

Lucy, getting to 21

I can vaguely picture brother Jack and I being ill in bed – guess I was about 3 years old – also mum and dad being ill.... with the flu, as I believe there was an epidemic at that time...

It was Huyton Quarry we 1st lived after leaving Wigan. It must have been work that brought dad here, for it was the years of depression and no work, apart from the mines – but really dad's job was painting and decorating.... we moved to Cronton Avenue to be nearer the colliery. The houses belonged to the colliery too, so once in them you had a better chance of keeping your job.... Mum used to help the budget by working in the fields picking peas and potatoes and Jack and I would run and help

I always seem to be troubled with a persistent cough, ... I can recall mum coming into my room many, many times pouring cod liver oil into me. I must have really had gallons of this during my childhood – also Scotts emulsion and plenty of malt. They were always worried that coughing would develop into consumption – or TB.

How well I remember going to Whiston Central School. I had a favourite teacher Mrs Jolley, who was English mistress. I used to help her and stay behind helping with marking. She also gave me a lot of confidence and I remember being very thrilled at being made the school librarian. [When the] time came to leave it was she who asked me to ask my mum if I could go on and be her helper at home. My duties being to make beds, wash breakfast dishes, clean out fireplace and lay fire for them and prepare a meal for Mrs Jolley and Mrs Jolley's brother, ...What I didn't realise at the time was I was being prepared domestically.... then came the time I had to leave.

Our Bill had taken ill and it turned out he had scarlet fever and Mrs Jolley being a teacher the doctor advised I might carry the fever and she could even get it and pass it on. Both Jack and I got the scarlet fever – the ambulance came took us both to Delph Lane isolation hospital: we spent our Christmas in the hospital and Jack was very ill.

... I thought of nursing...but training was out for the medical I failed having a persistent cough! Well I remember feeling very upset and not wanting to go into the BICC or Tinklins print works that meant service. That's ... being a servant for the rich families in Huyton – which was so very posh in those so-called good times (for the wealthy). So off I went to the McLeish's... Yes sir! No madam! I was trained by a very, very severe housekeeper. Black and white uniform was a must. From there I went to a girls boarding school... I remember running away ... after the housekeeper-cook told me to bring in the shepherds pie for lunch and found mice had already eaten half. It was either that or nothing so off I went running until I reached home and telling them why I'd run. I suppose I was afraid of being brought back.

Dad came to the rescue and he and I hand-in-hand went to the school. ... I do clearly remember dad laying down his hands on the table and saying he would make it known how a so-called posh school had the staff behind-the-scenes thinking they could get away with thinking they could do what they wanted and so it was taken to higher authorities... I was later sent for, asking me to come back, as new housekeeper and cook had been taken on – but no fear – I'd had enough so I was at home again – helping mum and the lodgers.

... The saddest memory of the 1930s was my dad passed away on January 30, 1937. ...Our home life was very empty and mum was very, very sad. Many the time I had to follow her, as she threatened to end it all, that year was very hard, having to adjust to living on 10 shillings a week widow's pension... And then our Jack, rather than be out of work, went down the mine,

that too broke mum's heart. So many times I had heard dad say "no son of mine would go down the pit" but Jack went from what I remember rather sad too – for he worked at the BICC and in those days one was stopped when you reached 18 years old, so another new life was for us.

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