

Memories of Kathleen COLLIER (née HUMPHRIES)

George Kettle

He was born I believe, in 1860, don't ask me where for I never heard much about his early years. I know he had two sisters and possibly a brother, the name Will springs to mind. The two sisters never married; Emily was a painter; the other one was called Mary. I believe they lived in Stockport.

George's wife, Betsy Purcell, came originally from Wellington in Shropshire. When I was quite young, we visited her sister who was still living in that county at a place called Ketley. There was some talk of a place called Poole House, but whether that was their family home or not I never heard.

George worked in insurance after they were married, but was moved around the country so many times that he finally gave it up. I remember my Grandma saying that they had been in eleven houses in ten years. Phillis, my mother was born in Darlington, county Durham. (The very first steam train ever ran from Stockton to Darlington.) I believe they also lived in Newcastle and in London.

But around the turn of the century, they finally settled in Eccles near Manchester where they lived for many years at 23 The Grove, a cul-de-sac of three-storey semi-detached brick houses, the end of which butted on to the edge of the Manchester Ship Canal, which stretches from Manchester to Liverpool and carries ocean-going ships right into the centre of England.

George worked for a firm called Lord's throughout the first world war. I think it was a tar distillery; he was in the office. This firm later became part of the National Benzole Petroleum Company, and some years later his son Jack became Senior Clerk in the firm and had his office in the Liver Buildings in Liverpool.

There was a fair-sized garden at 23 The Grove, which he supplemented by taking on an allotment behind it. Here he kept a few poultry and grew all the usual kinds of vegetables. But he had a heated greenhouse also where he grew tomatoes, sweet peas and very fine chrysanthemum blooms.

He was also a very keen photographer; the camera mounted on a tripod used light sensitive plates and when taking a photo he disappeared under a dark heavy cloth so as to shut off all the light except that which was going through the lens. We all had to stand very still for ages and not move a muscle. This gave rather a sad and weary look to many faces. In taking a photograph indoors, he used a flash of magnesium powder which was extremely bright and led to some very surprised and even terrified stares. He did all his own developing and printing, and sometimes made slides to show on a screen

using a magic lantern. There was usually an evening performance when the family were all together at Christmas.

When there was little to do in the garden, he would disappear into his shed. Here amongst other things he made jig-saws for the family with his fret-saw. They were often made from the pictures from old calendars, in particular I recall some by the famous war cartoonists Bairnsfather and Lawson Woods.

He was a complete teetotaler; even when his children were married, the toasts were drunk in tea – the cup that cheers but not inebriates. He was Superintendent of the Weaste Congregational Sunday School. He enjoyed a joke but certainly would stand no nonsense from any of the family – big or little.

He had a bald shiny pate – my grandmother said she couldn't remember him ever having had much hair, but he had a walrus moustache. He never owned a car, always travelled by tram or steam train, never owned a radio; but he did have a gramophone exactly like the one seen on the His Master's Voice logo.

But 23 The Grove did have a bathroom, hot and cold water and flush toilet, quite large rooms, a cellar and an attic – in fact it was rather a genteel sort of place.

I suppose George must have retired when he was 65. That was when he sent most of the furniture to the auction or spread it out amongst the family and decided that he and Betsy would visit their sons and daughters in turn for two or three months at a time.

He had always been subject to heart trouble and it was at Brookfield, Glossop where he had a fatal attack one morning in 1928.

Betsy Kettle

George's wife Betsy was my grandmother. I stayed with her quite frequently in the days before I went to school. She was rather a dumpy woman, a little thick on the hips, but not much overweight. Her hair was grey, brushed upwards and coiled into a small bun on top. The skin of her face was yellowish and broken into myriads of fine wrinkles. She always seemed old. Her spectacles were of the narrow, gold-rimmed bi-focal type. She often wore a skirt with a long-sleeved blouse, the hem line usually about ankle height. She owned several detachable lace collars which had to be tacked hurriedly into place on her jacket when she went visiting. Her hats were unusual always, and had to be skewered to her bun in order to keep them from flying off. They were usually black or fawn or brown made of fine crepe, swathed, pleated and folded over a stiff buckram shape and decorated with feathers, fruit, flowers, sequins, ribbon, rosettes etc. Quite a number of them sported a veil, the edge of which was gathered with a piece of thin elastic and went under the chin, covering the face with a fine mysterious haze, and giving added stability to the hat if the wind was extra strong and the hatpins fell out. Whenever she was called upon to have a cup of tea or a piece of cake, the veil had to be lifted,

perhaps as far as the bridge of the nose, until the refreshments had been consumed, then lowered into place once more under the chin.

I think here I should add that in those days if the tea was too hot, some people would pour some into their saucers to help cool it down. I have a vivid memory of several elderly ladies sitting on a form at a Sunday School picnic, all with their veils up drinking tea from their saucers.

Perhaps Betsy's most striking feature were her strong, even white teeth. When in her sixties a doctor asked her to remove them to better examine her throat, he was very surprised when she told him she couldn't oblige him. She had no fillings and had had no dental treatment at all.

She put this down to the fact that in her childhood, her mother had sent the children off to school each day with a slice of swede to eat on the way. She could not afford to buy apples. Though she still revealed her west country origin in her speech – she would for instance say a lung way meaning a long way – the whole family was basically very correct in the use of oral language.

Speaking of Sunday School picnics – there were no buses and very few cars in the days just after the first world war, so the congregation were usually taken on wagonettes. These seemed to consist of flat drays with long forms bolted on them, and were drawn by horses. Several of them would set off into the country; with fewer suburbs, the 'country' was much closer than it is today. The picnic area was a large flat empty field where adults talked and laughed and children just ran about. The repast consisted of a currant bun without butter on and a drink of strong sweet tea from my Grandma's saucer.

I would often hear people talk about the time we went to Wogden. It was some years before I realised that they had been to a place called Walkden.

23 The Grove, Eccles

I don't know when my Grandparents took up residence there; it was well before the First World War, I imagine.

The Grove was a cul-de-sac at right angles to the Manchester Ship Canal which was just about a hundred yards from the railings at the end of the road. As children when we heard a toot, we ran to the railings to watch ocean-going liners go past – right in the heart of England. But that's another story.

The semi-detached house was built of rough red bricks. I doubt if they had ever been pointed. It was a tall thin house of four levels and might have looked quite grand in its hey-day. Below ground was a spacious cellar, good for keeping food cool before the days of refrigeration. Here Grandma did her washing and Granddad used it as a dark room, he was a good photographer. The only light came from a small grill at one end, next to which was a coal chute with a round iron lid on top – situated at the foot of the wide front steps. More of that later.

On the ground floor was a minute scullery with pot-cupboard and sink and a very small chest of drawers for cutlery and tablecloths. The sink was under the window, the lower half of which was covered with a stick-on kind of film with a red and green pattern of interlacing circles, semi-transparent. The door led into the kitchen where there was an open fireplace with bars and a side oven, which never seemed to be out of use. Granddad had to have his porridge for breakfast every morning; it was put in to cook late in the evening and by morning had reached a jelly-like perfection. He also had a rice pudding for every mid-day dinner. There was also the brown lidded stew pot, and a constant supply of scones and apple pies had to be made for the almost grown-up family, not to mention the bricks that were heated to be wrapped and taken to bed on a cold night. I almost forgot to add that the oven and bars were black, and there were also some rather long fire-irons in the hearth; poker, tongs etc.

If these were not cleaned regularly, they began to look very dusty from the ash and had to be cleaned with a preparation called ZEBO – one brush to put it on and one to polish with. In the polishing process, fine particles of ZEBO went flying everywhere, in all the cracks and pores of the skin, up one's nose. What a dirty job; I often felt like joining in but wasn't allowed. There was also a wide fire surround which had once been a darkish green, but later Granddad painted it and it came out quite a bright emerald.

Grandma's chair was a plain wooden rocker, and many were the squawks when hands or feet or paws or tails got underneath. After lunch she would sometimes take me on her knee and try to rock me to sleep. She would pat my back, rocking away and chanting Bee, Bye Bow, Bum, then put me down in disgust saying "Go and play, there's no sleep in you". Granddad's chair was a basket chair; he had a nap there every day after lunch, then he would totter off up to Eccles Cross to catch the tram to go back to work at Weaste.

Under the side window in the kitchen was a narrow seat which Granddad had made mainly to seat extra children when having a meal. The table was as wide as the window, so to get in and out, we often had to crawl under the table between the legs of the adults sitting there. It was a bit tricky sometimes, especially when the uncles were there.

Granddad had also made two stools which fitted under the table, one had a round top and the other a square one. For some reason the square one was always the favourite. Once when there was just Grandma and I for lunch, she called from the scullery and asked me to lift out the stools. I took the square one and gave her the round one. As she came in with a dish in her hands she said "Oh, you've given me the round one and I like to use the square one". So as she leaned over the table to put the dish down, I decided to change them round. But she sat down before I had finished, and fell on the floor. She lay there for some moments with her apron over her face, absolutely still.

I thought she was dead and that it was all my doing. Then I saw her shoulders heaving and thought that she was crying because she was hurt; so then I

started crying too, and she pulled away the apron and I saw she was laughing.

There were four doors to the kitchen – one from the scullery, one leading outside, one to go down the cellar steps and one going up the passage (always known as the “lobby”), to the dining room and drawing room on the right, and the stairway on the left. The hall was quite wide and light as the front door had a beautiful frosted glass panel, quite large with, if I remember correctly, a shiny sunburst in the middle. The front door wasn't used much; less dirt was carried into the house if the back door was used.

The dining room (it was only ever called the “middle” room), was rather dark with only one sash window. It had an open fireplace and a heavy mahogany table, which, when it had its two leaves added almost filled the room. There were some Bentwood chairs and some very solid rush-seated chairs which are now extremely rare. There was a small side-table and a bookcase with glass doors.

I was sometimes told to go and get a book to read, but they had very small print and they smelled funny. Once I picked up “Hans Anderson's Fairy Tales”; it sounded promising but it didn't have a single picture in. However I started “The Little Match Girl” but had to give it up as it made me cry so much. I also found “Alice's Adventures in Wonderland” which I read with some enjoyment until I got to the bit about the Queen of Hearts trying to hit a hedgehog with a flamingo's head, then it all seemed a bit far-fetched. (I've still got this book, by the way.)

It was in the dining room that Granddad used to show his Magic Lantern. We thought it was out of this world, but it fell into disuse after we were allowed to go to the silent films. The first I ever saw was Charlie Chaplin and Jackie Coogan in “The Kid”. I can't remember anything about it except that someone called Gladys who had kindly offered to take me, gave me a pomegranate to eat and it stained all the front of my new blouse.

The drawing room was a lovely room with a large bay window overlooking the front garden. It had a yellowish Wilton carpet with an all-over pattern, and a white marble fire surround. On each side of the fireplace were three green tiles each with a yellow flower, and on the mantelpiece was Granddad's black marble clock with the shiny brass presentation plate. (This is the one that Aunty Nora left to John Kettle, the last male of the line.)

There was a piano in the room, made of walnut, I think. All the front above the keyboard was fretted in a flowing intricate sort of pattern. The pattern was enhanced by the pleated lime-green satin behind it, and at each end was a hinged brass candle-holder. Aunty Nora played very well and I have clear memory of kneeling on a chair looking out into the garden whilst she was playing. The wind was blowing quite hard and the tall blue lupins and the London Pride were bobbing up and down. I don't know why I should remember this so vividly. It must have been a moment of tranquility with everything just right.

There was a gramophone too, exactly like the one on the HMV logo. Edward was allowed to wind it up and put a record on. There were records of George Formby (not the one who stood by a lamp post at the corner of the street, but his father). There was a quavery voice which gave a rendition of "Roses of Picardy" and a very sad one about the sinking of the "Tom Bowling", I think, as well as a much more high-brow one which ran to two sides called "Ballet Egyptien".

The gramophone stood on a round pedestal table, dark in colour, probably oak. It was four to five feet wide, and at the touch of a spring the horizontal top could be made vertical and pushed against the wall; which is what happened each Christmas when the Christmas tree arrived.

It stood in the corner with the star almost touching the ceiling, with coloured balls the like of which are never seen today. And real candles! What a fire risk! We wouldn't dare have them today.

The stairs were fairly wide with a traditional red and blue patterned carpet, and brass stair rods. These were some of the brasses to be cleaned before Christmas. In addition the carpet was covered for the whole Christmas period with a white linen huckaback strip a little narrower than the carpet. The word 'drugget' springs to mind. It kept the carpet clean from the constant pounding of feet going up and down to the bathroom – remembering of course that there were no concrete paths and in winter, soil was inevitably carried in. After New Year, the 'drugget' was taken up, laundered and presumably put away till the next Christmas, because that was the only time I remember seeing it.

The short passage at the top of the stairs led directly to the back bedroom with the bathroom on the left. The bathroom had bath, washbasin with hot and cold water, and a flush toilet with a high cistern and a chain to pull. (This was sheer luxury to me for at my own home at Gamesley we had no hot water, just one cold tap and an earth privy across the yard which we had to share with another family.)

The back bedroom was the one I occupied whenever I stayed. It had a big double bed, sweet and white with a patchwork quilt over all – not any work of art like we see exhibited on walls nowadays – but a real no-nonsense thing made to keep one warm. The pieces were obviously the best bits of old shirts or skirts, mostly blue or white, check or striped or plain, overlaid and held together with feather stitch done in red cotton.

I would lie in bed with the sun streaming through the single sash window, and contemplate the three branching cracks in the ceiling. But the best thing was the tri-fold screen on the left, made by Granddad and covered I think with scrim. But that was not all. To the scrim had been glued all kinds of pictures – bits of calendars, picture postcards, shiny childrens' scraps, Christmas cards and Valentines. These had all received a coat of varnish that gave them a yellowish look like old paintings.

Grandma and Granddad slept in the middle room, and Uncle Bert had the front large bedroom. I was not allowed in there because he had paints and Indian ink and suchlike. Once when I was in helping Grandma to make the bed, I saw that he had been painting butterflies.

The attic also was out of bounds except at Christmas when the bare boards were swept and a fire was lit in the grate to air the place before two camp beds were made up. Each bed had a wooden trestle at each end; at either end of the trestle was a 2" x 2" cut-out into which fitted some thick bamboo poles. The bed consisted of a cylinder of hessian; the poles passed down the cylinder and into the grooves. The mattress was probably a straw-filled palliasse. They were not too uncomfortable. It was a great adventure to have to sleep in the attic.

By 1927 all the Kettle children had married except Bert and the house was then too big for Grandma and Granddad, and about this time also Granddad would have retired from Lords. So they decided that they would dispose of the furniture and from then on they would visit their children in turn and spend approximately three months at each place before moving on. It was in September 1928 that Granddad died of a heart attack whilst at Brookfield.

World War 1

Born in December 1914, I have little recollection of the war years.

John Edward Humphries, Phillis's husband and my father, was at this stage manager of Glossop Motor Company. He did not go on active service. I believe he was once called to go for a medical examination, for which he received one day's pay but local doctors opposed his call-up as he was the only qualified car specialist in the town of Glossop and was needed to keep essential services going.

But Elsie's husband, Herbert Blomeley was forced to go and finished up in the trenches of the Western Front as did Will Kettle also.

Bert (Hubert Victor) spent the war years in India with the army.

Jack Kettle was not old enough at the outbreak of the war but was called up later.

Somehow, they all managed to come home again, practically unscathed. My Grandmother thought this was little short of a miracle.

Dorothy Blomeley had been born in April 1914, eight months before I was. Leslie, her brother was born a couple of years later. To break the monotony of living alone, with Herbert away in the army, Elsie and the two children sometimes came to stay with us at Glossop. Having small children, Phillis and Elsie were not involved with war work. But I think Nora was, she was still in her teens.

To mark the end of the war, the whole of the Kettle family went on a joyous celebration holiday to Penmaenmawr in N. Wales. There were just a few cottages on either side of the main road; we rented several of them and also hired one of the bathing cabins on the beach. Some of the adults actually bathed in the sea. I remember Aunty Elsie particularly wearing a costume like this; it was navy edged with white.

Dorothy and I were allowed to walk down the path to the beach on our own – the first time I had ever been allowed more than ten yards from my mother's side. This was probably the first time that I had seen the sea. We played on the beach, Dorothy got a bee sting. One day we all climbed Jubilee Mountain. It was a picnic lunch under the trees. Uncle Jack and Uncle Will played ball with us after lunch and kept us in a state of near hysteria with their clever ball handling and comical tricks. We picked bilberries too, and it was surely the best time of my life till then.

It would be soon after this that my mother and I were staying at Grandma's house in Eccles. There were some strange noises coming from what was normally called the Middle Room downstairs. I wanted to find out what it was as I thought my mother was in there. But Grandma stopped me, gave me some money and told me to go to the grocer's shop to buy some pegs. I didn't want to go as it was several hundred yards away and it was a hot day. I went, feeling put out, especially as I knew that she had plenty of pegs already. When I got back, she told me that I had a new baby brother.

The Humphries Family

I suppose it would have been the Industrial Revolution which took place in the North West Midlands of England which lured John Humphries senior from his home in Holywell, Wales to the dark satanic mills of Lancashire. I know nothing of the lady that he met and married there, but they settled in Liverpool Street, Salford, a street almost exactly like Coronation Street. But as I remember the place it was a dismal and shabby place where poorly clad, barefoot children roamed around kicking tin-cans along the streets.

They had four children, my father John Edward was the only boy. The girls were Emma, Mary and Ethel the youngest. All machinery in those days was driven by steam; there was no electricity; Grandfather was an engineer but I don't know where he worked. When I first saw him, I would have been four or five years old and he already seemed to be a very old man for he had white hair, quite a lot of it, and a white beard. He had twinkly eyes and smiled a lot; he looked like Father Christmas in mufti.

On the other hand, his wife looked to be a rather sour woman. She wore layers and layers of clothing which seemed to be permanently attached to her; very, very dark clothing down to the ground with only her face and hands showing. She sat in a chair all the time and had a mournful voice which kept up a long monologue of complaints mostly concerning the two young daughters. Granddad didn't say much at all but sometimes sang little ditties. Mary and Ethel never married but lived on and on at Liverpool Street even

after their mother died. My father visited now and then but merely to see his father; he hadn't much in common with these two girls; they were not attractive, but nor were the conditions in which they lived. The eldest daughter Emma married and went to live somewhere in Lancashire. She had a son. She visited us once at Brookfield, Glossop when I was in my teens. She hadn't seen my father for many years. She seemed a nice woman. Her husband had been killed when coming home one night. He had fallen into an unlit hole in the road. She had married again. That was the only time I ever saw her.

I don't know which school my father attended but on leaving he became an engineering apprentice and attended Manchester Technical School in the evenings and apparently made good progress and won prizes for his efforts. One of his prizes that I remember was a technical drawing board and T square, and another was a box of fine geometrical instruments. At this time too he went cycling on the track at Belle Vue and had several gold medals to prove it. From bicycles it was a fairly natural progression to motor bikes, then bikes with side cars, then cars. The house in Liverpool Street had a cellar and this is where he did his 'tinkering'. He would build up a motorbike, side-car or early model car down there, then have to take it to pieces again to bring it up into the street and reassemble it before being able to try it out.

It was at this stage in his life, probably in his early twenties that he went to work for a firm called Horsfall and Bickham's who were boiler-makers. As I said, steam was the energy source for all the mills and factories in Lancashire. They were also tool-makers and became interested in petrol engines. They did actually start manufacturing a car which is now listed in Veteran car books as a Horbick. From there he went on to Oldham Motor Company. This would probably have been about 1915. But around 1925 he left to start up his business, first at Gamesley, then later at Brookfield. It was soon after that Edward left the Grammar School having taken his school certificate and began to work for his father. Over the next fifteen years or so he became the mainstay of the business.

His pay was very poor, about thirty shillings a week I believe. He and Auntie Nellie were engaged for eight or nine years before they could think of getting married. In those days most women had to give up their jobs as soon as they got married. Ed's wage alone would not have paid the rent, gas, groceries etc.

Their problem was solved at last when a bank teller, who travelled on the same bus as Nellie on her way to work at the Health Department, mentioned that the District Bank required a married couple to live in the flat above the bank to do the cleaning and maintenance work.

They got the job, were married and had this fabulous flat over the bank overlooking the town centre.

When the second World War started and petrol was rationed, the garage takings fell suddenly and my father suggested that Ed should apply for an engineering job in Manchester, as the business could no longer support two

families. He went for suitability tests and was taken on as an aircraft fitter by Fairey Aviation Works where he remained till his retirement over 30 years later.

But the factory was two bus rides away from the bank, and to cope with the desperate need for aircraft and spares, the men had to work ten hours a day, seven days a week. At night when he got back to the Bank he would fall asleep eating his dinner, so they reluctantly left the Bank and went to live at Heaton Chapel where he still is. (1996)

Christmas at the Grove

As soon as school had broken up for the holidays, I was taken by train and tram from Glossop to Eccles to 'help' Grandma with the preparations for Christmas. The help I gave consisted mostly of running errands to the grocer, Mr. Bradley, who had a shop at the corner of Alma Street and Barton Lane; I helped polish the 'silver' and the brasses which Uncle Bert had brought back from India, and made the jellies.

To make the jellies I was given a rectangular lump of thick jelly which had to be cut up with scissors. It was very tough and made my fingers hurt. Then after the hot water had been added I had to stir until all the pieces were dissolved. I soon found that the partially dissolved bits had a really fruity flavour. But Grandma didn't like it very much when the jellies refused to set.

One shop that I had to go to was the original Eccles Cake Shop with half a crown wrapped up in a slip of paper on which was written:

½ lb ratifers (ratafia biscuits) ¼ lb savoys

These were for the Christmas trifle and on no account must I eat any on the way home. Grandma had obviously got wise to my nibblings.

The 'silver' consisted of one solid silver tablespoon with a crest on, goodness knows where that came from; the rest of the cutlery was made of baser metal which tended to take on a green look whenever it came into contact with vinegar, and had to be cleaned regularly. But the brassware was quite fascinating. My own favourite was a rhinoceros which I never minded ribbing hard. There were two camels with people sitting on their humps, half a shell case with a heavy brass lid later used for keeping buttons in, ash trays and two containers shaped like cushions with cut-out patterns all over which might have been used for incense.

(Uncle Bert also brought Dorothy and I a small wooden box each. Inside packed tightly in wood shavings were tiny brass Indian cooking utensils; braziers, cooking pots, water pots, chopping tools, lamps etc. He told me how each one was used. I gave them to Mary his daughter when we went to London in 1974 or thereabouts. I thought she should have them.)

By Christmas Eve, the rest of the family would have arrived at The Grove.

Don't ask me where everyone slept. I know Dorothy and I had to sleep in the attic but we thought that this was something special. This was the night that Granddad went up to Eccles Cross to the market. He would leave it till pretty late when the stall-holders were likely to reduce the price of the poultry rather than have it 'go off' over Christmas; there weren't any fridges in those days. He brought home some good bargains. My mother had the job of dressing the fowl and preparing it for the oven.

One Christmas after we had been in bed asleep for some time, our mothers wakened us and told us to come downstairs again because we had a visitor. And there he was! In Grandma's kitchen! FATHER CHRISTMAS! He sat in Granddad's basket chair and we all sat on the floor. He had whiskers and everything, but what I couldn't understand was why he was wearing Uncle Will's trousers and his brown brogue shoes. I whispered to Dorothy "It's not Father Christmas. It's Uncle Will dressed up". She gave me a stern look and said, "It's not. It's Father Christmas!" I didn't argue because by this time he was giving out lovely presents. That was the year we each had three dolls; a porcelain one with real hair, a celluloid baby doll complete with knitted clothes and a Jackie Coogan doll. (I wasn't over-impressed with the latter because he was a boy.)

In the morning the Blomeleys went off to visit their other grandparents and afterwards I told everybody who was left that it wasn't Father Christmas really and I mentioned the trousers and the shoes. And they said, "Oh, well, if you don't believe it was Father Christmas, he probably won't bother coming to you next year". So I've believed in him ever since.

Abandoned

My mother and I were staying at The Grove. It was probably the summer that Jack was born, so I must have been about five and a half, Dorothy would have been six. She lived in Gaskell Road about a mile away from The Grove going towards Barton Bridge.

Grandma and Granddad were going on a wagonette trip one Saturday afternoon and our parents thought that they would like to go too. They left us in charge of Nora, Jack and Will who were unmarried and still living at home. Uncle Bert was playing lacrosse that afternoon. We had an early tea at The Grove; Aunty Nora, being the only girl, was in charge of the meal.

After tea, Dorothy and I were told to go back to her house at Gaskell Road as our parents would have arrived home by then and were probably having a cup of tea there themselves. So we went – there was nobody there. We decided that we had better go back to The Grove, but when we got there, the house was all locked up. Being Saturday night, Nora, Will and Jack had all gone out 'courting'. I never quite knew what that meant, except that one walked arm in arm with someone of the opposite sex. We played around for a while then decided that we had better go back to Gaskell Road again.

On the way I remembered about Uncle Bert playing lacrosse and Edward was

going to watch. So we turned down Boardman Street where the field was and arrived at the gate just as two men were locking up. They asked what we wanted and I said we were looking for two boys. One man leered and said, "After the boys are you? You are a bit young to be after the boys. You won't find any here, they've all gone home". We retraced our steps and went on to Gaskell Road – still no-one there. We hung around the small back garden and it got darker. There was a paling missing in the fence and we climbed in and out of the gap on to the access lane. We waited and waited and it got dark and the stars were out.

Then the lady next door came out and asked us where Dorothy's parents were. When we said we didn't know she took us inside and fed us. She and her husband were anxious to go to bed themselves as they were going on holiday the next day.

After midnight there was a knock on the door. It was Dorothy's mother, she had seen the light in the kitchen and had come to ask if we had been seen. She was in a state bordering on collapse. It was very scary to see her crying. Oddly enough I don't think Dorothy or I cried though we had been waiting for hours.

Apparently there had been some pretty hardened drinkers in the wagonette party who had insisted on calling at all the public houses on the way home. When the family finally arrived at The Grove, Jack, Will, Bert and Nora were all back, but there were no children – nor were they at Gaskell Road.

There were some harsh words from Granddad, I believe. Nowadays, a couple of phone calls would have prevented all this harassment and all the to-ing and fro-ing from The Grove to Gaskell Road. We must have been waiting around for six or seven hours; we were quite safe but our parents didn't know that. They must have been frantic.

Things seemed very quiet the next day; nobody was saying very much, not to us anyway. I've never found out what happened to Ed and Leslie. Perhaps Ed might know.