# Audio file

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# Transcript

The. 6th of August 1990 and it's. My name is Raymond Turner. And it's just. An account of life as it was. For me, in my childhood. And it's just. Part of my life story. Which I hope you might. Listen to and give me your thoughts on it. Now. In my younger days. Although I didn't know it at the time. Living in a reformed school was better in many ways than having to endure the harsh realities that existed at times in Shepherd St Mission Children's home for waifs and strays and children in need. I know it sounds rather detrimental and disturbing. But I can only speak of it as I found it. Of course. The paramount aim of the institution was the welfare of its occupants, namely the unwanted children of society. The problem arose, I think, when the home became too successful. In the beginning of the 20th century, child welfare on a large scale. Was not far removed from the Dickens era of Oliver Twist, was it? Now as time progressed, attitudes towards children became began to change. Homes and institutions were founded. But the people entrusted with the task of running these shelters. We're not really trained. Or child welfare orientated put it that way. What went on behind closed doors with something else? Now, some of the Guardians learned as they live with their charges. But could only provide the necessary essentials accorded to them. Through the various charities. We know that charities are left. To the whim of the public and benefactors, therefore. If the local. Trade and Industry slackened in any way. The contributions diminished, causing grave concern to the administrators of the children's homes. Lowering their standard of living to near starvation in some cases. Another fact to bear in mind was that. We have these house to house collections. What would happen if two different charities collected in the same street at the same time? I know that it was something that rarely happened, but. That that is one reason why Shepherd Street Mission childrens' home always always had an eye on publicity. Making the public of Preston aware of the home was Paramount. And the outward appearance of commitment to the welfare of the children essential. This contributed greatly to the gifts of food and of money donated. The sight of well disciplined children. Children attending the local churches and missions and singing anthems, et cetera, delighted many of the middle classes, who in turn. Gave generously. And in time. Enough money was raised to rebuild and expand the home. Previously. The home had been run as a large family. With the girls only separate from the boys for sleeping purposes, but. After the reorganisation. The girls were totally separated, except, of course, for dining, schooling and religious meetings, or not forgetting having to practise together for concerts and the like, of course. Now. These new premises had to be cleaned. So. For the job. While the boys themselves, of course. The idea. Was to keep us out of mischief and instil discipline. Besides saving on cleaning staff wages. And so it was up to the. Sister in charge. To. Oversee the work. This was OK up to a point. But lads of nine and 10. Being forced to scrub and polish and at the same time look after three and four year olds was a bit much. Especially when there was not much time for a young boy to play. And not allowed to speak before 5 to 8 in the morning. Then of course. Besides all that. They had to be in bed by half or 8:30 at night, not forgetting to sleep with the hands showing it out of bed, no. All this started when I was about six or seven years of age. Little boys problems belong to little boys. So they said and sister just didn't want them all except, of course, if you had headache or something like that. And then it was Castor oil. Or just maybe a stick of rhubarb. Would you believe it? Now this is not a rewrite of my book. Well, not entirely. There's a subtle difference which perhaps you will spot if you have read the book. I remember quite well one evening when we, the children, were shown Lantern slides. About how the home was founded by Mr Joshua Williamson. The slides were pictures of activities for the poor and unemployed of Preston. Who were given temporary work dealing with firewood, sawing, chopping and bundling, then selling it. The money raised went towards the welfare of these unfortunate people. There was a man there in the home explaining about these slides. Well, you know, while they were being shown. It seems. That. An old house was purchased in Laurel Street. That's just off Shepherd Street. Now this House was used as a shelter for homeless men just for a night's rest. A thick rope was secured round posts like a boxing ring. The unfortunates entered entered the unfortunates entering. I should said I'm sorry. Could lean on this rope for the duration of the night. Then of course, the next morning I had to leave. There was no line on the floor, though. All entered, leant on this rope. And when the place was full, it got quite warm. So heating was needed. And the following morning, after some bread and a drink of sorts Some of the men were put to work on the wood. Oh, horses. Waggons were used. And they were used for carrying of course. And. So with so little overheads. A profit was made. Eventually enough to buy our building just next to Arkwright House in Shepherd St. These premises. Were set up as a mission to help the needy. Some of the town fathers became interested. Gospel meetings were held and it was also the venue for the temperance movement. People went along to the meeting. And when were persuaded to sign the pledge? The local paper played no small part in this enterprise. And so the mission became well known. And well attended. This success? Gave Joshua Williamson the incentive to try to help the children of Preston. Many of whom were in dire straits. Crow Hill House became available. It was, and still is situated at the bottom of Oxford Street number 125, and it sits on the corner with Herschel St. It was a large house. It is a large house. With ground space, just the idea of place for a start. And so it was purchased. As far as I can ascertain. There were no ground rules to begin with. The children were rescued from poverty and degradation, sometimes by their local Constabulary and the town magistrates. And shepherded into the care of the home. Gifts of cast off clothing and footwear. Besides the usual gratuities. Were accepted. Bedding became plentiful an the home prospered. A large wooden building to the rear of the premises was brought into service to house boys or lads as they were called. Some quite young was about 13 and easily led astray. This building was not ideal, but these served his purpose on a temporary basis. It was indeed rotten and rat infested. But better than nothing for the destitute. And the young lads who had no trust of society. Let us remember that Preston was a cotton town and also port with ships from all over the world. Banana boats ship from Russia, Scandinavia, Europe and the Middle East and America. The stevedores. That work there. Never quite settled in the job because of the system of the. Daily queuing up at the gates and you when you when you. You you not you today and so on and so forth. Now this did antagonise the dockers and eventually it led to strike action. Therefore, many Prestonian's in those days went hungry. Consequently. The mission and the Children's home played their part. And frequently. Letters of gratitude were printed in the local paper. The Avenham district was the poorest side of the town. But at the winkley square end of Avenham Hill, Avenham Lane. Some of the well to do merchants, doctors, dentists and solicitors have their premises. Their affluence was shown by the daily appearance of housemaids busily cleaning the steps and polishing the brass plates. Then sweeping the pavement before disappearing into the different houses. As you walk along the lane. You passed streets of terrace houses. And for a fat public houses. Then where Avenham Lane leads into Shepherd St on the right hand corners to the White Lion Hotel. Beyond that stood a lodging house with steps leading up to it. I can't ever recall seeing a door there. And as you pass by, you can hear shouting, and the usual bedlam. There was a strong smell of frying fat and bacon coupled with stale beer. And you'd notice a couple of very small children playing on the steps. And they would just have a shimmy on that is the best. They'd be bare bottomed. And with nothing on their feet. Opposite this lodging house stood Arkwright house on the corner of Shepherd St and Stony Gate that would be. Then it was a working man's lodging house. And even. Walking past there, there will be a strong smell of tobacco and kippers. And. Further on. On the left, just beyond there. But with the mission it was there then. The stout front door on the smaller side door. A stranger walking along Shepherd St during the daylight hours unless accompanied. Did so with not a little apprehension. And at night. The street was patrolled by the police in twos. But that didn't stop the occasional scrap between drunks in and around the lodging house. It was indeed a very poor neighbourhood. But with the opening of the mission, a little respect was shown and things improved slightly. As you stood in front of Arkwright house, Stonegate, as I said will be on your left. Now this was a narrow a sort of ginnel that led to the back of the parish Church of Saint John. No, it was the main Church of England for Preston. So it was just called Paris Church. If yes, the ordinary man in the street. What the name of the church. Was. They would say the parish church. Not St. John's. The people didn't know that. Now, Stoneygate had its own characters. The rag and boneyards of a chap called Cayton CAYTON and another called Parker. They both had a few pawners and carts, and besides going to themselves, they sent others off, carting around the streets. In the yards, you know there was. Mountains of old mangles, iron vegetates large white enamel water jugs, chamber pots and coals cutters. Besides other items of curiosity. And if you were looking for any particular young lad from that area. And that was the best place to look. Course there were little hand carts as well, chaps went round with them. It for it had heard them shouting, Ragbone. And in the evening. If you went down, you would see the men. Get back with the hand gas with rags on the sort the bits of furniture and little items. They'll be haggling with Bunny Kane. That's the chap's name. You know for the load, how much for this? That kind of thing. And sometimes there will be an irate woman there demanding the return of some item taken from her house by her youngster and handed over for in exchange for a balloon or a goldfish. All this sort of thing was a daily occurrence in that part of the town. The mission was well patronised because of the frequent handouts given. There was a. Very well attended Sunday school with the Superintendent and the usual trips and parties. And I can remember that, like all established churches in Preston, they had a large banner. On it was Shepherd St mission. Feed my lambs and at the bottom. It had. So for the little children to come unto me. The Sunday Evening Gospel service was nearly always a full house. But that didn't mean the collection increased. Because there are plenty of families present there. That were practically destitute. We often witness mothers breastfeeding their babies while the service was in progress. And sometimes a person would stand up in the middle of a sermon and insist on giving their testimony. to God. And. To our that is the children's secret amusement, our amusement. During the prayers. Someone would say in a loud voice, Hallelujah. Then another would chip in with praise his holy name. Another one. Amen to that. And save me. I'm a Sinner. And this went on for a while. Ah, the missioner. Well he'd get fed up with it and shout. Amen, now let us sing in number whatever it was in the ancient and modern hymn book because the piano would strike a chord and everyone would automatically stand up. And then. The hymn would commence drowning out the other voices. We, the children from the home. Would always sit at the front of the mission hall. With sister keeping her eye on us throughout the service, so it was difficult not to giggle. And the way people reacted and besides. We knew that some of them were just pretending in order to be noticed in case there was any handouts going on. You know. After the service. I can see a lot more about the mission and what went on there. But don't get me wrong. There's nothing nasty anything like that. It's just that I want to say more about the children's home. First of all. First of all, Please remember that I'm telling this story as I saw it. And I could possibly be I might unclear about certain things but. That's. As it may be. The facts will be as true as I can get them without any research or boring dates. So here goes. First of all, let me name. Some of the committee. At that time. 1st the chairman. He was a Mr WA Margerison. Managing managing director of Margerison Soapworks in Preston. The makers of White Windsor soap and. Similar products. A staunch Methodist and he was the organist at Lune St Methodist Church, by the way. A big kindly man with a family. And he wore distinctive horn rimmed spectacles. Now that's what I know about him. Next. Mr Southworth, I don't know anything about him. At least I can't recall anything offhand. And. I do recall a Mr Mesham, Misham. He was the boss of this Misham the brass founders in Preston. And his firm had a large showroom in Corporation Street. By the way. Then there was Mr Spencer, a builder. Large, rotund figure of man, he had a heart of gold. His yard or premises were in Herschel St, which was just set beyond the home. He had two lorries And as far as I know, two sons you might have had others or what more, I don't know. But I know, I know that at least he had two sons. And he went on the name of the High Spencer and sons Preston. We nicknamed him all blow. He was always puffing and blowing. He had a grey moustache and always wore a bowler hat. He also. Had hearing aid. He was often seen sitting with us in the Mission Hall on Sunday evenings because he liked our company and. Just love to hear us sing. But I think his favourite. The choruses we used to sing. There were other members of that committee as well, such as the Minister of Saint James Church School and, of course. The Major the Superintendent at that time. And the chap in charge of the mission hall? It could be one man. It could be another, totally depending who they had at that particular time. Now the superintendents we had while I was in the home. Was first of all I knew a Very, very small. Just about remembering by Mr. Collins. After Mr. Collins, we had our Mr and Mrs Harrison and we used to call the Mr Harrison Daddy Harrison. They were followed by a Mr and Mrs Chadwick. I remember going to Mr Chadwick's funeral actually had it in the. Lancaster Rd. Congregational Church. That was it. Yeah. And of course, the last one for me was a Mr and Mrs Slater. Very firm, but extremely. Fair. Matron and the Superintendent, who incidentally changed our way of living for the better. I understand that after I left. The then missioner was Mr Nixon. He took over the running of the home but. Mrs Slater, still run the domestic side. Now. Mr Nixon was a member used to be a member of Saint Phillips until his appointment. And. That's as far as I can go. In that respect. I mean, after all, let's face it, I'm just thinking back. I can't just, you know. Remember, every possible little detail, although I try to. Right. To boost the funds for the upkeep of the home. House to house collecting was held in practically or the whole of the Fylde district. Although not so much in Morecambe or Lancaster a little, but not all that much. Then we went to places such as Poulton and Kirkham and Cleveleys, Norbreck, Bispham, Little Bispham, and Fleetwood Lytham St Annes. Fairhaven and places like that, you know all round about not too far away. And the response was great. We the children, were invited to a lot of the churches and village halls round about to sing and Christmas time was a very busy time for us. We had to learn different anthems and carols. Then go and sing at churches. You know, when the held their gifts Sunday and toys and gifts were presented to the home. We had our specialist soloists as well, you know. And I might add, although I say it myself, they were extremely good. Well, they had to be. And. Just in case there were children always ready to step in if. The soloist Sore throat or off or something like that. If they were needed, they used to step in and they used to know what this thing and what not to sing. Everything we sang. We had to know by heart, which we did. And I still remember quite a lot of the hymns and choruses and things like that which we used to sing. Answering the in your mind like that. They're hammered and then left and that's it. You see the matron and sisters made sure of that. Some evenings practice went on for hours but the boys were excused as scrubbing and polishing for that particular night then. We never had any supper. So it was a surprise to me when I first. Went out to work on a farm. And I was giving supper. What an unexpected, pleasant surprise it was. Now the rest of the staff in the home consisted of the two and sometimes three child minders or sisters, as if as we have to call them. There's one for the boys, one for the girls, and they're depending on the number of babies at one time. A third sister on a temporary basis. But as the rule was changed, later infants up to three years old, as far as I can make out, were sent to a baby's home. There was a cook. And the maid for the Superintendent and his wife? Because. They were that busy. They couldn't, in which housework for themselves, or even prepare their own meals. They hadn't time. There was a. Scullery maid and she dolled as the sisters made as well. And we had a woman who came in. Three times a week at least. To. Wash and iron for us. And then after that, of course there. Was old Harry. Harry Dagger. As the caretaker, he divided his time between the mission in Shepherd St. And the home. He was an old old man. In the 60s, when I knew him and so. The Lord knows how a man. I think he died just after, just after I left. I think he did. From what I can gather, he had his meals in the kitchen at the home but. He lodged with the if I remember, he was a Mrs Sheldon. Not far from the home. Harry must have travelled hundreds of miles. With the two wheeld hand cart for the children's home. Picking up jumble, sometimes toys and books, other times going to country houses and picking up fallen fruit putting it in sacks and fetching it back to the home. Besides all that, you know, there was the furnace that keep going in the cellar. at the home. And uh. On top of that. He had to go and prepare the mission for different functions meetings. And if it was cold, you had to light and keep going. The pot bellied stove that was in there in the. Mission Hall, that was. That was in cold weather. Now I know who cleaned the boys part of the home. But I cannot recall who cleaned the mission. No matter how I try, I just cannot remember if anyone did. Right. Well, go on from there. Now Preston market traders were more than generous. And when I was in the home, take, for instance, the butchers. The market was opening those days. There was no covered market then. And in hot weather, of course. On Saturday evening, a butcher for the market would ring up the home and ask for. Someone to call around to the market and collect meat that was left unsold. Two of us lads will be given a larger basket. And instructed to proceed with haste and bring the meat back or take them out back to the home. The job will be done. And when the meat arrived in the home, it would be inspected. And cut into sizable pieces, sizable pieces and portions. They will be wrapped and a name and address written on each each parcel. That was taken from a a list which they kept in the office for the most needy, needy families at that particular time in the district.

Then.

Three or four of the older lads in the home will be given a basket each, a smaller basket. With a couple or three parcels of meat in them. To deliver to the addresses on the path walls. I was often. Roped in for those errands. I would set off the first house say it might be, for instance, say for instance, say Mrs Yates, at Brewery St. We knock on the door and call out Mrs Yates

The woman would answer the door and I would say I'm from Shepherd Street mission. I've got a Parcel for you. Oh she'd say Come in. Put it on the table. And take out the parcel there. And I put it on the newspaper that represented the tablecloth. Thank you. Thank you and God bless you, son. And before I could get to the door, she would hug me and put the copper. Well, he's a penny in the basket for me. Then I'd be out into the street and await my next call. That might not be far away. There the same routine. Now. Feeling a little dry, being a warm evening. You see? Yeah, I might have to drink of water, but I never forget one particular house. I didn't go into one time when it happened. And. I'll ask for this drink of water. But they to give it me in a jam jar. There's no cups in the house. And take the last. Call. I remember one night going to this particular place. This lady lived in a room in a lodging house. Well. The same routine I'm from Shepherd Street. Walked into the room, bare floor, small stove. The frying pan on. Iron Bed set with some bedding on it, woman sits on the bed, the room window wall with some clothes drying on the window sill. I put the past on the bed and with a quick bite I will be away from there like a bat out. Of hell. Thankful to be on my way back to the home. I would hide the penny I received and spend it on Monday on my with school or I was being. I thought I was being watched and ask one. Of my pals. To go and buy me some sweets with. It on the quiet. So that no one else ever knew. They see what the other lads did. That they got money and not or what. I don't know. I didn't ask and it wasn't my affair. I want to to mention Lori Spencer. He was the Vicker of St James, a tall man. And extremely polite. If ever we met him in the street. He would smile. Raised his hat high in the air. And replace it on his head. Shake us by the hand and wishes the time of day at the same time you see. After a little. Conversation. You know how we're getting on all this kind of thing? They would excuse myself from going his way. He was, I understand as well Territorial Army chaplain and. I don't know is it Canon or an Archdeacon or something like that anyway. But. He was always knocking round and. Inspecting this or going to the school to sign the books or something or other. Because he wasn't sure. School, you see now. The church school was in Knowsley St, just at the top of the hill. It was an old school, not very big. And it had two very small playgrounds with a high wall between them, one for the boys and one for the girls. A little further down the street was the small hall belonging to the church. Now this was just used for certain functions and. It also served as St James Sunday School. The church itself was on the same side. In the street, but at the bottom. That its front door was in Avenham Lane. The church itself was large, with a tower. And inside it was very austere. Well, I thought so, but and it was warm enough. Provided you sat either in the middle or near the front. I remember the lectern and I think that that's what you call the thing that they put the very large Bible and thing on isn't it, a lectern. It it was shaped like a large eagle. It was lovely thing. I used to like that thing I used to think to myself, yes. I could do get it all hold of that. Yeah, I think it was a brass. And however. That was just the thing I didn't forget stained glass windows, of course. Depicting one thing or another. And the choir. Well, I thought it was as good as any cathedral choir I've ever heard anywhere. It was a large choir and it was a large organ as well. And the font was at the back of the church. If you would, that means to say when you walked in, you walked in the back of the church, didn't you? And then when you went, then you went on down to the front of the towards the altar now. Uh. That's as far as I can go of St James for now and. The vicar. Except to say that I think it was a very affluent church because. When we went in on Sunday morning after Sunday school, the place was nearly always pretty full. I must mention that certain pews in the church were reserved for the exclusive use of certain families. The names were inserted in a type of card. Placed at the entrance of the Pew so that anyone could see it. And besides the sidemen that attended. Made sure that the pews I just mentioned. We're never used by anyone else. Now the vicar himself lived in the Vicarage, which was in Clarendon Place. This was at the end of Clarendon St, just round the corner of the. And. Clarendon Place was just around the corner off Clarendon Street at the end of the street. And the whole street, or rather along the top of Moulden Street, if you would, if you get me meaning. So that he hadn't far to go. You know, travelling to and from his church, so it wasn't so bad in that respect. We boys and girls from the home of age like attended St. James School until it closed. I think that would be about what? What would it be about 1930 or 32 or something like that anyway. And you see, a school was formed in Frenchwood. Frenchwood Council school. So we went there. After afterwards you see. The. Thing that I could remember. Excuse me about Saint James was because of the. Size of the school, which was small of course. As I mentioned earlier. There are no facilities for woodwork class or domestic science. So that meant. That. To attend the woodwork class, which was part of the school. What do you call it school what Curriculum is it? We had to go to the special unit, which was in Marsh Lane. Every Thursday 9 till 12 and then two till 4:00 in the afternoon. Right, a little story about that. The year that the Robert Raikes Sunday School Union, Jubilee was held on Avenham Park one Sunday afternoon. I remember all the Sunday schools in the Preston District to assembled there for the rally, which they held. And every child that attended received a medallion as a memento. Now. I happened to try my my. Medallion. In a slot machine to see if it would work, I was disappointed and so I tried different ones and this was while I was walking to this woodwork centre in Marsh lane, you see. Now when I arrived at the. The centre went in. The man walked in behind me and spoke to the woodwork master, who was a Mr Berry. Now Mr Berry. Was the young Mr Berry of he was the. What do you call them? The oh. Chief education officer's son. Now. This particular chap spoke to him and pointed me out. So he called me over. And explained that. The chap. Who was a detective? Saw me trying machines and he thought I had a dud coin and I was trying to. Put it in the in the machine. And. When he asked why I tried the machine with this medallion which had. I thought to myself. Yes. I'm in it to you. Deep. I would be careful what I say so. We've been used to getting myself organised for quick excuses. And I said. Well. I'm from the home and I thought. It. Was money, is it not money or something? And then, of course, the Mr Berry said to this detective and squared with him somehow because he left. And Mr Berry thought that I didn't know what money looked like, really. However. I got away with that. The lying toad aren't I? Anyway. After that, every week that I attended his class. He slipped me two pennies and said. Now use those for the machine that's 2 pennies. Now you can put those in the machine. All right. And it worked out well in the end, didn't it? Quite. Now do a bit more about the home. Running along the back of the home. Was the house and gardens belonging to an an elderly couple? The name was Cassidy Cassidy. Now. Youngsters. Well, uh. Like playing ball games and we used to play ball games. In our yard. And of course, sometimes a ball. Landed in their garden. That meant. That to retrieve it, one boy had to climb over the fence that separated us. This was no easy task because. Think back. The. Level of Cassidy's garden was a good few feet lower you see. But manage it, we did. Naturally, on some occasions we would get caught. And so we would be informed by the Superintendent that no ball games would be allowed in the yard until he gave us permission himself personally. So. We thought about this for a while eventually. We got the idea of getting a child's building, brick kicking the corners off and playing football with that. Which we did now. It was alright, but our clogs used to get some hammer. And the corkers. They were the irons on the bottom of the clogs. Wore down rapidly. Besides that. Our shins took a battering. Nevertheless, we had some good, exciting games and got to know each other's type of play. Consequently. When on our months holiday by the sea. And we were invited to play another home, who happened to be in the same area. At that time. We said yes, we'll play a football if you wish. And so a game was arranged on the sands. And well, let's say we were not bad. I remember the promenade and the people watching. Consequently, as soon as they were spotted. A collection was quickly organised and the money divided irrespective of the result. We never saw the actual money and handed over, although it was it must have. Been. But the matron used to line us up afterwards. For ice cream. So that that part of the holiday. We did enjoy. Now. Let me put all of this. Account up to now. Into perspective. First of all, I can show you. So there were good times as well as bad in the home. And we were looked after. We the boys, had our hair cut regularly. We ate three times a day. We slept in good clean beds. And. Our clothing, although it was drab. Was clean. And in good repair and hard wearing. And of course, of all that, we had each other company. Didn't we? Living in the home was like being in school permanently. And you vied with other lads for favours from a sister like. Getting your little extra meal time, such as a thick crust of bread instead of a thin slice. Or an extra helping at dinner. Now to a homeboy. That meant a lot. And when errands had to be run.

Well.

There's nothing quite like being chosen. It might be that you had to go to the back door of some cafe or restaurant I mean, some other largest establishment in the town where some function was being held. And of course. That meant taking a large basket to be filled with goodies like cakes, meat pies. Pieces of cold meat or chicken. Things like that so that. On the way back home, a lad could satisfy his hunger, if only temporarily. Now that's what we vied for. Now another thing was if by some unfortunate circumstance. A new boy was brought into the home. I mean, unfortunately for the boy himself, in a way. Well, we never asked him any personal questions about his family. That was always left to the individual. And all the boys tried to make friends knowing full well. That something must have been wrong. Otherwise the lad wouldn't have been brought into the Home, would he? All we wanted to know was. Could he play football or cricket? How good was he? Uh. Was he good singer? Or. Could he fight? What do you stick up for yourself? Or what's your telltale? Or did he have a temper? Anything else about him didn't matter. Now each boy in the home at that time when I was in anyway. Knew everyone's habits, good and bad. So that. Personal belongings. It didn't go missing for long. And. If anything unusual occurred. Just after we said the new boy arrived.

We knew.

The culprit right off. And things were put right very quickly. Now, perhaps, after listening to my rambling. Are ramblings. You may be inclined to think of me as an ungrateful and resentful chap. That I can assure you. is not the case, far from it. The home as it was and what it stood for will be remembered by the older generation throughout the Fylde as a safe shelter for unwanted and needy children. I was taught. Many things while being brought up in. In that. Charitable establishment. Such as Manners. How to please people? When and when not? To tell porkies. How to make? And keep friends. And always trust in God Not forgetting to help all the people at all times and obey the laws of the community. I have learned quite a lot of other things.

The.

In many occasions in my life I have come to be grateful for my upbringing In Shepherd Street Mission children's home. I can stand here now. That anyone who was brought up in that institution. and is quite capable of looking up himself. Or would have benefited greatly. Have they received further education? What a pity there were no facilities. For the young people. left in this home Who would have liked, to You know, gone on to further education, perhaps even university.

No.

Child welfare was in its infancy then. So. I can understand the problem that may have been created. had such a scheme been tried Now I should remember. But. This was. The era of. Or. Clogs on pavement. The factory Hooters tramcars gas lamps. The time when policemen went on point duty directing traffic at busy road junctions. And the accumulator was a wet battery. For use with the wireless set. Chalk was used for writing on slates in the school. And uh. Yes, Lloyd George was the name used.

That people used

or had to queue for benefits from the state. Or I could ramble on and. On about the Shepherd Street Mission home because I spent nearly 14 years of my life there. But they know that.

By now

you have got the message and heard enough. After listening to this tape. Yes, there there'll be one or two of you. Who? Would very probably want to ask me some questions pertaining to this this particular. Part of my life, the whole life. And would like to know a little bit more about this. Shepherd St mission. Let me see for instance. I suppose the question would be. Well, when did I first? Enter the home. And what were my feeling? And was I afraid, and all this nonsense? Well. It is nonsense admittedly, but let me say this right from the start. I was a baby, a babe in arms. If you would. I was about 3 months old as far as I can ascertain that is. But. Of course. That meant then that I was gradually conditioned to everything that went on there. Consequently. My thoughts would be slightly different, I think, than would say a boy entering the home at about 6 or 7 or even 9 or 10. So therefore that type of thing and that type of question, I should say I can't answer tell you. But. I was very, very young when I entered the home, so there we go now. I think I've mentioned about the typical day, haven't I? Where we. Heard the bell ring in the morning? A hand bell that was, by the way. The sound of that bell. Everyone got up out of bed. Pulled the bed clothes back. Ready for inspection. And knelt by the bed. A sister entered the room. And all she would say was hands together, eyes closed. Begin. And then you would say prayers. The set prayers every morning. Throughout the year. After the prayers. There was a beeline for the toilets. He stood in line. While the boy in front of you went to relieve himself, there were two toilets, so it wasn't too bad and all that long to wait, but long enough. I mean, when there are, say, 20 odd boys. Waiting to go to the toilet. With the. Just a shirt on or whatever. You kind of bent your knees a little and cross your legs and. You waited until it was your turn. Then you went to relieve yourself. And he got back. You got dressed hurriedly. Meanwhile, sister had gone round the beds, looking, inspecting for anyone who had wet the bed. One or two couldn't help it, but they did. And. Of course they were punished. And the same lads, unfortunately. Every time. However. And next thing was to get dressed. And then you made your bed. Straight. As a certain way of making it, it had to be made that way and left. That way. Then you went into an adjoining room. It was called the children's room. Children's bedroom. You. Went to the child you were allotted to look after. He got the child out of bed. You either took them to a nearby toilet or pottied them and then. You dress them. Wash them. Then he took them downstairs. Sat them down. In a little. Prepared space for them. And then they were given books and. All bits and toys to play with until it was time for their breakfast. Now your job then. Or my job would say. What I did after that. Was to. And go downstairs. Going to the ablutions downstairs, there were 8 basins, 16 taps. Plugs. Of course there were two. Water closets. Now the tile. Or I should say the walls were tiled. And the floor was red tiled. And of course, the basins for white porcelain. Pot The taps were brass And the chains were brass and the little plugs. And the. It became evident that the basins were too high. For the younger. Lads. Therefore they had two extra little. Basins put in lower down so that they could reach them themselves. And learn to wash themselves and dry themselves, however. All those. Facilities. Had to be cleaned. The walls were left until the weekend, when they were clean then, but then all this was before. 5 to 8 in the morning. Not always the taps. Had to be. Brassoed and cleaned up underneath and on the top. The chains had to be done. And inside the plug had to be done. The basins had to be. Very very clean. Inside and outside and underneath. On the floor had to be. Extra cleaned as well any marks. Had to be got off. And it was rather awkward when. Some of the boys. Would nip into the toilets or would come in and wash the hand and splash everything all over the place now? To clean. Tops. Which are wet is a very difficult job and. If you try to dry them first. With the. Cloth you had to dry them with. You found that. It didn't work properly. Consequently, when you put the brasso on the taps. And then tried to dry them off. No, it didn't work properly. Consequently, again, when I say that I mean that. The. The end product of it was that when they were inspected, they were either. All satisfactory. Or. Something like that, there be something that would be wrong and sister wouldn't be satisfied with, therefore, I'm going to use that word again, therefore That would you, that would. Mean. That you got a cuff over the ear 'ole and shouting at. Then if you went half an inch above what she thought was right, then you're on half rations For a week. Now. The job had to be done. Before 8:30. And then you had to have your own wash and get yourself ready. With your. Sleeves rolled up. And then of course, we're having short pants on. and after kneeling down on your knees. You had your knees and legs to wash as well. and dry. Well, one thing we were not bothered with much and that was the hair parting because we all had donkey fringes. Short back and sides in a donkey fringe. That was the hairstyle we all had. And. It saved a lot of time admitted. And it saved the need really for a. Hairbrush. Now. After that breakfast came along. The sound of the bell. And. Oh, I'm sorry prior to that. Just before. The table. In the boys room, which was also in the dining room. Will be set for dining that will. be cloths put on Cloths put on And. Each. Each place would have a plate, just a plate. And. With cups. Were the enamel kind. You know, the white enamel cups tin cups, in other words. Many of them chipped. But. The persons with sore mouths and what have you. Had a piece of wool or cotton tied around the handles over the area. Which cup they had to have. And that was put in their particular place. Everyone had their own place. And then when the bell rang. That was the end of the. Uh. What you must say? Cleaning session if you will. If the bell rang. And you hadn't finished. It was just too bad you had to be. Standing in your place at the table, ready for when the girls walked in, they were marshalled in by the girls' sister. By that time, of course, again our own sister was in. And then when the girls were in. The last girl shut the door behind her. All filed to their places. And. Then. She would say sister. I should say would say to. Hands together. Grace begin. And Grace would be so. After grace. Everyone would sit down. We had forms on either side of the table so that everyone sat on the forms And then you waited. The. What we call the pie hole, which is the Hatch, is opened. And plates of bread and margarine were handed in. The sister. For the girls. Took the bread for the girls. Two plates and the sister for the boys. Took the plates for the boys. She would take the plates. You would put one down on the serving table, which was by the Hatch and she would come along. And. You would literally pick up a piece. A slice of bread and fling it at you, everyone in turn. Blinking. Right around the table, when that plate was empty,she'd go and get another one. And then she's flinging that round. You see each individual. Was. Rationed 2 rounds of bread and margarine. And either Cup of. Cocoa or coffee? Very rarely, tea. Now and again we have 3. But that was certain occasions, but let's get on with what we are saying. The half rationed people, they only got 1. Round of bread or one slice of bread. The favourite? That is the chaps who Were In the sisters good books got thick crusts. The chaps who were not. got little thin slices and believe me. They were thin. And. That was the type of thing that went on. The cups were taken. By the Elder Lads, 3 or 4 of the other lads used to go and. Take the cups in 2. They take two cups to the urn, which was on the serving table. And sister would. Pour the. Turn the urn on and you'd hold the cup underneath and then you would stop the urn and you would take the cup and. Next come and fill that out. Well 3/4 full and take them to where you got them from. Get two more and so on and so forth and you'll be queuing like that. Yeah, and. behind all the lads or girls, whichever. And then. At a certain time. Sister was here. Hurry up. All finished stand. Then you would stand. Up. Hands together, eyes closed. Grace. Once you would, you would say Grace again, thanking God. After that, everyone would file. That where the serving hatch was, where there was a space there. The table was put down up against the wall with a folding table and the boys and girls used to stand in three or four lines. Straight lines round there and matron would walk in. Now just on the other side. There where we were, there was a door and the door. The one matron entered, and then she would pass us. Good morning, children. Good morning, matron and everyone. And matron would open the piano. And. She wouldn't say anything else than she'd sit down at the chair by the piano. I said play. The accompaniment to some hymn. tune Now we're all sing this hymn Without books. Then. We were all say set prayers again. The matron would say a prayer. And when it was over with. Matron would say. Good morning, children. And she'd go out. And then the girl's sister would open the door. And. Oh, by the way, I'm sorry to, I've I've forgotten the sisters. And the maid? And the cook used to come in for this this here, little prayer meeting. Every morning. And stand on one side. And. And then. When matron said good morning and walked out, they would go out first. She'd open the door and go out. And then the girls would file out. And if the girls would file out The boys who disperse first of all. The children, the smaller ones, would know exactly what to do. They follow each other. They would go to the far end of the room and sit down. 3 or 4 the boys would start collecting up the plates. On the cups to put the serving hatch table up again, open the serving hatch. Put the plate. And the cups. Through the serving hatch and the girls would start washing up. They would take the cloths they would shake. Them onto the floor. And they'd fold them up neatly and put those through the Hatch as well. And then there'll be two lads with brushes. And other lads would move the forrms And the the room will be swept then. Where we had been dining. After that, two more boys would put the tablecloths on the tablecloths on for you. See, you have to look nice and clean and smart. But visitors, which we may. May drop in anytime and then they take the forms were put back straight. And then the youngsters were taken. And they're. The ones which went to school were put their shoes or clogs on whichever they had to wear. Coats on And. And then they were left to one side and you get yourself ready for school. Now. By that time, you should go out 10 minutes to spare. You did very well and you go out onto your onto the yard, onto that play yard. The boys had a play yard. The girls had a play yard. And we would have a little game of football with the brick. It all depended. What? And then the bell would ring. When the bell rang, we all went down to the bottom yard where that was the girl's yard and would line up in 2 long lines. The girls in front, the boys behind. And we would stand about a foot apart. And then matron or sister would walk around the ranks. Just like inspecting the guard of honour And she would look and. Say. Have you cleaned your ears? Your neck clean? Your shoes are not clean enough or your clogs are not clean enough, but why have you got a broken lace in that clog? When you come home, get it fixed. Have you got a? A rag up your sleeve or a. Handkerchief. The jersey sleeve you see, we had jackets on the jerseys. And. You see, you couldn't put handkerchiefs in pockets. All pockets were sewn up so that we couldn't put our hands in them. And then matron sister would say. Uh. After school. Off you go. Good morning, children. Good morning, sister. Good morning, matron, Whatever. And then we trot off to the. To this school, an elementary school, church, school, whatever it is you went to. It wouldn't be that far away. You see, you were given so much time in which to get there. And you're giving so much time in which to get back. Now. When school finished for what they call dinner time and. Two hours. School started again at 2, finished at 12 and started again at 2, and between that time. you'd nip home. How to wash make sure the child was right. You got the dining room ready again. With the usual. But by that time. UM. You have the cloth put on and. You wouldn't get the plates put on the table. There will be done two big two or three big stacks on this their serving table. But you would have. A knife and fork and spoon. Give me a yes. A knife, fork and spoon. Now then. It was very, very unusual to have the. Drinking water. At dinner time. Or any drink at all any description But and then of course, the usual thing went on again. You see, the bell rang. He went to your place. And the girls filed in and the door was your hands together, Grace, ready. And then you know. The old rigmarole job. And then after that. You might find a little time. When everything went on like the room cleaning up and the child ready for school, and if the child didn't go to school, by the way, it was too young. If you take him into the girl's part and leave him there at the doorway and the girl used to go and take. Inside the play. In what they call the playroom. The kiddies playroom. No. The lads used to play. We used to play football or cricket or whatever. We'd make do and mend anywhere. We went on. Anyone with faulty clogs or laces or whatever? Got them fixed up as quickly as possible. We always pick sides for a game of football. That the. Eight or nine on either side. So yeah, I wasn't extra big, but big enough to have a decent game and wide enough to. And UM. Then. In the mean time. If. Matron and her sister felt like it. They would. Walk out onto the yard and either throw apples on the yard, which you'd. Pick up and keep. And eat there and then. Or they'd line you up and give you sweet. Two or three each. And. You had to eat them there and then because you couldn't put them in any pocket. Your pockets were sewn up. You could put them in jacket pockets, yes. But. We didn't play football with jackets on because we got rather warm and what's what's more, if anyone fell down, they would dirty the jackets, wouldn't they? Consequently, they used to take them off and put them on one side very carefully. Now the bell would ring. The usual thing would go on 2 lines. Not much of an inspection at that time. The sister. Good afternoon, children. And that would mean to say you turned and off you went who was the first want to get out the gate and then you could go your own sweet way to school. And then I was till 4:00 or half past. Exactly. I think he was 4:30. He's come out of school. The elders, children, youngsters used to come. At 4:00, if I remember rightly now. UM. The girl's job was to get fetch the youngsters from the entrance school. That was their job now. You have to be back in the home. Within a reasonable time. At least from the school. Otherwise, you wanted a where have you been. What you been doing, etcetera, etcetera. And that meant trouble. But the first thing I did when I got back. The home was to take off my school clothes, put or what they called my play clothes. Uh-huh. Play clothes, indeed. And then I would nip smartly into the laundry where the potatoes were kept. I get a bag and a half potatoes, something like that. Then I would start peeling them by hand, or if the machine was working, I used to put bump them in the machine. So much so many at a time. Turn the handle while the only. Peel it, come off and then. After that, they wanted what we call eyeing, that meant to say taking the eyes out of the potatoes and giving them a darn. Good wash again. But all the ways how do we put on one side for sister or matron to inspect? And that job took me quite a long time, especially at weekend when you had to peel for. Sunday and Monday. It took quite a long time to do that, but then you see they used to run and say, well, you got plenty of time you've got all weekend. But. They need to take into account the extra work I used to have to do in the first thing in the morning or at night time. We get a bucket of scrubber cloth and some soap and get some hot water. And scrub the floor of the dining room. Now that happened every night and every so often I think it was twice three times. We used to have to do this. The tables scrub the table tops and scrub the forms. At weekends, of course, there was extra jobs. Beside there was the windows to clean the windowsill, to clean the window sashes to clean. Lamp shades. Walls have to be dusted. Different things like that that, that that used to take till. 7:00 or 7:30 at night. And then you've got an hour in which to play it or mess about in whatever you wanted to do if you were. Lucky. For 8:30 was bedtime. But of course, from coming home to school. And getting off the day is done and then. Getting your tea and going back and finishing the potatoes and then scrubbing the floor of the. Dining room. The boys player and it took quite it took all your time practically. So therefore by the time you did go to bed, you were you got quite ready for it and. The other. The occasion was that I didn't mention to you when we had our tea. The procedure was the same as it was at breakfast. You went and you lined up and you got singing a hymn. And then we had prayers and all this and you. And then if there was a concert to go to or something like that, matron would say. Now we're going to so and so. This weekend. Now. We must practise such and such. And we would practise and matron was satisfied or sister then. Let this go.

No.

However. To get back to it. Excuse me again.

Oh.

8:30. By that time. The boys had cleaned the clogs. And they'll clean the youngsters clogs for them. And. Don't one or two little bits and pieces of things which had to be done like there might be a one boy made out, might have had a a hole with his sock or. his jersey. Or a button off. That had to be put back on. And the boy had to do it himself. You had to do it then you didn't know how to do it you were shown once. By sister and that was the end of that. You had to do it yourself. Now. All the socks. And things like that have little tabs on. But marking it. And each individual's initials were put. On. So that he knew. Which were your socks and which were not your socks, which was your jersey, which was your shirt, and all this time? Now, as I said, 8:30 OK upstairs. Undress. Toilet. Everybody line up was one bursting then. But you waited and then you went to the turn and then you went and knelt by your bed. And the last lad. Had been to the toilet, knelt by his bed. Sister would say begin. Hands together, eyes closed, and then you begin your nightly prayers. And then you would say your prayer. After prayers You'll get into bed and you'll leave your hands and arms out of bed. And then you'd shut your eyes. The sister ever caught anyone with their eyes open? Or hands under the clothes. They would get their wrap on the backside. And the good rap on the backside. Sometimes the person would be. Feeling not too good and they would get to sleep and their hand would roll under the bed or something like that. Now. Sister them. Would. Lift the blankets in the sheet. And put their hands out of bed forth and leave them like that. But if she ever. Looked through the glass, which was in the doorway. The doorway from her room to to where we slept as she saw anyone with their eyes open. Or is anybody talking like that? There wouldn't be a riot, but there you go. When everyone was settled down, the lights out and that was it until the following morning when the bell rang. Uh. 6:00. In any case, well, that was roughly very roughly a day in the life of. Not the Sunday, which is a day different altogether. Now. Dinner time. That's lunch. It was nearly always. Potatoes, except twice a week when we had pea soup. A slice of dry bread. And a bowl. A bowl, a bowl of pea soup. And it wasn't bad soup. A bit watery, bought it was filling more filling than the other. The potatoes and veg. Now other days you would get. Some potatoes mash. And you get some carrots. Or peas. Or cabbage. It was nearly was cabbage, to be quite honest with you. And you'd also get some Stew beef or something, just a little bit, but you get some with gravy. And then after that there might be a plate of rice pudding or sago pudding or tapioca cold.