

Work in the Pawnshop

Eleanor Barrow was born in 1905 and interviewed in 1983

I can always remember having typhoid. I think I was about nine or ten. They always reckoned that it was the first boatload of soldiers coming home on leave sometime about 1915 or that horse trough at the bottom of Beast Banks that caused it. Anyway I was in t'sanatorium on Parkside Road. It was called "Fever Ward" in them days. They used to take scarlet fever, diphtheria and typhoid cases as well. There were three of us on the danger list and one girl died and I was in there about two month.

Dr Brumwell was coming up with his carriage and pair and I was likely daydreaming or something and I got knocked down so that meant another two or three weeks and me mother never came to visit me. Oh I was worried.

There was a wall by the canal banks and your parents or whoever came to visit you had to stand at that wall and you were right way up at the back of some railings - that was your visiting. They were not allowed in. I was awfully upset 'cos me mother never came like she had enough to do really. She had to go at four o'clock in morning to stoke up the Ghyll Head laundry come back, have her breakfast and then go to work. She missed seeing the postman and didn't know I was due out that day. I was worried I thought "She doesn't want me." When I came out of course all our heads were shaved so I was "Baldy" at school for quite a long time.

My step-father and his cousin worked in the gardens at the top of Captain French Lane. Many a time they went off pub crawling and his cousin's wife, she had a wooden leg, used to stump after them. One day they'd been annoying people asking people to have some pies they'd bought and a young bobby had spotted them and summoned them. But they didn't go to court, they stopped in bed so of course their wives went. It was headlines in the Gazette "What the wife thought!" The policeman, giving his evidence, said he thought of locking them up and this female voice spoke up saying "You damned well should have done." They were fined half-a-crown and they asked if they could pay threepence a week.

My first job was in t'pawnshop at t'bottom of Collin Croft. I won't say I hated it but I didn't like it. I thought it was a come down. When I think back I can still see these women coming in every Monday morning with their husbands' suits. They'd happen get about five shillings for them. You had a ticket to mark out and I had to go and pack them upstairs. They got a good pressing there's no doubt about that.

Then they had to come out on Friday night and they either had a penny or two pence to pay on them to take them out. But as regular as clockwork they came back on Monday morning. It was nothing for a man to come in and pop his watch they called it the "Pop Shop." If it wasn't collected for twelve months and a day later it was put into the shop. That was how there was such a lot of second hand stuff.

Interview No R004

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