



Lea School — David Barber

# LEA AND HOLLOWAY CHILDHOOD REMINISCENCES I

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### Childhood reminiscences: by Tom Stoppard

I was born in 1901 and am almost as old as the century. My father was a farmer and we lived first at a small farm where Home Farm now stands by the gates of Lea Green. We moved to a farm further up opposite the end of Sledgegate Lane and his fields were around there. He used to slaughter the pigs and sheep there and we had a bigger slaughter house for cattle along Leashaw. He sold the meat to the houses and farms round Lea and Riber. We had a wooden shop across the road. There was another butchers in Holloway.

My days started with delivering milk. I did this for my father when we were living by Lea Green, and later for Mr Seals the farmer at Lea Hall. I went to some houses in Lea, and on my way to school I would deliver to some more. We didn't have milk bottles, I carried it in metal milk cans into which we ladled it out with long handled measures. I would collect the cans to be refilled for the next day. There were a few more to deliver that evening because I could not carry many without spilling. I got sixpence a week for helping. When I was ten or twelve I helped more round the farm.

We used to go home from school for dinner at mid-day. Our mothers would have a hot dinner for us, it was the main meal of the day. Although we had an hour and a half it was always a rush, no time to play football. Going home at night was different, we would be playing football, kicking a ball all the way home. There was no traffic in those days.

Sometimes during the holidays when I was sitting on the wall Stanley Newton would go past in his horse and trap on his way twice a day with the milk to the station at Cromford. I would call out to him to see if I could go as well. If he was in good time he would tell me to get a coat and cap and tell my mother. Other times if he was late he couldn't wait for he must get to the station in time or he would miss the train and all that milk, four churns, would not be sold to the dairy and he would lose that much money. On a Saturday we might walk over to Cromford station to pick up half a dozen copies of the football paper for the reading room.

When I was older, about twelve, I used to go to the reading room with my father to play billiards. The room had been lent to the village; there were things to read on the ground floor, and games upstairs. You could get a drink- temperance drinks, no strong drinks. I won the championship once, I had a start of course because I was younger. About nine o'clock my father would say it was time for me to go home. I used to run on that bit by the chapel, there were no lights and it was frightening. My father would follow about ten.

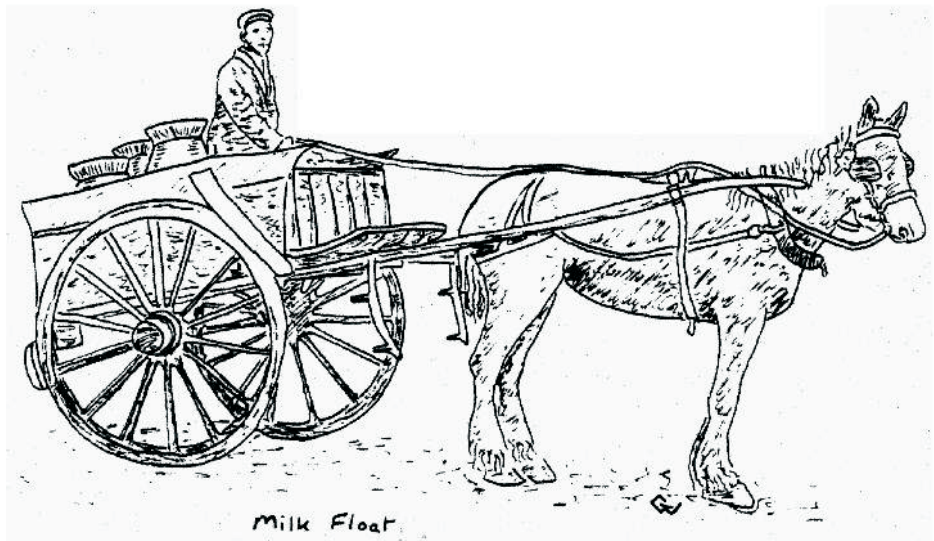
Sunday was a family day. I went to Lea Chapel Sunday School in the morning and there were about fifteen to twenty children there, and in the evening we would go to the service with our family. Sometimes we went visiting our relations on Sundays. Although we had a couple of horses and waggons and traps my father would have work to do tending the animals and couldn't go, so we walked. We went walks as a family. Sometimes we went up to see family at Riber or to Tansley Cliff, other times to Wirksworth to see grandma and auntie. We walked down to Lea Bridge, across the river, over the canal on the swing bridge and up the High Peak Railway. This didn't operate on Sundays so we could go up the track and use it as a short cut. After tea it was the same walk home. I used to love going there.

The Sunday School outing was another special day. Sometimes we went down to Lea Wharf and got into the narrow boat, specially cleaned out of the coal which it usually carried and with some benches in. We then had a slow but exciting journey to Ripley.

Sometimes my mother and the family would have a holiday sleeping away from Lea. Sometimes we went to relations at Sheffield, or else to Belper. Father stayed to mind the farm.

My father had a two-horse brake which was used to take the local football teams, Holloway or Lea, to play away at Bonsall, Birchover or Winster. If it wasn't full of team and supporters I would also go. Holloway were the best of the teams in our village. My father also ran a horse and waggonette which held about 5 to take people like the school master to the station when they were going on holiday, or when they were going visiting to Shirland. My job would be opening the gates while father sat high up at the front driving.

I left school at thirteen. I would be about fourteen when we moved to Alfreton from Lea, this was when my father became Farm Bailiff at Alfreton Hall.







## A Lea Childhood: by Lance Brailsford

I was born in 1901 and lived in a house on the opposite side of what is now the playground opposite the Jug and Glass at Lea.

There were just a few children of my age lived round there and we were at school together and played together. We used to go round the back of Lea Green past Mr Snowball's and down through the wood to get to school. One autumn I saw some of Mr Snowball's apples on his trees by the path and reached up for one, when suddenly he appeared from nowhere and grabbed me. He only got my school cap but I decided I had better go round by the road in future for a bit. When I thought it safe again I went back to the usual route and there was my cap on his gatepost! He must have had a kind heart after all.

At lunch time we all went home for dinner; there was nothing at school and our mothers didn't go out to work so they were at home waiting for us. Sometimes we would take sandwiches and sit on the wall at school to eat them. In winter we used to have to wear our fathers old socks over our boots to stop slipping.

After school from being about six years old, I used to walk across the fields to Dethick and I used to tend Mr Seal's cows. There were about twenty-five of them, Shorthorns. I used to take them up the road to get a bit of extra grazing from the grass verges for a couple of hours. Then I would go have my tea at Manor Farm. When the Seals moved to farm at Lea Hall I used to do the same there. Then I would take them up Shore Lane where there are some wide grass verges. There was no traffic about so it wasn't difficult, even though the cows were so big.

What was a problem was a new big shire horse they got. It had got great big hooves, bigger than dinner plates, which had spread from working on the hard cobbles of Manchester. I was leading it to the field and walked too close to these unusually big feet and it trod on my foot. I can still remember shouting 'get your foot up' but it didn't seem to understand! My toe nail still grows split up the middle.

We used to help a lot, and it often caused problems like that. I was chopping hay with Tom Stoppard on his father's farm. He was turning the handle and I was feeding the hay to the blades on the wheel as it flew round. I got careless and it took the ends off my fingers. Mrs Stoppard put some clean rag on them and sent me home for my mother to take care of them. I knew she would be cross. She took the bandage off and when it started to bleed she said 'stop there' and went into the coal house and got the biggest cobweb she could find and put it over the ends of the fingers to stop the bleeding. It was a mucky cobweb at that, but it worked. She used to cut the hair of all of us, and if she snipped the top of your tab (ear) she would slap a bit of cobweb on.

We didn't have all the medicines there is now. Just below the end of Sledgegate Lane there was a sand quarry. Sand martins like a steep wall of sand to dig out the tunnels for their nests and there were a lot there. My brother was leaning over with his arm in a tunnel to investigate when he tipped over and fell to the bottom. He was unconscious for a week.

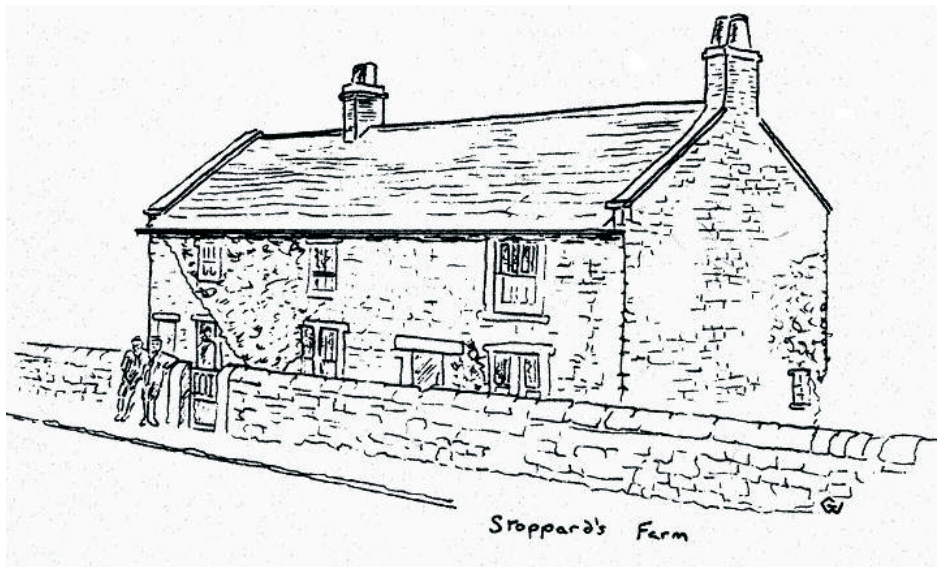
I remember helping Tom's father (who was butcher) when he was killing a bullock. I was about ten I suppose because we left Lea soon after. We used a rope to hold its head up to a ring in the wall. He gave it to me and told me to hold the rope tight while he hit the beast with a poleaxe, right on the forehead. Well I couldn't, it was too strong for me and it got away. By the time we had spent an hour or two chasing it up and down Leashaw I wasn't very popular.

We didn't have television to watch but we did have our own bits of excitement. There used to be a fire brigade at Smedley's and my father was one of the men. There was a fire at Home Farm and these six men had to pull this cart in a hurry all the way up the hill from Lea Bridge with the ladders and things to put it out. They were all in their big helmets and they weren't half hot by the time they got there.

There weren't many motors then. Smedley's had the first; it was just like an old fashioned pony trap to sit in. You got in at the back and sat facing inwards, one in each corner and one on each side, the driver in front.

I was ten or eleven when we left. There was a strike at Smedleys, the first they had ever had. Mr Smedley came to our house and told my father he had to be back at work on Monday or be sacked. My father wouldn't let his workmates down. He went as far as Huwthwaite to find work. For three months he stayed with my auntie who lived there.

He walked back to Lea after work on Saturday; it's a good twelve miles. Sunday evening the family walked back with him as far as South Wingfield Market Place for company, and he went on from there. We left Lea then. I have a lot of memories of it though.





"As I remember it 60 years ago." by Miss Mona Wheeldon. (1978)

The present day Church St. was The Common, hence the Common End we still know. The Empire Club boasted a little bar and a very good billiard table. This was the building by Rise Cottage, which until some fifty years ago was part of The Rise. This, I understand, was at one time a Public House. Beneath the Club Room is a coach house.

At The Rise lived Mr and Mrs Davis who had a green-grocery business, also horses and a trap and brake. It was in this vehicle some of us went from Lea Council School to Haddon Hall and Wingfield Manor. The latter 'outing' involved much walking up the hills to save the horses. We had no buses. We had to walk either to Cromford or Whatstandwell Station when we went out of the village.

The four cottages off the road, and the three up to the road, were followed by a field. At the end of this, opposite the Co-op Store, and under a spreading and possibly oak tree, the village smithy stood. Mr Briddon walked from Tansley. We, the children, loved to watch him operate the bellows that fanned the forge into life. Out came the red-hot shoe, to be beaten on the anvil. Then a cloud of smoke as it was fastened on to the horses hoof. I could never understand why it didn't burn the horse. To the side of the smithy there was a steep narrow field, a wonderful toboggan run. We had winters in those days.

Our villages own branch of the Co-op Store was half provisions, the mainstay of the village, and half drapery. Dividend was a few pence in the pound, but very acceptable to our parents, when every copper made a difference. Mr Wootten, the Manager, went to Manchester to order what he needed or had been requested to get. This trip involved walking to and from Cromford Station, with a busy day between. The store was later taken over by Ripley, and eventually closed. After some idle years, it was burned down on January 9th 1978. Very sad.

Mr Brown's cobbler's shop was under the wall in the Co-op yard. We took our buttoned boots and shoes to him to repair. He was always busy. A few years later, Mr Sales had his Pork Butcher's shop on the lower side of this yard. This was after Buxton's Pork Butcher's shop, where Mr and Mrs Wallace now live, had closed. I remember the blue and white striped basin I took there to get savoury ducks while they were still hot. When Buxton's closed, Mrs Clarkstone had a shop where one could buy anything from bootlaces to children's dresses. It was difficult to move round when inside.

At the top of Little London was Amatt's shop, where we bought our ha'porth of sweets and our newspapers. Mr Amatt was our village postman and barber - short back and sides for 2d. Over the shop was the Reading Room where men gathered to read newspapers, at one time provided by Florence Nightingale, and play dominoes. Under the shop was Mr Hall's bakehouse. He gave us pieces of sugar and orange candied peel. His Tott'n'am Squares were delicious. Women round about would take their dough in tins to be baked in his oven. I think 1/2d a loaf was what he charged.

On the other side of Little London was Hughes' shop, with yet another bakehouse. Mr Hughes delivered bread to villages round about, using his little "tub" drawn by his Pony, "Creamy".

Lower down Little London lived our village "Bobby," Mr Woodward. In uniform, a very fearsome man, but out of uniform, much loved by the children round about. Mr Dawes, the village photographer, lived down there too. He was the first man in Holloway to have a "cats whisker" crystal set - the very first wireless and we were allowed to listen in but we had to sit like mice!

Opposite Amatt's shop was a wooden fish and chip shop. This belonged to my grandma, Mrs Swift. She cooked 'mushy peas' in a huge brown stewpot in the oven at home.

Up the hill from this was 'The Hillside' sometimes called 'The Square'. It was a square of little cottages, built in threes, about forty in all. The water supply was a tap in each yard, and used water had to be brought out to a grate in the yard. Shared earth closets were at the end of the garden, or at the back of the cottages. A very rough road was the access, with two roads running over to the other side of the square. At the end of each of these roads was a large open ashpit. These, of course, like our dustbins, collected empty tins. The boys found great delight in kicking these downhill over the road and into Little London. This is how it became known as 'Salmon tin alley'.

When Ripley Co-op bought the building containing Amatt's shop for the drapery department, Miss Amatt had a wooden shop in one of the bottom Hillside gardens. Later when Hughes' shop closed, she moved into it and the wooden one went. Moving on to the little Chapel, United Methodist, or the 'Bottom' Chapel it had a very good choir which was backed up by the nice little organ that is still there. Sunday School Anniversary was a memorable day, with the raised platform on either side of the choir and the boys and girls opposite each other. Another delightful memory old Mr and Mrs Jacob Bunting, faithful caretakers, living in the Hillside cottages opposite. On the other side, Mr Herbert Wragg, our joiner and undertaker, had his woodyard and joiner's shop, still there. Mr Todd, a retired Chapel minister lived nearby. He was a little man in a black suit and round hat, his false teeth bobbing up and down as he taught us to say, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper" when he met us.

Then there was The Lotts, a wild piece of moorland, a favourite play area, for picnics, with bilberries and heather. Beyond the cemetery was the Vicarage and the Church. The Wigrams were at the Vicarage, Mary being my age. It was a great thrill to be invited to tea in the nursery, with its huge rocking horse. On Sunday the church choir stalls were full of men and boys at each service. Before the service old Tom Conquest blew the organ by hand. Mr Ratcliffe rang the bell. The Church was always at least half full. That was before motor cars and T.V. There was a large Sunday School, both morning and afternoon, a thriving G.F.S. and King's Messengers.

Now we move down to the school, a much smaller building, before what we know as the Cookery and a class room were added. While this was done we children had our lessons in the Chapel Sunday School Room, and the old Wesleyan Chapel down the road. I don't remember how long this took, but it seemed a very long time.

Our Headmaster was Mr Bennison, but the only thing I remember about him was his coming into our classroom, the new one, during a grammar lesson (standard two) and asking which was correct to say, "The yolk of an egg is white, or the yolk of an egg are white".

The Old Chapel I do not remember as such. It was used as a Drill Hall during the first World War. From school, we saw the soldiers marching by. After this it was used for the most enjoyable dances. Often a Whist Drive would be held from 7.30 to 10 pm followed by dancing until 2 am. The music was piano, violin and cello. When drums were added it was wonderful. For these festivities we paid 9d, and the most popular cause was for the Lea Amateur's Football Club. There was also a good Badminton Club held in this Old Chapel.

Leaving the Common, and going up Yew Tree Hill, our District Nurse lived in the stone cottage on the left, the first house. Dear old Nurse Crooks. I think she was paid 2d a visit. She always wore a navy blue velvet bonnet and a very white apron. Her voice and manner were so gentle, we all loved her. She was indeed an Angel of Mercy.

School Croft was a field opposite the Yew Tree. During the week after the nearest Sunday to November 12th, our Wakes were held here. There were hand manipulated round-a-bouts, the payment being jam jars. The round-a-bouts were discontinued, and instead we had a week of wonderful concerts.

Monday was the Top Chapel's turn when Fred Harrison Slater entertained with elocutions. Tuesday it was the Bottom Chapel's Sunday School with a concert of recitations, songs and sketches. Wednesday, this Chapel's choir gave a wonderful concert, always finishing with a good sketch. Thursday was Christ Church's turn they gave a concert in Lea

Mills dinner house, now part of the spinning department. This always finished with a dance, a very dusty affair. Friday I don't quite remember except as Lea Mill's Band night. Afterwards, the Nursing Association had a dance in the Old Chapel or, I seem to remember, sometimes in the School. Saturday was always the Co-op's turn. A ham tea for 9d, followed by a concert given by, I think, some Ripley players. I remember John Brough entertainer. This was in the Chapel Sunday School room. A week we all saved up for and enjoyed immensely.

The house at the top of Lea Hurst Drive had a tiny sweet shop in its sitting room. One can see where the doorway was built up after it closed. The garage was for horse-drawn vehicles. Ted Worthy had traps and wagonettes. His brother Alfred kept what is now our Post Office, our village store being the living quarters. The Post Office was a few yards further along, up a few steps and a cobbled yard. Then it moved on to one of the cottages, a little further along the road.

This was when the first location was made into another bakehouse run by Mr John Slater. It was here we bought the most wonderful sultana loaves. When Mr Slater died, so did the loaves. No one else had the recipe. Jack Fern delivered bread, etc. pushing a large basket trolley round the village. Then of course our family butcher, Thomas Walker and Son. Then, as now, they only had the best. In those days our parents talked of Old Tom, Young Tom and Young Tom's son Tom. This of course being our Mr Walker. Now the business has passed out of the family.

At Holloway House lived Herbert Yeomans, Auctioneer, and owner of all the property on Lea Shaw. The large coach house belonging to this house has been taken down. Further along the road, in the very picturesque little cottage coming up to the road to the left, lived our gravedigger Joe Curzon. He was also quite a good violinist. Tucked away in the corner at Holywell, was a little wooden shop where Old Vincent Greator repaired shoes. The second house at Holywell was the home of Mr Handford, a Tinker and our Rates Collector. He provided a room where Dr McDonald, of Crich, held a surgery each morning.



Coming back to Chapel Lane, we came to the "Top Chapel" or "The Prims". It was Primitive Methodist. While it didn't have a choir of its own, it always provided a good augmented one for the Sunday School Anniversary. They also produced a nice little orchestra on this day. The musicians were resident in the village. For many years Mr R Yeomans, who also lived in Chapel Lane, was our chimney sweep. This was after Mr Woolley died. He was a real character, pushing his wagon from Crich, and was known as "Pedley push cart"!

So, our village was well provided for our simple needs.

Happy days!

Childhood reminiscences: by Mrs Maisie Medcalf.

I am 80 now, so I was born in 1911, at Holt House in Lea, my brother Jack was born there too. My father was John Snowball and when I was very young he was a lead smelter working shifts at the lead works in Lea when it was called Wass and Company. Holt House was a big house and so my mother was asked to have the Vicar to stay when they opened the Church because the vicarage wasn't yet built. We had the school master too at one time. That was what started mother having visitors. Auntie Polly used to run a Hostel at Lea by the play ground opposite the Jug and Glass. It was to provide somewhere for the girls at Smedleys who had to walk to work from, say Wessington, to stay during the week. If there was an overflow they used to come to stay at Holt House. Later we moved to Little London which was where my younger sister was born.

My Great Grandma, Mrs Holmes, at one time used to live on the hillside in The Square as it was known then, across from the top of Little London. They were poor houses, terraces of three houses, three storeys high, with tiny windows and flag floors. She used to deal out the soup that Florence Nightingale brought for the different people who lived there in those houses when times were bad. We also had a bible in the family

that Florence gave Grandma. My husband lived in The Square above Church Street as well when he was a boy. They got snakes coming into the houses through the grating over the kitchen window. His mother had to take them out. They were grass snakes that lived up on the rocky edge.

When Mr Else, the manager at the lead works died they asked my father if he would take on the manager's job as he was the most experienced smelter. We then moved to Lead Works House when I was twelve and it is now called 'Snowball Cottage' after our family, the last lead smelter family to live there.

At First School we used to play all the usual games like skipping, but later we also played tennis! They put up a net on the level piece by the infants. We also did plays. I told mother I was the maid in one play, eventually she found out I was Maid Marion in Robin Hood. We had gardening as well. There were little allotments up the side.

I used to walk to school down through the woods from Long Lane through the four puzzle gates. When I was very little coming home from chapel the big boys used to demand a kiss to let me through the gates and I had to push my head through the gap at the top of the gate to give them a kiss. Then they would let me through.

When I was twelve I went to Herbert Strutt's school at Belper and went there for four years. Some went to Lady Manner's but most went to Strutt's. We went by train, some from Cromford and some from Whatstandwell. I went with my cousin Mary Steeples. We had to walk to the station each day. There were no pavements or street lights and there were lots of trees so it was very dark coming home winter nights, but there were lots and lots of cowslips in spring in the fields above the road.

Some days we got a lift in the milk float in the morning, and very occasionally a ride back on the Foden's steam waggon taking lead ore from Darley Dale, Mill Close Mine to the smelter. It was about the only thing travelling on that road, that and the two wheel horse carts with the lead ore going to the works or taking lead pigs to the wharf. I never missed school once in the four years. I went through two coal strikes

when the trains stopped and I had to go on my mother's bike all the way to Belper. We went over the river at High Peak Junction and cycled down the A6. It was very quiet then and so quite safe.

We always had a lot of homework during the week. I also had my music lessons. I learnt the piano from Miss Todd on Church St. and later from Miss Price down Little London and I sang too. Kathleen Newton who lived above us at Cowgate used to play duets with me, either on a harmonium or on our piano. Otherwise I used to help my mother.

My job was the brasses. I told mother when I grew up not to leave me any brasses, that I never wanted any brass ornaments in my house, I had had enough with hers. There were brass candlesticks and brass lamps because we had no electric light in the village. When we lived in the Lead Works cottage later we had electric from the generator at the plant, but when they stopped work at the weekend it was switched off and we had to go back to candles and oil lamps. The fender to the fire was brass, so was the stand for the kettle and the fire irons were brass too. All that to polish and if the 'belland', the smoke from the smelter, was blowing towards our house the sulphur in it tarnished the brass straight away. We had to shut all the windows to keep it out. The sulphur gasses were bad for the men's lungs as well.

The Lead Works had some very dirty jobs and the smoke caused a lot of problems. It could poison the land with the lead dust and nothing would grow. It was sometimes said it poisoned the cattle. We had a piece of belland land across the road from our house but the cattle never died there.

The smelters would work their furnaces during their shift and draw off the slag with boards and at the end of the shift would pour the lead with long ladles into the moulds to make the pigs of lead. Every fortnight it was 'sooting' day. The 'block' collected the soot from the furnaces and the lead in the smoke stuck to the walls. It was a great big square building much bigger than a house and it kept down the pollution by giving the soot chance to settle. Then the soot had to be gathered up to save the valuable metal.

This was a very dirty job and dangerous because lead is so poisonous. My father was very careful. The men all had masks and special overalls which my mother used to have to wash. We kept a couple of cows so the workers could have milk which was a help in preventing lead poisoning. On 'Sooting' day mother used to make the men breakfast of boiled fatty bacon sandwiches because the bacon fat was good that way too. Father would never let the men smoke while they had lead dust on their hands which would get onto the cigarettes and into their lungs. Every month Dr Broster came from Wirksworth to examine the smelters. He came on a Thursday afternoon.

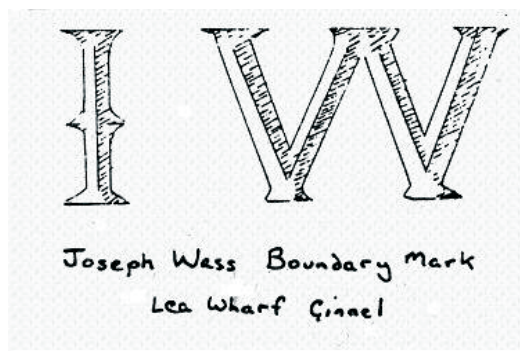
The Sundays were very different then. It was Chapel. My father was a local preacher. Papers and books were put away, there were no newspapers, the only thing we could read was the Children's Newspaper and a Chapel paper. Even the vegetables were prepared on the day before, on the Saturday, so there would be no work done. My father went preaching in the Matlock and District Chapel circuit for fortyfive years and had to walk to every service he took in the early days. Later someone might fetch him in a car and I would go with them and sing solos during the service. The Sunday School outing was often on the canal. They cleaned out the barge and lined it with clean newspaper and took us to Ripley. My father would lead the horse and we went through Gregory Tunnel. All great excitement.

Christmas was one of the happiest times of the year. Weeks before Christmas was a busy time for mother as she made her own mincemeat, Christmas Cake and plum puddings. Nothing was bought in those days, everything was home made. On Christmas eve the Choir and friends from Holloway Chapel toured the village singing carols, and the last call was Lead Works House where they enjoyed a welcome warm by the open fire and a hot drink and Christmas fayre.

After the carol singers had gone on their way we all hung up knee length stockings belonging to my father on the line across the mantle piece ready for Santa Claus. As we grew older we had great fun filling each other's with small gifts. Our other presents from family and rela-

tions were put in a clothes basket in the middle of the front room floor, and at a convenient time during the morning my father handed out the presents to us individually. This was quite a ritual every year. I often darned the long stockings to help mother for which she gave me a penny a pair. I was quite pleased and enjoyed the task.

It was as a local preacher father got to know Mr J F Stevenson from the Dyers and Cleaners at Bull Bridge. He used to call at the lead works, to see father, to talk about chapel matters. When I left school father asked Mr Stevenson if he had a job for me. I wanted to work in a shop although my mother thought having had four years at Grammar School I should have got a better job than that. When an opening came up I went to Bull Bridge each day by bike and for two years learnt about the business, working in the office there at the works, and then when a job was vacant at Matlock in their shop I went there. Stevensons later sold their Branches to Sketchley Dye Works and I became their first manageress at Matlock and at nineteen years of age their youngest. I was grown up by then and childhood was well and truly over but I was to have fourteen happy years with this company.



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