still my surname Walmsley isn't really too bad, or is it?

The Pilkington family arrived soon after that, they were a lovely family and gave birth to certain warmth on the street, if that makes sense. Sally Anne was the matriarch of the family and an affectionate loving person, they occupied 29.

The last house on the row was still being built, which gave us yet another temporary playground. We used to wait until the workmen had gone from the unfinished houses and then we climbed in, playing for hours, leaving foot prints in the soft concrete, some of which are still there today; bed time always came too soon back then.

It wasn't long before the last semi on the row was finished and quite soon after, the Birch family arrived and took number 27. Mr Birch was the Headmaster at a school in Grindleton, a village near Clitheroe in Lancashire. He was also a staunch cricket fanatic and advertised the fact.

Finally the Cooper family moved into the last house on the row at number 25, but it wasn't until I was in my teens that I found out that Mr Robert Cooper had been a Major in the Army. Sure enough, he was a real gentleman and in his later life, the locals addressed him with the great name of Major Bob.

The little local shop, situated on the corner of Commercial Road and Delph Road was just down the Ginnel, or alley way from the Cooper's house. It was a delightful place, always full of strange things that I had never seen before. There seemed to be an almost military atmosphere and an acute sense of urgency from the shop keeper, probably due to the vast array of things he had to keep in stock to accommodate the continual changing demands of the locals.

There was precious little time for browsing children asking for Black Jacks or Halfpenny Spanish Sticks, he sold them of course, but we were always served in double quick time and sharply ushered out from the premises. The shopkeeper's order book was full even though Ration Books were still in force.

To see the variety of goods in the shop was truly amazing, there was more or less everything in that shop, ranging from firewood bundles, cough mixture, potted meats, shoe polish, cigarettes etc. What a nightmare it must have been to keep so many items in stock, but nevertheless, we children were always acknowledged there.

Junior school had hit me quite hard; I simply couldn't understand why I had to attend the Saint Wulstan's Catholic School. From the outset, the teachers were like tyrants, so very strict and physical punishment was all too common for what I thought the most trivial of reasons. As you can imagine, falling in line was not very easy for me and I was becoming a very unhappy child with no escape from the Religious Instruction, those R I lessons, seemed to go on forever.

Even at such a young age, I wondered why they filled our heads with so much useless information, which even to this day I find quite hard to erase from my memories. This so-called God and all his glory gave me so much pain and anxiety, as I began to question some of the supposed miracles, it didn't go down too well.

As I approached the age to leave junior school, I had already traumatically fumbled my way through the Birds and the Bees and thought I had a decent grasp on where little boys and girls came from. During the latter years at the school, we were told about Mother Mary's Immaculate Conception, now that's a big pill to swallow I thought to myself and I never ever came to terms with that one I'm afraid, how can anyone really believe in such rubbish? Maybe Joseph was a magician? The Catholic Church and its flock made no sense to me, yet I was silenced like the rest of the lambs.

On entering the confessional box, I always noticed that the small black dividing curtain would move and being so young, it scared the living daylights out of me. There was I telling my life's secrets to a peeping priest! Now when I think back, I really had nothing to confess and yet they pushed us regardless, into this little room and woe betides you if you couldn't think of anything to confess.

It was compulsory to attend Holy Mass on Sundays and if by any chance you didn't attend, it was regarded as a Mortal Sin. The Holy Mass was the Catholic sermon, which was executed in the dead language that they called Latin. No one in the congregation quite understood why they performed the sermon in a language that only the priest understood, (or did he?) but regardless of this, everyone accepted the rules of the church without question and that the Pope was, and is, infallible.

My elder brother Ray and I were helped out of bed on some early morning Sabbath days with the aid of a leather strap delivered by my father because we dared to request a day off, how barbaric was that?

The Knights of Saint Columbanus, an Irish Catholic Fraternal Organisation, was founded in Scotland in 1919 and was supposedly a secret organisation for Catholic Gentleman. My father was one of the mainstays in Great Harwood and I remember seeing his robes and chains of office that he wore during certain ceremonies, what chance had I? I had no choice but to attend Mass come rain or shine, in sickness and in health and during my formative years, I was positively brainwashed by the Catholic priests of the time as well as by my father and his Brethren Knights. That might sound harsh but I promise you it's not, how true is the Jesuit saying?

'Give me a child until he is 7 yrs old and I will give you the man!'

The simple philosophy is to indoctrinate the child at an age where anything an adult says is believed. I still carry the mental baggage to this day and reject the Church's philosophies and practices with a passion. I really don't mean to offend anyone by voicing my beliefs and if anyone has faith in any religion, so be it, but having said that, I firmly reject Islam! 100%

I found out later in life that my father wasn't really a family man, just a dedicated, conditioned Catholic, abiding by their rules as they were laid down in his childhood and through to adulthood. He was also confrontational towards anyone who was even mildly sympathetic to the suggestion of birth control, as I later found out.

Although he tried his best under the circumstances to keep us under control, the pressure of his new position at the Town Hall was taking its toll. After tea he always escaped this so-called family life and off he went once again, into the newly built garage. We dared not follow him, but we were told he tinkered away with anything that could occupy him until it was once again our bed time and then he would return to the relative silence of the house.

He was the master and ruled with an iron rod, with my poor mother having to fall in line for an easy life, by the way, she was a 'Protestant'.

I never remember having being hugged or kissed by either of my parents, even when I was very young. The only happy time that I remember with my father, was occasionally racing him along the 'Catholic Pad' or Path on the way to Church and that's all, that's my sole memory of my father getting even slightly animated with us. I can't ever remember any major conflict with him apart from not wanting to attend Church on Sundays. He simply just didn't want to be involved with children and never hid the fact that we were a nuisance to him.

He should have embraced his Vows of Matrimony towards his wife and family but he didn't, it was part of the Doctrine he chose to ignore.

As I've grown older, I've realised that religious men throughout the world do likewise. If something in their so-called good book doesn't suit them they ignore it, reinterpret it, or in some cases, re-write it all together and that's why there are dozens of different versions of the bible.

Hey, what about another new testament chaps? Enough said!

Chapter 2

Hohner Thy Music

I happened to stumble on an old discarded mouthorgan when I was perhaps 7 years old and took to the instrument like 'a duck to water', there was no need for tuition; I couldn't even spell the word! Everything seemed to fall naturally in to place. It was a winner and I played the beautiful instrument for hours, eventually linking up tunes of my favourite songs. I played until my lips were numb but the end result was well worth it.

The following Christmas rewarded me with the best present I ever remember receiving, it was a Hohner double sided C/G mouth organ and I remember having tears in my eyes as I opened the case. The aroma of this beautiful new gift will be with me forever, made in Germany, where was that I thought?

I took my bundle of joy everywhere, even to school, as I carefully tucked the box away into my zipped up side pocket and played it every chance I had, to and from school, in the playground, even in the toilet, it didn't matter!

I had mastered the Scottish born Jimmy Shand's song, Bluebell Polka, 'Picking the bluebells in the merry month of May' and still play the song even to this day; using the double sided characteristic for the key change. I treasured the instrument until the reeds eventually corroded and left it quite impossible to play; now that was a really sad day.

Another dear friend came with me to school in those days, (that was until somebody split on me). It was one of my white mice. It played in the desktop and in my pocket as happy as can be. Then one day the girls spotted it and they just freaked!

"Ahhhhh! David Walmsley's got a mouse in his pocket!" they'd shout as they spotted him wriggling in my jacket in the playground, but after a few visits to school they got used to him and the little white blighter became a bit of a celebrity.

It was inevitable that the teacher found out of course and I got yet another whacking and sent home for that, not again, I thought, I was only having fun!

My father by now, being the Sanitary Inspector, needed to set an example and of course, the mice had to go. Part of his job was to inspect major premises for signs of rodents and I didn't know until later that occasionally he was addressed as the 'Rat Catcher' especially by a later friend of mine, John Lawless, who was yet another character in town. Poor father! What a come down for him to be called a Rat Catcher.

John was maybe five years older than I and was courting a really smart, good looking girl by the maiden name of Margaret Howard. One day as they passed me in the street, I couldn't resist giving the loudest Wolf Whistle of all time, however, I soon realised that I had made a mammoth mistake!

John was on my heels as I ran up Commercial Road trying to hide myself in Moor's fruit and veg shop doorway. Off came one of John's shoes and he leathered me until I begged for forgiveness.

"I didn't mean to be disrespectful," I cried, "It was only a bit of fun!" He then delivered the last whack on the top of my head.

"Fun?" he said, "Don't you ever try to embarrass my fiancé again, do you get my

message?"

As I walked away, I was rubbing my head furiously and could feel the bumps beginning to materialise, other lads might have run to their father but I never gave it a second thought and sensed that I was probably out of order. I looked back at the shop and thought, 'I never did like that bloody doorway!'

As the years passed by, I reminded John of the incident and he said,

"So it was you that I clobbered that evening, well I never!" and continuing the conversation he asked, "How's your dad?" Perhaps he thought I'd grassed him up?

Strangely John, Margaret and I became good friends despite the age gap and whenever I was in their company, tongue in cheek; I would silently mimic yet another memorable Wolf Whistle which brought smiles to all our faces. I was always a cheeky little sod and I still smiled at Margaret for years afterwards.

Sadly, John Lawless has since passed on but has left so many of us with so many fond memories.

When I was approximately eight years old, my friends and I spent quite some time in an old burnt out car that was dumped in one of the two small local quarries which were just ten minutes walk away from our house. As we wandered into this new exciting adventure playground that we later called the Felt Delph, or Second Delph, we fought between ourselves, throwing stones and home-made spears, showing no mercy and definitely aimed to kill. It was a serious and deadly escapade and of course being the age we were, we never even considered the possible outcome if any of us were struck with these hefty projectiles. We were young and fearless and no doubt a little crazy too.

The Delph was later the dumping ground for all the waste plastic coated felt floor coverings from the local Hardura Company, which I believe had been established from as far back as 1948. The discarded material was tipped day after day and soon filled the whole of the Delph's recesses.

The wagon driver in question was from the neighbouring town of Rishton, he was known as Mad Jack and certainly lived up to his name, I can assure you. One day, Jack reversed up to the edge of the recess, opened the tailgate of the wagon to find the rear wheels had lost grip, the truck lurched up until it was nearly vertical and then started to slide, there was nothing Mad Jack could do. Down the slope went the uncontrolled vehicle as Jack jumped out from the driver's cab for dear life. I think that was the first time that us young 'uns' had heard this new foreign language full of words beginning with F and C, and there were a few B words in there too! Jack survived with just a few cuts and bruises and the wagon was eventually pulled to safety with the help of Frank Ford and his tractor, Frank was the local farmer, a very obliging person to say the least.

Fire broke out in the Delph in the late 50's and at times the smoke covered the whole of the town. The Fire Brigade appeared to be at a loss as to how to put the fire out and on top of everything, it gave off poisonous, nauseous fumes. The plastic coated felt that had been unceremoniously dumped there for many years was finally taking its revenge on the town.

Water just wasn't enough to extinguish the fire, probably because of the sheer depth of the pit and it was glowing as far as forty feet under the surface. Finally the fire brigade gave up and the Delph eventually burnt itself out, after which, the area was completely cordoned off for quite a few years and tipping of any kind was then prohibited. Not too long after that, the Hardura Factory disappeared, but not without

leaving quite a few of us with great childhood memories.

I had never been a so-called fighter, but as we grew up, it was inevitable that there was a serious pecking order being formed out on the street. They call it bullying now and sad to say it wasn't uncommon back then either. It's strange how I never looked on it as bullying back then, it was just part of growing up. Some would call it character building and as harsh as that may sound; I would probably go along with that, but being quite small for my age, I was certainly in the line of fire.

A local lad called Jimmy Grim, somehow appeared on the scene, he was taller than I and bit by bit, day after day, he eventually pushed me to the limit. Although I didn't realise it at the time, there were a few lads quite envious of my situation. My father had a good job and despite his faults, at least he and mum clothed us well and put food on the table. Many of my pals were less fortunate than us, with several sadly having single parent families.

"My dad works at sea," one of the lads would say and another told me of his mother in Australia. It was invented fantasy trying to hide the embarrassment of broken homes, but I didn't realise that at the time.

Because of my father's position at the Town Hall, we could afford a car, whilst so many of the community barely even scraped enough money together to eat. To add to this, one day a large van pulled up outside our house and out came a brand new three piece suite, together with several new beds and various other pieces of furniture. Little did I know at the time that my father was part of a syndicate at the Town Hall and was one of the eleven lucky winners of the Littlewoods Football Pools. I think the total amount of the win was in the region of £60,000, leaving each of the eleven syndicate members with £5,500 cash. We were rich and did the neighbours take it all in! I can imagine the gossip behind the closed curtains and of course my pals absorbed every last word, it was said that the local newspapers showed no mercy, we were on the map!

In the 50's £5,500 was a huge sum of money, I bet father thanked the good Lord long and hard when that one came in, his knees must have been red raw! Good old God, looking after his own flock, the envy gradually built.

To own a television was sheer luxury, but I simply took it for granted, innocently telling the lads at school about the fabulous things I watched on this little black and white circular screen. On some occasions, with my mother's permission, I would invite some of my friends to my house to watch TV, but Jimmy Grim's hostile behaviour towards me never warranted an invite and of course his aggression towards me escalated as a result.

Grim was a bully during those years, he kicked my shins and dragged me to the ground on so many occasions, especially when the girls were around, I stood and took it for months.

"Come on Walmsley!" he shouted, "Get up and fight you coward!"

I offered no resistance because I was petrified of him until one day; I sensed I had to make a stand, even if I ended up seriously damaged, I'd had enough. He caught me in the school corridor one day and it started up again as he pushed me continuously in the chest challenging me to a fight. I puffed out my chest, trembling as I summoned up the courage,

"Right," I said, "If you want a fight, I'll see you after school." I remember Grim looked a little shocked as he looked around to his henchmen and one or two grinning girls. We arranged the time and place there and then as I stood fronting him up as calm as I could, then as he walked away I called out to him, "I'll be waiting for you, you Rat

face!"

'Where the Hell did that come from?' I thought to myself. I was petrified as I placed two or three towels down the front of my jumper, thinking they would contain most of the punches and then it was in to battle. By then, the street was buzzing. I gallantly walked down to the grassy triangle area at the bottom of the street, just outside the Cooper family's front garden and held back the tears as I waited for the opportune moment. It came as he took his eyes off me to smirk at his mates, as if to say 'watch me make mincemeat of this little squirt'.

I seized the moment and smacked him as hard as possible in the face. I'd taken him by surprise and he staggered back holding his nose. I was petrified, I knew I had hurt him for real and now he would kill me! Survival instinct kicked in and I wasted no time as I dragged him to the floor and held him in a bear hug back bender, forcing his spine backwards, using my chin in his neck while I whacked his face at the same time.

It all happened so fast and as he screamed out for me to stop, I delivered the last frantic punch then stood up; Grim lay on the grass silently holding his nose. The girls were jumping about and the lads were amazed at the outcome of the war.

"Just leave me alone!" I shouted angrily as I pointed to him on the ground. "Or next time there will be real trouble you bully!"

By now, the 'Little Jimmy Grim' cowered on the floor with his hands covering his head fearing more violence which never came, I turned and walked back home.

I sat down in the back garden and burst into tears, perhaps a little frightened of the animal I'd turned into, Grimes left me alone after that. It was a well-timed, perhaps lucky punch, but I had delivered it well, and followed through with the job, sure enough, I'd hit back and bullies don't like that.

After that, there was another lad that lived in one of the prefabs, he too fancied his chances, his name was Brian 'Croft, nicknamed Spouk and although he was a little younger than I, he also provoked me but always with one or two mates in tow. I backed off time and time again, until one day I caught him in his back garden on his own and give him a Wammy back bender. It was such a trivial situation, no winners, no losers, but unfortunately and against my values, the pecking order was taking place.

Quite near to his prefab was yet another so-called friend by the name of Michael Moseley, (bearing yet another ancient Anglo Saxon surname). Mickey was a frail, cheeky, little sprat and proudly wore the nickname of 'Mowkins'. His claim to fame was that he could inhale a complete cigarette in four drags or draws, his tolerance to tobacco was amazing, which of course was par for the course in those days and as he exhaled the last bit of smoke, he would produce a perfect smoke ring.

"What about that lads?" he would say as he laughed.

We all fancied a piece of the action, because it was cool to smoke and when there were no cigarettes to be had, we endeavoured to make allowances.

"What about smoking tea? We drink it, why not smoke the stuff?" was my suggestion.

"What do we wrap it in?" asked Mowkins. I disappeared for a couple of minutes, returning with a roll of Izal Germicide toilet roll tissue.

"This'll do us," I said.

"Come on, let's ged up tat th'hen coyts," (let's go up to the hen cabins), which was an ideal secluded area, not too far away. Loose Typhoo Tea and Izal Germicide toilet paper, a match made in Heaven! Heaven?

The foul smelling smoke belched out all over the place, we'd do anything to mimic a cigarette and how we survived these hideous escapades I will never know. Germicide toilet paper? Hell's Bells! (That's if there is a Bell in Hell?), at least the inside of our lungs must have been chemically clean!

Some time Later, Mowkins got the word that I had given Spouk a dressing down, so he called me over from the inside of his back garden fence and when I wasn't expecting it, the little gob-shite smacked me in the face, then disappeared rather quickly into the kitchen of his corner prefab and locked the door.

"You're a marked man Mowkins," I shouted,

"I will bide my time!" Unfortunately I didn't get the chance. Mowkins kept out of my way for the next few days and very shortly after, the whole Moseley family left their prefabricated Green Hill dwelling and moved over to Accrington in Lancashire, a mere four miles away. I often wondered if Mowkins had planned this and had some sort of goal to leave our street as the undefeated top dog.

Sadly, it wasn't until many years later that I found out that Mowkins had died from lung cancer during his mid-thirties, now that was really sad. Despite that last ever altercation he was still a really good, but mischievous friend of mine. R I P Mowkins, where ever you may be.

In June 1952, my sister Susan was born, it's funny how I remembered leaning over the next door's front garden wall and proudly saying to Mrs I'anson,

"I have just got a little baby sister!" Susan was such a beautiful baby but this new addition to the family left me with so many mixed feelings. Mum had enough to contend with without having another child to look after; she forever slaved away and always seemed to have a genuine complaint or ailment.

Only now can I imagine the heartache and desperation she must have been going through and Dad just stood in the side lines. Poor Mum!.

During my junior school days, I remember that my mother held down a part time job on Rushton Street, which involved the preparation of the local school meals, she also managed to do a housewife's shift at the OXO factory, but that was only for a short while. This was probably during the time when her problem was just starting to kick in I suppose. It was about that time of my life that I became aware that my mother had, or had developed, something described as Schizophrenia to which medication was the only escape from the torture of this incurable disease, even an Aspirin was out of the question during that time.

On a few of the occasions that I accompanied her whilst shopping, I realised that she always made her way down the back street to avoid contact with any of the neighbours and on one particular occasion she said,

"The flyers are provoking me and I refuse to reveal anything to them, they want to know too much!"

"Mum!" I replied, "There aren't any flyers, what are flyers anyway? It's just your imagination working overtime, please don't talk like that".

Very often I would walk away and burst into tears, I was at a loss and unable to do anything to help. I knew something was happening to her mind, but I felt so inadequate, isolated and afraid, what could I possibly do? This was the beginning of my

father's aggression towards her. *The shouting had begun.*

Both my brother Ray and I tried to evaluate the meaning of these so-called 'flyers' and of course we tried to ask her on many occasions. I don't think we ever got a straight answer, yet we could only assume that she was constantly, mentally inhibited by some kind of invisible force that was trying to drain her of information. She mentioned the Cold War on several occasions and I wondered if the flyers were some sort of specially placed spies? We were at a loss, I admit it was all too much for me and all the while, my father did nothing to help.

Sometimes talking to mum could be okay, but if the conversation got a little personal, it resulted in a defensive and stressful situation, which again brought out the imagined hallucination that she called 'the flyers'.

"I want you to leave now, you know too much," she would say, as if we were interrogating her. "I have finished talking now." It's a tragedy that I knew very little about the person that was my mother.

I was searching for something or other in the sewing machine drawer one day and stumbled across a bronze medal that mum had received for a swimming competition. She'd obviously been a great swimmer and athlete during her teens, but let it all go when she got married. The only other thing I know is, that according to my Auntie Isobell, Mum was held in high esteem at school with *everything* she did.

Before the onset of schizophrenia, her patience knew no bounds and although I was out of the race with her on English literature, she encouraged me to take heed. Believe it or not, I have only read maybe two or three complete books in my life, as you discerning readers can probably tell. Yet as I fumble through many of the words whilst writing this book, this is something I now regret. However, maybe I'll put it right when health eventually forces me to put my guitar down.

One day, my mother insisted that we took a walk; she said it was time to meet her brother Tom. He and his family lived down on Saint Hubert's Street, situated quite near to the Saint Hubert's school, I had little choice, so - off we went.

I was reasonably familiar with that particular part of the town because being an adventurous type of lad with so much time on my hands, I forever wandered into the magic of those little narrow cobbled back streets which were really out of bounds. Gang leaders were not favourable to strangers, but luckily I escaped much confrontation, but only by the skin of my teeth I might add!

We arrived at the shop fronted house; the large windows were draped in drab old net curtains that were in need of repair. The sign in the centre window read, 'Thomas Dunkerly Esq. Chiropodist'. My mother pressed the doorbell and a stocky little man came to the door.

"Come in David," he said, "I am your Uncle Tom and this is your Auntie." My aunt was a tall lady with dark eyebrows, quite slim and blessed with a gentle voice. Even now her name fails me, I think that she was called Mary? Mind you, I only met her on one occasion.

"This is your cousin Joan," she intervened. I remember wondering why I had never met these extended members of my family; it's hardly as if they were living in Timbuktu

after all.

My life was in enough turmoil with my mother and as I stared at my cousin Joan, I knew something was wrong, she wasn't like me. She had a speech impediment and walking difficulties, in fact she struggled to walk unaided across the room. At that young age I was convinced her problems stemmed from the mental disorders that had been handed down from previous generations.

I wanted to get out of the place as quick as possible, I was being confronted with yet another disaster and it was all too much for me, my life was now becoming a real nightmare.

A little later with help, Joan attended the same Saint Hubert's school as I, but just for a short time. She had been taken out of school and sent elsewhere.

"Where have they taken Joan?" I asked my mother, but I never got a straight answer. Soon after that episode, Uncle Tom died and I never saw Joan or my aunty Mary(?) ever again.