

Life in Sedgley – the memories of the late Jack Lloyd

Jack Lloyd, a long term parishioner and former chorister at All Saints', sadly died on 6th July 2016, aged 102. Here is the story of his early life as recorded in 1992 in a school project by his grandson Edward Lloyd, when he was an eleven-year-old schoolboy.



3 Arcal Street, Sedgley, where Jack was born.

John Edward Lloyd was born on January 3rd 1914 at a small terraced house, 3 Arcal Street, Sedgley. His father, Edward, came from Cradley Heath, and his mother, Alice, from Old Hill. They moved to Sedgley to be nearer to Edward's work in Wolverhampton.

My grandfather was an only child and had memories playing in the streets with other children as a very young child - well before he started school. The family later moved house to Dudley Road, Sedgley.

1914 was the year that the First World War broke out and it continued till 1918, but my granddad has very little memory of it – he said the world was a different place in those days and people knew little of what happened in other countries.

He attended Queen Victoria School in Sedgley from the age of five until he was fifteen, when he went to work. People didn't move schools in those days. School was very strict and he didn't like it very much. He even ran away to his mother once. Children could be caned for any little mistake. Each child sat at their own desk

with an exercise book and wrote with a pen and ink - the ink was kept in an inkwell. He remembers many children wearing a jumper and trousers with holes in them, and a pair of their dads' shoes. Many boys had to run two or three miles to take their dads' lunches to work. If they were late getting back to school they would get the cane.

Some boys had bread and jam for dinner, others had nothing at all. My granddad was lucky – he never had to take his father's lunch and was able to go home for dinner at dinner time.

He remembers children being poorly because of poor feeding. Many children were 'cripples' (as they were referred to then) and several children in his school died of TB or bronchitis.

In the school playground he played football, cricket and marbles. There were not really any school teams to join in those days. He does remember the poor children trying to beg bits of food from other children.

At home the family ate quite well because his father had a good job. The bacon and meat was salted to keep it fresh and he remembers milk being delivered twice a day by a horse and cart.

The family left a jug outside the door and the milkman poured out a pint from his can, fresh from the cow. He poured it into the jug and left it there for them to collect.



Jack aged around 8

His father had about ten chickens in the back yard for eggs and my grandfather remembers having to hold the chicken's legs while his father cut their throats - he didn't like this job but they needed the food. He still has the knife his father used. Each year the family bought a cockerel and fed it up for Christmas dinner.

The toilet facilities in Arcal Street were very crude. There was a toilet at the bottom of the garden, but you couldn't flush it. So you threw ashes from the fire on it to take away the smell. At night men came on horse and carts to take the sewage away – the smell must have been horrible.

My granddad remembers Friday night as 'bath night' His mother boiled water and filled an old tin bath in front of the fire. There was no running water at all - the water came from a well in the back yard. He remembers many people looking dirty. Some coalminers only washed their face at night and you could see the dirt still around their necks.

Lighting was from gas - each street had a gas light and each evening a man came round with a long pole, which had a flame on the end. He reached up with the long pole and lit the lamp.

His house also had a couple of gas lamps. And he remembers the flickering shadows along the walls and going up to bed with only a candle to light the stairs, and frightening shadows everywhere.



Jack as a chorister aged around 12 - at All Saints' in the 1920s.

There were few clothes for families and my granddad's mother used to make most of his clothes. On Sundays he went to Sunday School. It was a very quiet day. There was no playing and children were expected to sit quietly and speak when they were spoken to.

On Saturday my granddad was expected to run errands for his mother to the local Coop shop for tea or butter - other food was delivered by horse and cart.

A man would come down the street shouting "Fish or bread!". The coal was delivered into the street in one big load and the family had to carry it in by bucket up the entry into the coalhouse in the backyard.

There were no cars on the road. People had bikes, but most people walked or travelled by trams that moved along the roads on rails.

There was lots of poverty in Sedgley at that time and my grandad remembers there was a shop in Sedgley called the 'Pawn Shop'. They would take your goods from you and give you money; next week you could buy your goods back at a higher price, a sort of money lending.

It was considered shameful to go into the pawn shop and my grandad went to great lengths to point out that his family never needed to go to the pawn shop.

Though life sounds very hard he said he was happy. There were no televisions or cars or computers and people didn't need the luxuries we expect today.

My granddad left school at Christmastime in 1928 in the middle of a recession. There was no work around and for three months he walked from factory to factory asking for work until he was finally taken on by Cooke's, a brass foundry in Wolverhampton where he ran errands, did odd jobs and worked in the warehouse.



Jack as a young man.

He worked from 8am to 6pm six days a week. The only holidays he got were bank holidays and he had to ride to and from work on his bike. He did not enjoy the work at all. He heard from a friend that a hairdresser in Sedgley named Mr Reid was looking for an apprentice.

My granddad was taken on and stayed for four years learning the hairdressing trade, starting work at 9am and often working till 9.30pm, still without holidays.

When he was about 20 he moved to a hairdressers in Willenhall but he wasn't there long and Mr Reid asked him back to Sedgley.



Jack at his hairdressers' business in Coseley.

In 1934 his family his family saw an advertisement for a shop for sale in Coseley and after some investigation his mom and dad bought the shop for him. It was quite frightening at first but he said but he got into the swing of things and gradually began to enjoy it.

Part 2 to follow