Hanford and Trentham Memories

Tales of a boyhood
in Hanford and Trentham
written by Peter Baines

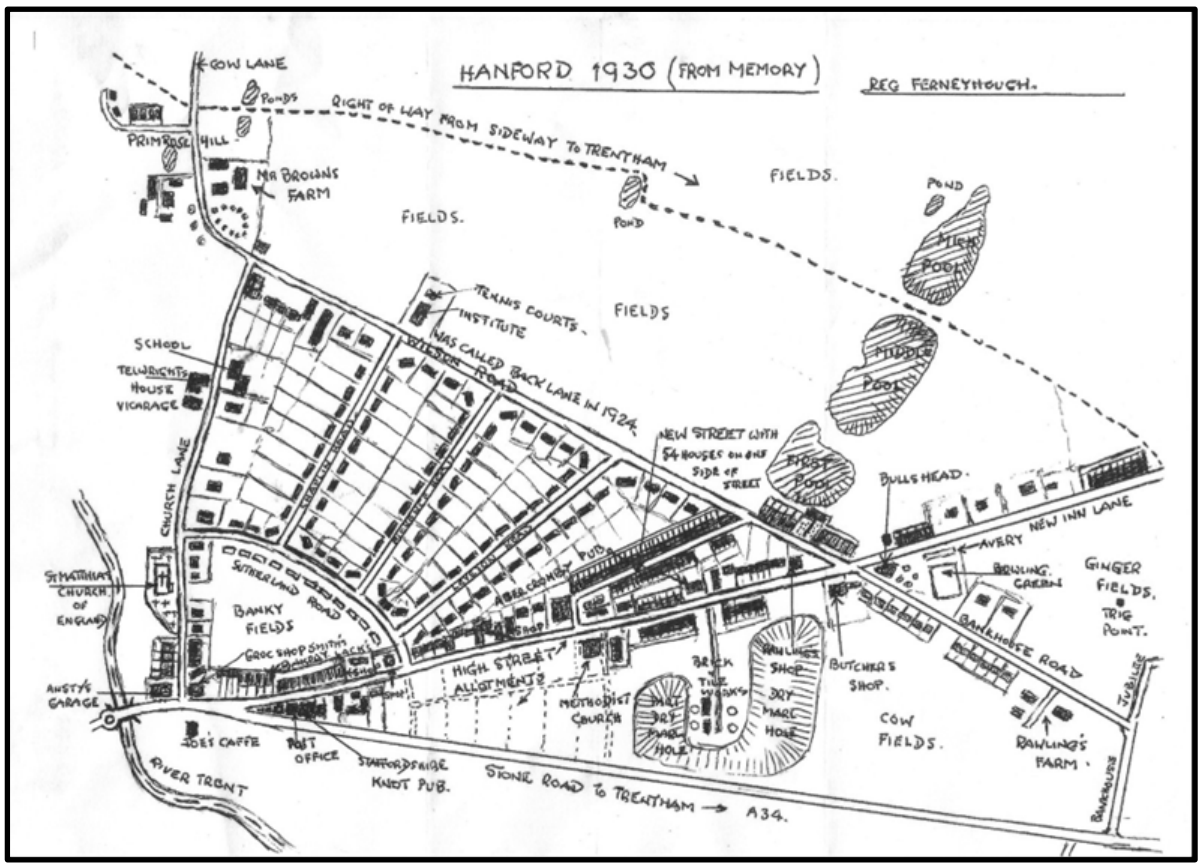
Trentham Heritage Project

I was born on the 14th of January 1932 in 'The Limes' maternity hospital, Hartshill Stoke –on-Trent. At the time my family lived in Levison road, Hanford, but before I had begun to form any memories we had moved to 17, Sutherland (now Diarmid) road. This is where I grew up and lived to the age of 17, when we moved to Trent Vale. I was christened in the church of Our Lady and St Peter in Chains on Hartshill Bank, in Stoke, by Father Leo Vincent Twinney. When I was at its related school, St Thomas's, there was another 'Leo' and two Vincents in my class. I know that this 'nominal' feature was repeated throughout the school (and probably throughout the generations). There's more than one way of skinning a rabbit, I suppose!

Some people seem to have no problem in recalling their first memory. I have no idea. But certainly, one of the first things I remember was, whilst playing in the back garden, hearing a loud-to me frightening-shouting noise. I ran inside to tell my father, no doubt showing no little fear. He pacified me, picked me up and said we must go and find out what it was. It was quiet when we got back out there and remained so for quite a bit. Then, suddenly, there it was again – even louder this time. My father laughed lustily, almost dropping me in the process. Why that's 'The Boothen roar' he said and I'm sure tried to explain what that was. I'm equally sure I didn't understand, but I realised from his attitude that it was nothing to be afraid of. I learned later exactly what it was and became an enthusiastic part of it. I still am to this day! Number 17 was at the High Street (now Mayne Street) end of Sutherland Road. It was the second house in the second block of semi-detached houses and, as such, already at a good height above the level of the river Trent. Between Stoke (and therefore the Victoria Football Ground) and Hanford Bridge the river valley is quite narrow-hence the surprising distance of travel of the roar of the football crowd.

If there is one dominant feature (and it is just that) of my early childhood in Hanford it is 'The Banky Field' or 'The Banky' as it was universally called. The Banky was a rough, sloping triangular piece of land bounded by High Street, Church Lane and Sutherland Road. It was not in any way tended – just left to nature and the ravages of children! There were three official access points off Sutherland Road and a couple from the bottom of High Street – and a few holes in back-garden hedges, like mine. Since the boundaries of Church Lane and High Street are upward sloping from Stone Road and the bottom of High Street it can be appreciated that the high line of the Banky borders was along Sutherland Road. Behind the houses in my area the land was level for about 20 yards or so before the slope was reached.

This level piece gradually broadened until it reached the top entrance, roughly opposite the end of Chaplin Road (now Nial Street). Here the downward slope was at its maximum and was the most thrilling toboggan run – but you had to be so careful. If you didn't have good control of your sledge you could run into the immovable wall of Lack's bakery! Behind my house the slope was gentler but it was 'marshy'. Water oozed out for almost its entire width and length. When there were sub-zero temperatures, as in some Winters, it was tempting to sledge down it but much more dangerous as it became a sheet of ice.
The Banky was truly an 'adventure playground'. The natural wildness, the humps and hollows carved out by creative young minds to suit the background of the story that was being played out. One day the field was strewn with dead and dying Germans or Japanese, the next Geronimo and all his Indians fleeing before the silver six-guns of the victorious cowboys led by the Lone Ranger or 'Deadwood Dick'.



One gradually grew out of such childish pastimes and moved on. Probably the thing that has lingered longest in my Banky nostalgia though - perhaps the 'icon' of the Banky itself, is the 'bake-house wall'. Lack's Bake-house Wall. It was of little value in the warmth of the non-winter months – but what a boon when the temperatures dipped. In those days the outer wall of Mr Lack's

property was ‘in fact’ the outer wall of the bakery –and it was hot! Tobogganists queued in between runs and were grudgingly given a turn. It was not possible to put your hands directly on the wall, there had to be a scarf or gloves in between to make it endurable. There are those who say the wall also serviced courting couples. But I never got involved in that sort of thing. Honest!!

The adventure playground of my childhood originated on the Banky, but from there you could go a good way in any direction of the compass and find interest, excitement and enjoyment. The wider adventure playground! One of the first explorations we made was to the meadows of Trent Vale. Shortly after passing over the Trent at Hanford Bridge, going towards Newcastle, there was a public footpath to the left. It skirted Father Mac’s orchard (and many were the illicit ways in and out of that domain known to us) and St Theresa’s school field and went on down to a steel and wood foot bridge over the Lyme Brook. That’s where we turned off and spent the day on the stretch between the bridge and the path up to Riverside Road. The brook was beginning to broaden out here and ran pure and clear supporting much water-life, small fish, frogs and plenty of water voles with all of which we had good sport. We also spent time climbing the bordering trees and having ‘brook-jumping’ competitions – yours truly more often ending up ‘in’ the brook rather than on the other side! At the Riverside Rd end of the patch large sewerage pipes, about 18 inches in diameter, stood some 3 or 4 feet above ground mounted on brick-built supports. ‘Walking the pipes’ – a challenging balancing act –therefore became another favourite game. I made unplanned descents even more times than I landed in the brook! From the foot-bridge the path carried on eventually up the steep hill past Clayton Woods –called universally ‘Hill Sixty’ after a WW1 battle - and on through Clayton towards Hanchurch Woods, if you wanted to go that far. But, well before the footbridge, in fact directly after the West fence of the school field, a turn to the right took you across a narrow field to a much more interesting place. A football arena!! It was a large, flat field surrounded by embankments –no seats and square rather than oval – but there was a war on!! Seriously, I think it was the result of work preparatory to an abandoned project of building more houses off Riverside Rd. How it all got started I don’t know but throughout the war years football and cricket were played on this field more or less continually. With ‘British Double Summer-time’ in force this meant, weather permitting, until up to half past eleven at night!

Dozens of boys (and some grown men) from Hanford, Trent Vale, Oakhill and maybe even Trentham, I'm not sure, would gather together on this field, as if bidden but more or less automatically, and begin to play. No one was in charge, no teams were picked, If the field was full when you got there you just sat on the embankment; As people drifted out of the game for a rest others would drift in naturally keeping the teams balanced, no one kept score but everyone played as if their life depended upon it. Many of the lads were thought by their peers to have what it takes to make professional grade – but only one, to my knowledge, actually did – and that was Roy Sproson. He became an absolute icon of the game playing well over 700 games for Port Vale and eventually becoming their manager. It was my privilege to have known him well. He was a man of character and very well respected as a person as well as a footballer. He was a regular in the 'Riverside Rd Arena' as was his elder brother when he was home on leave from the Air Force.

Another field that was important to Hanford urchins was one that was on Stone Rd opposite to the original Staffordshire Knot pub. It stretched from the road down to the River Trent - which in those days ran multi-coloured with industrial pollution (if you fell in it was off to the hospital to be de-contaminated). It was neither the field nor the river that was important, but what grew on the river-bank. Willows!! The best source around for a decent 'bow-stick. We all made our own bows and arrows – as we did catapults. Mainly for target practice – only 'in extremis' used lethally! This field was always referred to as "crossthefieldsacross" just one word. It never occurred to me that it was an amalgamation until much later.

Another direction in which we turned for adventure was Trentham Park. There was a good, clean, fast-flowing brook, like the Lyme but with a waterfall flowing from a small lake in the grounds of the Park Golf Club. There was a punt parked permanently on the lake and often we would sneak in and paddle it around – sometimes unnoticed, sometimes chased off by an official.


BY THE WATERFALL

SCHOOLCHILDREN by the waterfall in Trentham Park. This popular venue for the kiddies has attracted record numbers this Whitsuntide.

The most interesting (though, I suppose naughty) thing I remember doing was collecting some water-hens' eggs from a couple of nests we could reach from the punt, finding a suitable(rusty)tin, lighting a fire and boiling the eggs. They were very tasty – but we didn't do it again – honest! We played many happy hours in the park, but disaster did once strike. On the left-hand side of the central road through the park were the fern hills. 'Trentham Fern Hills' were iconic throughout the Potteries area. They were known for their beauty alone and well used by walkers and, I believe courting couples, and also by young whippersnappers like us just looking to use up some energy. At the bottom, near the roadside were the remains of a scraggy old tree. It was sort of collapsed in on itself and hollow at its base. Our ideal hut for the day. The day was a cool, Autumn one so we lit a fire. We stoked it up and really got a good blaze going. Unfortunately, it got out of control and the tree itself was on fire - before we knew where we were so were the ferns. We were completely overwhelmed. The speed with which the flames were travelling up the hill was frightening. Suddenly, the wailing siren of a police car coming from the park gate end of the road caught our attention. Off we ran like the wind up the path by the Gardens fence to the now deserted army camp Nissen huts. Whatever possessed us to believe this was a safe way out of our difficulty, I'll never know – but it wasn't. There were more police up there and we were duly arrested.

We were taken to the police station which was then an old ex-private house in Parkway. We were arraigned before the sergeant sitting at a large, polished hardwood desk who ordered a constable to take our names and addresses. He then ordered another constable to go out into the garden, the window to which lay directly behind the sergeant so we could see what was going on, and cut a switch from the birch tree which was in clear view before us. He took the switch from the constable and slapped it hard on the desk twice. We could feel it already in anticipation. But he laid it aside and looked at us long, hard and sternly, gave us a good dressing down and sent us home. We could not believe our good fortune but did as we were told – and never told our parents a thing!!

Mostly, the way we got to Trentham Park was by way of 'The Gingers' a set of fields between New Inn Lane and Allerton Rd – actually mainly the site on which Trentham High School was built. Part way across was a huge depression, rounded like a bowl and fully grassed over. Naturally, we called it 'Hole Sixty'. On the far side of the field ran a fence and hedge, naturally porous to us, beyond which one dropped down a grassy slope onto the Trentham Park railway line. Word got around that occasionally train-loads of soldiers would be shunted down so the troops could get out and stretch their legs etc. (My father told me they would be on a long journey from up North down to the coast and embarkation to France). This was irresistible, to be in the presence of actual soldiers, to talk to them and have fun with them. When we asked them where they were going, they invariably said they were going on holiday Literally dozens of children would go, after school or at week-ends and holidays, just on

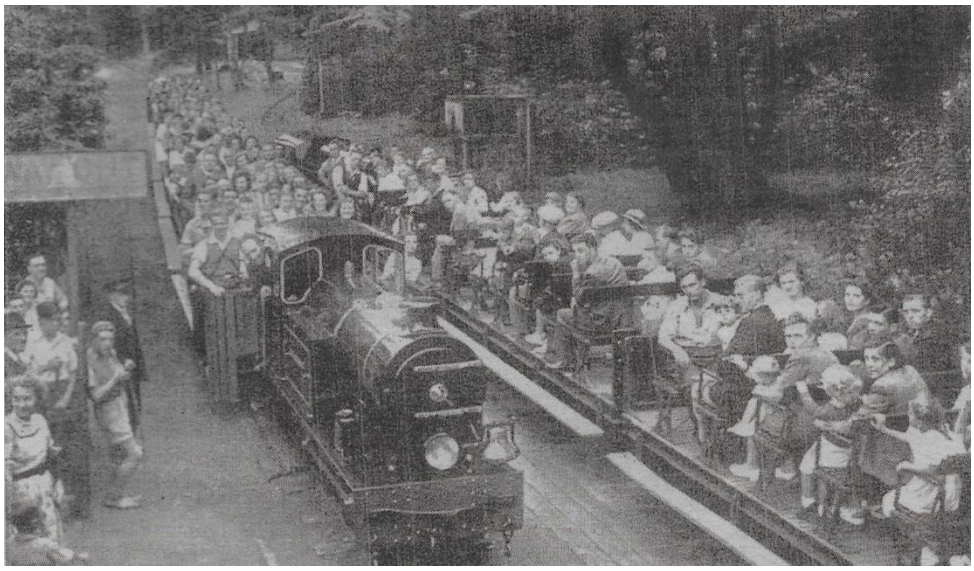
the off-chance of the experience. Then one day – joy of joys – the soldiers were Americans!! We were fascinated by them – and them by us! They gave us chocolate, gum, ration packs and even cigarettes (for our dads, they said). Those particular trains were certainly the highlights of the experience. Gradually the trains got fewer - and the last one did not contain soldiers. When we got there, we could see a line of ambulances in the station road and when a train did arrive, we got a nasty shock. It began to disgorge a seemingly endless number of bloodily bandaged people on stretchers, crutches and being helped along on foot, and children being carried. We slowly melted back into the Gingers and home – much saddened. (I was told later by my father that the wounded people were victims of the V1 and V2 German rocket attacks in the South – so numerous that hospitals had been overwhelmed.)

After a week or so we resumed our visits to the railway line to no avail. The troop movements had obviously stopped, which we could have realised if we'd been following the course of the war closely enough – we were too young. The last time we went there were a good dozen or so, milling around, bored and irritable, when I heard the loud sound of breaking glass. It was the station door and window. People had broken in and were smashing furniture and scattering papers around. Simultaneously others had climbed into railway trucks on the shunting line and were smashing the contents (ceramic water pipes) onto the line. The commotion must have been seen/overheard by local people so police cars were soon screeching up Station Rd. There was a resulting rapid exodus across the Gingers of course but I and two of my friends thought we saw a better way out of the difficulty. We would run back along the line to the bridge over New Inn Lane, slide down the sloping parapet and walk on home as if we'd been somewhere else. But as we were about to drop a police car drew up under the bridge. Back down the line we

began to run when we saw two policemen in the distance coming towards us. So, we darted through the fence/hedge next to a five-bar gate, the first two of us climbing over it. As we did this a firm hand grabbed each of us by the shoulder. The other lad ran on up the path – but quickly ran back and surrendered as he encountered a farmer astride a carthorse with a shotgun across his knees coming towards him. Our arresting officer was Sergeant Clement Gorton, a well-known and respected officer who lived in Parkwood Rd on its corner with Boma Rd, Trentham. After a thorough interrogation, he scolded us roundly, took our names and addresses and, surprisingly, sent us home! In the sadly mistaken belief that the course of these events would follow those that completed our previous encounter with Trentham police, I never mentioned anything to my parents.

When, therefore, they received a summons to court on charges of 'trespass and malicious damage' in my name, there was hell to pay. I won't go into all that. Suffice it to say that the day came when three boys with parents stood waiting outside the courtroom in Stoke Town Hall to be tried. Eventually the door at the other end of the corridor in which we were standing flung open and towards us strode the towering figure of Sergeant Gorton. As he got to us he stopped and flung out his hand, "Hello Frank", he said. "Well hello to you too Clem" responded my father as they shook hands enthusiastically (one never saw men hugging each-other in those days). They were old friends from boyhood, had played in the same football team for years – and not clapped eyes on one another since. Up to that point neither had realised they were being brought together again by the current circumstances, but celebrations were cut short as we were ushered in to the courtroom. The charges were read out and described in graphic detail followed by discussion between the judge and lawyers. Sergeant Gorton was then asked for his summation. I remember almost his exact words. "There is no doubt about the trespass Your Honour, they were caught in the act" (general murmurs of agreement). "Following my questioning of them and further investigation however, I find they all come from good families and are genuinely repentant. I don't believe they would have been involved in the malicious damage." With that, after further discussion on the bench, we were formally found guilty on the first charge, not guilty on the second, admonished and ordered to pay one shilling each costs. I was relieved but I'd learnt my lesson. That was the end of my criminal career. I went home with one of my friends and his father. My father and Sergeant Gorton might have been seen disappearing into the Glebe!!

Only one of my school friends was from Trentham and that was Colin Goldstone. Colin's was a large family of ten children, he being somewhere in the middle. The only other one I got to know was Richard, his next elder brother who preceded us through school. They lived in the old school house which was on Stone Rd on the Hanford side of the Mausoleum cemetery. Mr Goldstone worked for the Duke's estate. During the time when the Gardens Estate was closed, he was responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the mechanical infrastructure – mainly the railway, its engine, carriages and lines. When Trentham Gardens opened again, he was also the train driver.



Mrs Goldstone was a very handsome woman, tall and slim and always seemed to wear a long, black dress right down to her ankles. All the children's good looks came from her. When it came to doing National Service, Colin opted to join the Merchant Navy instead – which entailed 5 years instead of 2. The last I heard of Colin (from Richard) was that he had 'jumped ship' in New Zealand and after some wrangling had been allowed to stay there. His parents along with their youngest child, Garth, are buried in the Mausoleum cemetery.

One of the important features of Hanford of relevance to the children of my generation, particularly the teenagers, that should not go without mention is Joe's café. It stood on the west side of Stone Road, roughly opposite to Church Lane. It was basically an Ice Cream business which went under the trade name of 'Joe's and Morris'. It comprised the Ice Cream shop, a café and a function room at the back, reached by a rickety gangway perched precariously over the Trent, where parties and dances were held. The younger children were delighted by the ice cream being available year-round, and the older ones

happy to have a place where they could congregate over chips and egg or some such simple fare. The owner was one Mario Tonigieri an Italian who had escaped with his family from Fascist Italy and changed the family name to Morris. They lived towards the Church Lane end of Wilson Rd and their son, Julian, became a close friend of my brother. If you had a few pence to spend, 'Joe's Caff' was the place to be.

To my recollection there were three boys of alleged notable achievement in my generation. One did, actually, become a priest (eventually), i.e. two were believed to become millionaires. Vincent Royal was transferred to a seminary during our junior school days to be a priest but returned to us during senior school days because things hadn't worked out. He had a career at Wedgwoods, got married and had a family. Sadly, his wife died when they were in their fifties. He retired, went back to the Church for training and was consecrated shortly afterwards.

The first alleged millionaire was Ted Bently, a lad from Chaplin Rd, who I knew very well, we were good friends as children. When call up for the two-year National Service came, Ted signed as a regular for five and came back to civilian life after that period as a fully qualified chef. He had got married in the meantime to a lady with a good business brain and together they began a career in Public House management and, eventually, ownership. The first pub they managed was 'The Kookoo' in Blurton. They then took over 'The Thistleberry' in Newcastle and finally became hosts and owners of 'The Filleybrooks Hotel' on the A34 near Stone (now 'the Wayfarer') where they were apparently the first to introduce the 'carvery' idea. Next, they bought Hanchurch Manor with a view to converting it to a hotel-restaurant, but following purchase they were refused planning permission. They played the waiting game, however, and eventually sold it with the relevant permission – which raised them into the millionaire bracket. They then bought 'The

Travellers Rest' on the Leek-Buxton Rd, near Flash, installed their son as manager – and then retired. Ted, himself told me all this over cups of tea during our half-time chats in the 'Boothen Stand' bar at the Victoria Ground.

The other successful businessman was a boy called Donald Mason. Mr Mason, his father, sold fruit and vegetables from a horse and cart round the streets of Hanford and maybe Trent formerly owned by the family of Reg' Ferneyhough – champion marathon runner (I'm not sure of the latter). Don was his very unwilling assistant from when he became old enough. I think he really hated it. I can see in my minds-eye now, Don being coerced by a judiciously thrown potato. He must have settled to it, eventually, and learned a great deal about the trade since he ended up with his own shop in High St, opposite the end of Wilson Rd. (I think it might have been the shop formerly owned by the family of Reg Ferneyhough. Be that as it may, Don built up the shop magnificently into a very efficient and popular supermarket and willingly sold the business to the eagerly seeking Co-op', putting him into the super-rich bracket, it is said. Despite not being sure of all the facts in this latter case – and maybe one tiny bit of exaggeration in the former, I think both men are to be congratulated on uplifting their original social status by their own hard efforts in such a way.

One of the saddest and most disturbing experiences of my childhood occurred one morning in our living room. We had just finished breakfast and were getting ready for the day's activities when, suddenly, Mum's best friend, Mrs Shaw (we called her Auntie Bessie in those days), burst through the back door and threw herself down on the floor crying loudly – almost screaming and waving a small piece of paper. My Mother ushered us back upstairs, motioning

us to wait quietly as she went back down. About an hour later she came and told us she was taking Auntie Bessie back home. We were to play in the house until she returned. She arranged for another friend to look after Auntie Bessie as Uncle George was at work – he was a coal miner. Mum explained to us that the piece of paper was a telegram from the War Office to tell them that their elder son, Harry, had been killed in action. We children wouldn't have properly understood but we sensed the gravity and sadness of the situation. Harry had been part of the crew of a bomber that did not return from a raid over Germany. His death occurred on Sunday 5th August 1943 and he is commemorated at the Runnymede memorial. He was 20 years old.

When they retired from their Hanford village grocer's shop in High St, Mr and Mrs Shaw went to live in Longton Rd, Trentham. George died soon afterwards and some years later Bessie was tragically killed in a road accident. They are buried in the Mausoleum cemetery. I noticed quite a few years ago that his family had put the urn of ashes of their younger son Graham (who had himself made a lifetime career in the R.A.F.) on the grave.

Another unusual situation, which I suppose became more the 'norm' in wartime Britain, was the advent of having 'boarders' in the home. The first people to be 'billeted' on us were two Free French army officers prior to their Trentham Park Camp being made ready. They were not with us long. Then, for a much longer period, we had 'Elaine' who was posted from her home in Lowestoft to work at the Bank of England in the Gardens. Following her came 'Lilly', a delightfully cheerful an amusing 'Cockney' who had been posted to the munitions factory at Swynnerton. She was also with us for a long time.

Backtracking a little, following the departure of the French Officers, we had an extremely unusual visitation hardly describable in normal terms. The evacuations from Dunkirk meant a large volume of troops (over 300,000) came to southern England. As they were exhausted and in the general confusion, they were all given leave to go home. At least one of them, a certain Flight Sergeant Frank Daniel, had no-one to go to – he had been posted to France from Canada, where his wife and two children had stayed. On being quizzed, he told the authorities that had been good friends with a 'Frank Baines' who'd left the Air Force in 1927. As far as he could remember his friend had joined a tyre company in Stoke-on-Trent. It needed only a couple of inter-police and factory phone calls to result in Frank Daniel turning up at our door. He stayed a fortnight. On the day that he joined us we all sat round the dinner-table and

watched as he ate our whole week's ration of bacon and eggs. As he consumed the meal my mother had cooked for him, he relayed his experiences. They were many and scary. The one that sticks in my mind was that he was taking a bath when the building he was in, in France, was hit and set on fire. The end result was that he was rescued and put into a small boat wearing only a towel. During the journey across the Channel, he was lent a greatcoat and fixed up with proper clothing only when they got back to England! He was posted in Britain so his wife and two boys came back from Canada and lived with us for about nine months. Then they all went back to Canada only to return towards the end of the War and Mrs Daniel (with now additionally twin girl babies) stayed again with us for some months until they got a house in Riverside Rd. How my parents, particularly my mum, coped with all this I'll never know - all our main rooms were multi-functional for several years – but they did. I remember it all as a happy time. (It turned out by the way, that Frank Daniel didn't like bacon and eggs!!)

At the top of Hanford, behind the houses at the High St end of Wilson Rd, were two water filled holes the 'Brick'll Pits' (marl holes). They were a source of interest with tiddlers, newts and such, but also of vandalism, receptacles for old prams, bike-frames and sundry household rubbish.

And of danger! During my childhood three children were drowned there. The little sister of one of my friends, George Follows from Leveson Rd, a boy called Powell of Garfield Crescent, who I didn't know personally and Billy Blandford from Florence Rd, one of my friends. There may have been more, there were certainly some in most generations. A sobering thought. Thankfully the pits were both filled in many years ago.

I had some part-time money-earning jobs in my childhood years. The first was in Mr Lack's Bakery, greasing the baking tins before the dough was inserted. Not particularly interesting but it imbibed in me a life-long love of the smell of newly baked bread. I can often be seen 'lingering' near the bakery section in a supermarket just to satisfy that desire. In later years I became a 'caddy' at Trentham Golf course at the end of Barlaston old Rd and indulged profitably in that pursuit as often as possible at weekends and school holidays.

There was a period of two years, however, when I visited Trentham twice every day Monday to Saturday and once on Sunday – as a newspaper delivery boy! For six shillings a week I delivered for Mr C.P. Goodwin of Stone Rd Hanford. His shop was the first building coming out of Hanford. Next door was his brother

who ran a fish and chip shop (and also wet fish from a horse and cart once a week), then came the original Staffordshire Knot followed by a sweetshop called Maynards. With my paper-bag fully loaded and whistling all the tunes I knew, as I invariably was, (it wasn't considered odd in those days) I walked along Stone Rd to Bankhouse Rd where my round began. I delivered up to Bankhouse Farm, where the road veers left back up to Hanford, Ivy Grove, Jubilee Rd, Margaret Avenue, Robinson Rd and then back down Boma Rd to Jubilee Rd. I have several memories from doing that job which give me pleasure. On Sundays part of the job was to collect the money, and that could bring another couple of shillings on a good day. That was considerably dwarfed on the one Christmas I served. I got an astounding Six Pounds Ten shillings!! An absolute fortune to me. I bought my first push-bike with it, a good second-hand one that lasted me all my teenage years. I was disappointed, though, that one of my customers, a very nice lady living with her sister in a big house on the corner of Margaret and Robinson, didn't show her appreciation before Christmas, but relieved when she gave me a large parcel the day after Boxing Day. It was the remains of their Christmas goose! Sadly, I felt my Dad didn't like the idea of food donated that way but the parents of my friend Ken Wright didn't mind a bit, so I took it round and I and all his family had a good feed! The experience of that time that has stayed in my mind most clearly and strongly, however, occurred one Sunday morning when I was collecting in Margaret Avenue. It was at the McCarty's. Mr McCarty appeared at the door with his young son. He hadn't got the right money and I had no change so he disappeared back into the house. "Hello Tom", said the little boy. "Hello", I replied, "but my name isn't Tom". "My Daddy says your name's Whistling Tom" was his rejoinder. "No, it's Peter", I said. "Mine's Leo" said he and skipped back into the house as his father re-appeared and paid me. Amusing but not all that significant, you may think. But the reason it is a significant memory for me is that that particular little boy grew up to become 'Bishop' Leo McCarty!!

I know this to be the case because my brother, Tony, was the head-master of a Catholic School in Birmingham for most of his career and he worked closely with the Bishop on church matters. They became good friends though Tony

never mentioned this to me until well after he had retired and come back to our area. Incidentally my brother, Francis Anthony, to give him his full title, stayed a bachelor until he was 72 when he met and married Sheila. They were married in the church of Our Lady and St Peter in Chains in Stoke (where Tony and I were both christened) and the priest who took the ceremony? Why Father Vincent Royal of course.

Finally, like a lot of boys, I had a collection of bird's eggs. It was not considered particularly naughty then. Imagine my surprise when I saw a very large blue egg lying at the bottom of the farm hedge in Bankhouse Rd as I walked back home after my paper round. That must have been a big bird, I thought. I put it in my bag and continued past the electric sub-station on which the air raid siren was perched (which could be heard from Barlaston to Oakhill), into Wilson Rd then Leveson and back home. I showed my mother the egg "Ah that's a duck egg. Shall I cook it for your tea?" She did. I loved the taste and remain addicted to it to this day. It's not easy to find a reliable supply these days but currently I travel 10 miles to Amerton Farm for them. I always ring up first.

Such are my main memories. Modest and ordinary, of course – but mine!