

# The Preston Magazine



Issue 24

**Daddy Dunn**  
**VE Day 1945**  
**Now and Then**

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# Welcome

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A big thankyou to our advertisers, without them we could not produce this magazine. Please support them whenever you can. If you would like to help us by advertising, please do contact us.

Our thanks to Penwortham Priory Academy for their help and support in the production of our magazine. A link on their website's community pages allows you to read all issues online, as well as our sister magazines, The Penwortham Magazine and The Lostock Hall Magazine. [www.priory.lancs.sch.uk](http://www.priory.lancs.sch.uk) you can also access The Preston and Penwortham Magazines via [www.blogpreston.co.uk](http://www.blogpreston.co.uk)

Included this month are – A Poem from Preston born Canadian poet Robert Service, from his book of poems entitled Rhymes of a Red Cross Man, which was dedicated to his brother, Albert, who was killed in action, in France in August 1916, Memories of Preston Shed by Robin Bamber, The final part of the diary of James Green 305712, who served in the Great War, our thanks go to Mrs Rita Finley for her permission to print her Uncle Jimmy's diary. Our ongoing serial 'A Preston Lad' by Arthur Eric Crook (1917-1997) reaching the end of Volume 1 relating to his time in the orphanage on Brockholes View. We continue with Volume 2 which are memories from his early working life and memories from the 1930/40s around Preston. Old articles found relating to Daddy Dunn, Preston Gas Pioneer and VE Day celebrations in Preston, 1945.

**If anyone has any family memories, photographs or any items of trench art relating to the First World War that could feature in our magazine please do get in touch.**

Also if any of your family members are named on a Preston or South Ribble War Memorial and you have any information about them we would love to hear from you.

Should you require a copy by post each month, please contact us. We can also email you a pdf version of the magazine. If I have missed you lately please do let me know.

The Preston flag seen on the front of the magazine was designed by **Philip Tibbets**, copyright has been waived to allow it to be used by anyone.

Take a look at the Preston groups on Flickr, there are thousands of images, old and new. **Preston Digital Archive** – is always on the look out for old photos of Preston and surrounding area, please get in touch at the number below if you would like to contribute. We can scan any images for you and give you a digital copy.

A copy of each issue of all the magazines will be kept at Lancashire Records Office.

**Front Cover Image – Miller Park by Tony Worrall.**

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Sailing Ship Entering Preston Docks c.1894  
Watercolour by Edwin Beattie (Preston Digital Archive)



The Site of Miller  
Arcade  
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# ARTICLES FROM PRESTON PAST

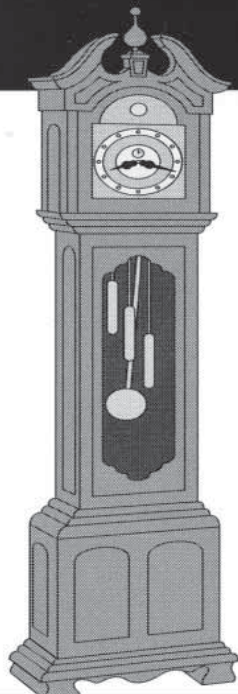
**AERIAL DEMONSTRATIONS IN PRESTON** – Tonight Captain Spencer and Captain Smith who are in charge of Hudson's War Balloon, near the Deepdale Enclosure, Preston, intend giving demonstrations in balloon signalling. Powerful explosives are to be suspended a considerable distance below the car, the occupants of which fire them with electricity. The report, it is said, will be audible for a radius of many miles. *Lancashire Daily Post 10th July 1901*

**SPRINGTIDE IN PRESTON PARKS** – The parks at present are in early freshness of their spring beauty. The lime trees which form the avenues on Moor Park and on the river side at Avenham are in full leaf, and the horse chestnuts, of which there are some magnificent specimens in Moor Park are just beginning to put out their blossoms. Soon the laburnum will be hanging out its golden tassels, forming a beautiful contrast with the lilac, which promises this year to be opulent in blossom. Among noticeable trees and flowering shrubs that are coming into bloom are the pear, the Siberian crab, the double-flowering cherry, the mock orange and the guelder rose. Here and there the gorse lights up the shrubbery. The daffodils which decked the green sward are past their prime and the hyacinths are going, but the tulips are at the height of their glory. A special display of these bulbs has been made this year by Mr Tye, and some very gorgeous colour effects have been obtained, particularly in Miller Park. The show is undoubtedly one of the finest in the kingdom, and has been greatly admired. The ten circular beds near the fountain in Miller Park are occupied exclusively by tulips, among the varieties being Crimson King, Duchess der Parma, Brutus, Prince of Austria, Cottage Maid, Van de Neer, Chrysalora and Scarlet Due Van Thols. There is also a splendid display in the flower garden near the drinking fountain, and opposite the Derby Statue a mass of gorgeous colour is provided by a very extensive bed of these flamboyant flowers. All the parks are in the pink of condition. Some desirable alterations have been made here and there, and what money has been expended on them has been well laid out. *Lancashire Daily Post 8th May 1901*

**ROYAL OAK DAY** – Although the thanksgiving service for the restoration of King Charles II to the throne no longer forms a portion of the ritual of the national church, the custom of bearing boughs of royal oak on the 29th May is still honoured. Last Thursday, most of the carters and lurrymen of this town and neighbourhood decorated their horses with huge boughs of oak in commemoration of 'Royal Oak Day'.

**CRICKET : ALL ENGLAND MATCH AT PRESTON** – We learn that the Preston Cricket Club have agreed to enter into arrangements with the All England Eleven, for a match at Preston on the 15th, 16th and 17th September against nineteen members of the Preston club, with three professionals given. Our readers will doubtless remember that on two former occasions, in 1852 and 1854, the champions were defeated by our townsmen. May we hope for them a similar measure of success on the next occasion. *Lancashire Daily Post 31st May 1862*

**DEATH OF THE FIRST RAILWAY PORTER AT PRESTON** – On Tuesday night, Thomas Hilton, residing in Lauderdale-street, was taken suddenly ill, and on the following day he died. He was the first, and for some time, the only porter, at the Preston Railway Station. After discharging his duties in this capacity for some years, he took the post of pointsman at the entrance to the Fishergate tunnel, and held that situation till 1864, when he was removed to the points on the Strand-road, connected with the Ribble branch line. Hilton was a faithful servant and was well respected by his fellow workmen. *The Lancashire Daily Post 30th May 1868*



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# PRESTON THEN AND NOW 1843 – 1893

## 'THE CHANGES OF HALF A CENTURY'

The Parish Church next claims our attention. In 1853 the whole of the then existing structure was demolished with exception of the lower portion of the tower, and the present church was erected by Messrs Shellard and Shellard, of Manchester. It was completed in 1855, at a cost of about £9,500, and is considered one of the finest parish churches in the country creditable, alike to the architects and to the parishioners. It was greatly admired by Dr Fraser, the late Bishop of Manchester. Just past the Blue-bell public house, in Church-street, once stood a barrack-looking building, six or seven storeys high, coloured yellow. It was built a long time ago by a person called Holden, who had two or three coasting vessels plying on the Ribble; and it was said at the time it was erected that Holden intended it to be a sort of speculum, or look out, from which he could the arrival and departure of his craft. This was probably mere raillery, as the building was really a warehouse, Holden being a general dealer. The neighbours, however, named it 'Holden's Whim'. After the owners retirement or death, the building was occupied as a waste warehouse by Mr Thomas Ainsworth (Owd Tom) proprietor of the cotton mill in Cotton Court, but it was always known as 'Th' Whim' till it was pulled down to make way for the shops now standing on each side of the entrance to Mr Hothersall's County Mews. It had a door in the middle front of every storey, with a small blinking eye of a window on each side. Alterations in the appearance of goal, called by a sad misnomer, 'House of Correction' have been extensive in recent years. Formerly there was not too much to be seen but the rough stone residence of the Governor, and the Court House on the right; but considerable enlargements have been made, especially on the north side of the prison, since it became a Government Goal. In Newhall-lane and between that thoroughfare and Ribbleton-lane, the building of houses has been going on rapidly for years, and the same may be said of the western part of the township of Fishwick, and of the northern part of town, east and west of Garstang Road. Continuing our survey along Deepdale-road, we notice what is called, Deepdale Enclosure, a triangular plot of ground in which stands an observatory containing a telescope purchased from the trustees of the late Alderman Watson, and we believe the use of it is free to the public. On the right of Deepdale-road, opposite the enclosure stands the finest line of private residences in Preston. It was built about 1846 by Mr George Mould, contractor, who had then in hand the construction of the Preston and Longridge railway tunnel under the west side of town, from the then Deepdale terminus, to Maudland, for the Fleetwood, Preston and West Riding Railway Company, who had bought the line. At the inauguration of this extension of the undertaking, the late Mr TB Addison, Recorder of the Borough and Chairman of the Quarter Sessions, took part, and having been induced to don a navy's smock frock for the occasion, he cut his one sod and trundled it in a barrow about twenty yards, 'amid the cheers of the spectators'. Mr Addison was chairman of the directors of this previously unprosperous railway, which opened in 1840, and their were frequent calls upon the shareholders. At one of their meetings an irate shareholder said he 'wished an earthquake would come and swallow it up', to which the chairman, with a sarcastic smile, rejoined, 'I'm afraid an earthquake won't come to gratify you'. Our next object of note is the Preston and County of Lancaster Royal Infirmary, in Deepdale-road, of which the old House of Recovery forms a part. Ground was broken for the Infirmary proper in April, 1866, by Mr CR Jacson, who laid the foundation stone in July of the same year, and in January 1870, opened the building, which was erected from the design of Mr J Hibbert, at a cost of nearly £19,000. Six or seven years afterwards fever wards were added, the expense, £7,000, being defrayed from the late Mr ER Harris; and Mr Jacson has also been a donor in the same direction.



# Whitsuntide Festivities

There is not a more joyous festival in the year, or one which is celebrated with greater rejoicing and merriment, than the feast of Whitsuntide. Sports, pageants, shows, pastimes, and diversions, have combined to render it the most popular of our English festivals, especially among the humbler classes of our society, and who more than they stand in need of recreation and diversion? They toil from 'dewy morn to dusky eve' and have to break their morsels and eat them steeped in the sweat-drops of laborious industry. A holiday, therefore, must at all times be welcome to them, and at no season more than when summer holds its revelry, and adorns the earth with beauty, bloom and verdure. Whit Monday! The very mention of the day calls up pleasant memories, tells us that summer has again come borne on the soft winds, and waving in her hands garlands of leaves and roses. Whit Monday! A general holiday, whereon friendly and benevolent, relief and benefit societies, hold their anniversary processions, and spend the day in merrymaking and feasting. Preston has long been famous for the demonstration made on this day by its several societies, who assemble to celebrate their annual festival. Not only was the dawn joyous, but the day was beautiful, cloudless, and calm as 'a bride's dream of love'. Nature appeared to rejoice with man, the cuckoo shouted more merrily, the lark carolled more melodiously, the brooks murmured with sweeter music, and the very breezes, loaded with 'odorous sweets' and bearing on their wings 'sweet sounds and harmonies' came wafted with greater softness. All labour was at a standstill, and everyone made up his mind to live easily, and indulge in repose, once at least in the year. Those who, longing for 'fresh fields and pastures new' were not disposed to witness or mingle in the festivities of the town, sallied out into the country among green lanes and flowery dells, or sought the health-inspiring freshness of the sea coast. Country folks, on the other hand, poured into the town, they came in all varieties, in all many of groups, and in all sorts of dresses. There was the smiling child, borne in the arms of its mother, or toddling by her side, there was the comely rosy-cheeked girl, just budding into womanhood, neat, prim and precise, the staid, demure and sober matron, the old man, bending under the load of three score, the blithe, young and cheerful swain, the farmer and the farm labourer – he who drives the team, and he who 'whistles o'er the furrowed land'. Some rode in carts, some in shandrays, some trudged on foot, others ambled on horseback. A motley crew – all attired in their holiday costume, new coats, new gowns of all shades and colours, ribbons of every hue, flash scarves, and showy handkerchiefs. What bustle, gaiety and jollity! Chadwick's Orchard is full of whirligigs, fly boats, hobby horses, puppet shows, pavilions, and pantomime sketches. Here are exhibited the infant giantess, the female Hercules, large serpents, immense crocodiles. Here is the Preston Wizard and the Caledonian Magician – one swallowing knives, the other fire pokers. Dogs telling fortunes, monkeys playing cymbals, crippled sailors detailing their perils by sea, old soldiers their adventures by land. Then, go where you would through the town, there was no end of lollipops, gingerbread, nuts, oranges, and sweetcakes. Fairings given, favours bestowed, wedding rings bought – such flirting and such philandering, such fiddling and such dancing. Who could help being gay amid such diversity of amusements and pastimes? The several railway companies offer cheap trips to Liverpool, Fleetwood, Longridge and other places. The Theatre Royal is opened under the direction of Mr W E Mills, and the romantic drama of the brigand is performed. Mr Pablo Fangué drives eight pied horses through the town, Master Pablo dances on a tight rope, and the circus is crowded with spectators, who are thronging to behold the wondrous feats of agility there performed. Now the clubs come 'sounding through the town' and are marching in procession to church and chapel. Banners bearing various emblems and devices, are borne before them, and bands of music cheer them on their way.

*Lancashire Daily Post 1st June 1844*

# The Last Shift

The following verses were written by a member of the voluntary staff of Preston Station Free Buffet and the day when she and her colleagues on the same shift went on duty to make and serve cups of tea to members of the Forces for the last time. The writer desires to remain anonymous.

Well, the presentations over, but before we go away,  
Though out of order, out of place, I've got a small bouquet  
I want to give the workers, the ones we call 'Anon',  
The nameless crowd who manned the shifts and just went plodding on  
The ones you ordered to do this, and blamed for doing that,  
Who had to wear an overall, an armband and a hat,  
Who kept things going all the day and through the endless night,  
And never in the photo with the Mayoress, left to right,  
So here's a toast, a final brew, for 'tis to you I drink,  
My comrades of the counter, and the cooking and the sink,  
To all the 'Loves' and 'Ma's' and 'Ma'am's' wherever they may be,  
Whose tribute to the Forces was a nice hot cup of tea,  
To all the years we worked without a grudging angry word,  
To all the friendly jokes we shared and all the tales we heard,  
With David out in Burma and Henry out in France,  
And Philip, trapped in Singapore, who never got a chance,  
With someone, somewhere, on the seas, or somewhere in the skies,  
And all the things you dared not say close written in your eyes,  
So brave and uncomplaining, making coffee, serving buns,  
For other people's daughters, and other people's sons,  
So fitting that this railway mug should be our loving cup,  
Goodbye, and think of me sometimes just when you're washing up.

*The Lancashire Daily Post December 21st 1945*



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# **VE DAY PRESTON 1945**

## **DISAPPOINTED CROWD**

Crowds of people gathered in the Market Square, Preston, this afternoon. Just before three o'clock they turned towards the Town Hall evidently expecting either a relay of the Prime Minister's broadcast or some public proclamation. But as the clock struck the hour and nothing happened, most of them began to drift away. During the afternoon the Home Guard rendered selections of military music from the steps of the Free Library.

*Lancashire Daily Post 8th May 1945*

## **HOW LANCASHIRE LET GO FOR VICTORY**

Preston and other parts of Lancashire joyfully celebrated during the two VE holidays. In some towns large crowds heard the Prime Minister's broadcast. There were big congregations, including Civic worshippers, at the thanksgiving services in the churches on Tuesday evening, and flags and floodlighting made a brave display. Open air dancing and community singing, games in the parks, bonfires and the letting off of long hoarded firecrackers and rockets added to the jubilation.

## **Preston's Happy Crowds**

A large crowd which assembled in Preston Market Square continued VE Day celebrations until a late hour. The illuminations, flags and bunting made an effective show. The thousands of merrymakers included a large proportion of Service men and women, and nearly everyone wore patriotic emblems. There was dancing to gramophone and band music, and everyone entered into the spirit of the occasion. The proceedings were enlivened by the exploding of fireworks, but the crowd was very well behaved. During the evening the mayor appeared on the Town Hall balcony and called for cheers for the King and Queen and for the Services. There was a vociferous response. Thanksgiving services in various churches and chapels were generally well attended, the Mayor and members of the Corporation visiting Preston Parish Church. Celebrations were not confined to the Town Centre. In many of the bedecked districts bonfires were lit, rockets went up, and effigies of Hitler were burned. Young people gathered round the fires for community singing.

## **'PLUS ONE' CELEBRATION'**

VE Day plus one was to a large number 'view day'. Tours by bus and on foot took people through some colourfully decorated areas. Bright warm sunshine made the parks and countryside particularly attractive, and easily the most popular rendezvous was Avenham Park with Preston Excelsior Band playing selections and dance music. Tennis cricket and bowls were popular in all areas. Later in the day there were large crowds in Fishergate and on the Market Square, where there was dancing to band and gramophone music. Coloured lights and floodlighting added to the gaiety. From early in the afternoon until 11 pm buses carried almost full loads.

The drivers and conductors accepted the position as a wartime job, and the public have been very considerate towards us, said an official. Traffic by rail is said to be 'similar to an ordinary Sunday' with a few trippers to Blackpool. In response to a request by a deputation which called at his house last night, the Mayor lit a children's bonfire at Ashton-on-Ribble. He walked up to the site, in a field, along a path of corrugated sheets, instead of the customary red carpet. Elmsey-street was the scene of a big Preston street party, yesterday, when the firewatchers entertained the children. They had a procession headed by a 'Unity' banner made from black-out material, and led by four clowns. Mothers of the children contributed rations for a splendid tea, and then there was a bonfire, with community singing. Cadley's Fete. The sum of £55 was raised for the Red Cross by a Victory Fete at Cadley. The Victory King and Queen' – chosen from the schoolchildren – were crowned yesterday afternoon, and then there was a procession around the district. Goods were auctioned and refreshments sold for the Red Cross. At night after a big bonfire had died down, there was flood-lighted dancing and singing at the home of Mr and Mrs R Burton. Fulwood Council arranged a striking display of 33 Allied flags outside the Methodist Chapel at Witherby Trees. At night, floodlighting made the effect even more impressive. Notable in the Preston celebration was two year old Pat Walmsley, wearing her Victory outfit, an attractive dress and beret, in red, white and blue which her mother who lives at 127 New Hall-lane had made specially for the occasion. Pat's father is serving with the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean.

**A VE Day Pledge** – When he retired from the secretaryship of the Clog Fund, a year or two ago, Mr W P Williams, former headmaster of Ribblesdale School, was presented with a handsome pipe of pre-war vintage. He placed it on his desk and undertook not to 'break it in' until peace had been declared, and that promise I know he has kept. I envy him his satisfaction when he loads up with his special brand of tobacco and applies the match, knowing that he has kept his pledge.

*The Lancashire Daily Post May 10th 1945*



# 'DADDY DUNN' Preston Pioneer of Gas Lighting

## Town's Proud Boast – A Kindly Priest and His Hobby

Was Preston the first provincial town to use gas for public lighting?

Is it true that Preston Parish Church was the first public place of worship to use gas light? Or was it St Wilfred's in Chapel Street, Preston? If you are interested in such questions read on. You will find as the central figure of the story one of those forceful, eccentric little men who made Preston famous in the past by sheer dynamic determination to do good to others – whether they liked it or not. Father Joseph Dunn, Rector of St Wilfred's for over 50 years, friend of the needy of all sects and creeds, lover of all children, the man who compelled Preston to adopt gas lighting, will always rank in the forefront of Preston's great men. Father Dunn was over 70 years of age when the Preston



Town Commissioners signed the first contract for street lighting on February 20th, 1815. He had made many experiments with gas and gas lights in his spare time for nearly a quarter of a century, and he was the moving spirit of the enterprise at Stonyhurst College that came to a head when the large schoolroom was lighted by gas for the first time on Monday, February 18th, 1811. What Father Dunn's experiments were and how far they went may never be fully known, but he was so convinced of the great public benefit of the new light that he over rode all opposition. Everybody's Friend. Joseph Dunn was not a native of Preston, but of Catterick Bridge, near Richmond, Yorkshire. Educated at the Jesuit English College at St Omers from a very early age, and later at Liege, he became a great scholar and was sent as a missionary to England. He came to Preston in 1775 as an assistant to Father Nicholas Sewell, and remained in Preston as a Catholic pastor for 52 years. During that time he raised funds for the building of St Wilfred's Chapel in 1793 and the Fox-street Catholic School in 1814. He was so universally popular with the people in all ranks of life and of every sect or creed that he was affectionately known as 'Daddy Dunn'. 'The best beggar I ever knew' was one tribute to Father Dunn. The secret of his success was that he begged just as whole-heartedly for every good cause, whether Catholic or Protestant, and gave generously to all. The greatest wonder was how he found any spare time for so many outside activities, and especially for his gas-making experiments. In the early years of the 19th century the use of gas as illuminant instead of candles or oil-lamps began to be talked of as a practical commercial possibility. In a paper read before the Royal Society in 1739, Dr James Clayton described his experiments in producing carburetted hydrogen from coal and enclosing it in bladders or glass vessels which could be ignited at pleasure. He spoke of the inflammability of coal gas as being well known to chemists for many years past. First Gas Engineer. William Murdock, a mining engineer at Redruth, Cornwall, carried practical experiments to successful illumination in 1792, and after further experiments in early producing gas from wood, peat and coal, of various kinds at his home in Ayrshire, he was engaged to set up his apparatus at the Soho Foundry of Messrs Boulton and Watts at Birmingham in 1798. This was the first building where coal gas was used as an illuminant on a large scale. Mr Murdock was awarded Count Rumford's medal by the Royal Society in 1808 for his paper on the use of coal gas as a commercial possibility. In this paper he gave details of the commercial use of coal gas at the cotton mill of Messrs Phillip and Lees, Manchester, 'the most extensive mill in the world', where the counting house,

store rooms, dwelling adjoining, and all the rooms in the mill were lighted by coal gas alone. The engineer of that commercial installation, which had been at work since early in 1805, was Mr Samuel Clegg of Manchester. A certain Monsieur le Bon startled all Paris by lighting his house in the suburbs by gas produced from wood in the winter of 1802, and was awarded a Government patent for his discovery. In England, a Mr Northern, of Leeds, wrote a paper in the 'Monthly Magazine' for April, 1805, on the production of coal gas as a substitute for candlelight. He does not seem to have taken his experiments much further than the laboratory. In 1803, Mr Adolph Winsor, a German chemist, exhibited gaslights at the Lyceum, London, carefully keeping his apparatus a profound secret, while making extravagant and mysterious claims for the new magic light. He was more of a showman than an inventor, and his wild claims evoked more ridicule than faith. Doubters. The great Sir Walter Scott writing to his friend Lockhart said 'There is a madman proposing to light London with – what do you think? - why smoke'. Even the learned Sir Humphrey Davy was so sceptical that he refused to consider Winsor's new gas light as a serious proposition. By persistent showmanship, Winsor won support enough to set up works and take out a patent, and he lighted the whole of Pall Mall, from St James Palace to Cockspur-street with gas lights on the night of January 28th, 1807. It was not until the close of the year 1810 that the Royal Letters Patent were granted for the formation of the London Gas Light and Coke Co., and the concession was so hampered with restrictions and conditions so to make success almost impossible. A few districts in London adopted the new light in 1814. Father Dunn learned all about Monsieur le Bon's show in Paris, was in touch with Wm. Murdock, the Scots engineer, had seen the installation at Manchester and talked with Samuel Clegg, the engineer. It was through him that Clegg described his methods to the Society of Arts in 1808, and was awarded their silver medal, and that he became engineer to the London Gas Light and Coke Co. With what tireless energy Father Dunn tried and tested every theory and applied methods of his own in pursuit of his hobby. Could gas be carried about from room to room like a lamp or candle? Would wind or water put it out? Would it smell less if it passed through water first? These and a hundred other theories and problems he put to practical test. Tradition says he kept a brilliant gas-light flaring night and day, through wind, storm, rain or snow, at the corner of his Presbytery on the old Terrace on Fishergate, for years before St Wilfred's Chapel was built, to the fright of old women of both sexes. At Stonyhurst the new English College that housed his old Collegium of St Omers and Liege, he enlisted Pastor Postlewhite, the professor of chemistry and the rector, Father Wright, that 'John Bull' of a man and eager humanist keen to adopt any invention'. Was it not Father Wright who converted an old poor-house into a mill to find work for cotton hands in the time of distress, and who bought MacAdam to lay the new road to Hurst Green, the first MacAdam road in Lancashire? Stonyhurst Gasworks. Father Postlewhite, with Father Dunn and the rector of Stonyhurst behind him, planned and carried out the gasworks there, and they were in use until the electric light put them in the shade in 1922. Father Rowland, the famous meteorologist of Stonyhurst tells me that the last of the gas from the gasometer at their gas works were used up in his observatory to supply the always-burning lights for various scientific instruments there. In the famous museum at Stonyhurst is preserved a quaint relic of Father Joseph Dunn. It is the figure of a Buddhist yogi or teacher, seated on a symbolic deer that carried a fig tree branch in its mouth, the symbol of longevity and enlightenment. The old teacher carries the staff of wisdom. Father Dunn had a gas pipe fitted behind the figure, and from the tip of the staff of wisdom a bright light flamed from a cunningly devised burner, and jets of steady white flame from the nostrils of the deer. Very soon after Stonyhurst got its gas light at work in 1811. Continued next month .....

# MEMORIES OF THE FIRST ELEVEN YEARS OF A CAREER ON BRITISH RAILWAYS, INCLUDING LIGHTER MOMENTS

**LOSTOCK HALL MEMORIES** – In the mid 1960's when the first diesel shunters arrived at the depot, Neil and I installed the first diesel fuelling plant, a temporary affair of three ex-rail tankers coupled together adjacent to the fuelling road. When transferring fuel from a rail tank to these static tanks care had to be taken by the operator to close the valves in time or each tank would overflow, and gallons of fuel disappeared into the ground before a permanent plant was installed. One or two of the houses now built on the site might be sitting on an oil well ! Whilst examining the Coaling Plant I used to ride up and down on the balance weights to examine the guide rail joints. Not as dangerous as it sounds as the two weights were about 4 feet square, but I had to keep tight hold of the hoist rope. This would certainly not be allowed nowadays, along with many other steam era practices. And each year a pigeon nested on one of the weights and I had to be careful not to step on the two white eggs. She always returned, and never seemed to be put off by the 80 foot trip down and up again as a wagon of coal was tipped into the bunker. With personal transport by the Depot van often not available the five mile journey from Butler Street was usually by bus, or a Liverpool train to the station adjacent to the Shed. I soon discovered that a Stanier 2-6-4 tank engine would leave the Shed about 3.45 pm to pick up a Southport train at Preston. A little gang of railway staff would sometimes gather on the station platform to cadge a lift down to Preston. I enjoyed this, and as many as six persons, plus the crew, would squeeze onto the small footplate as the little tankie clanked its way down through Todd Lane Junction and past the Gasworks to the East Lancs side of Preston Station.

**WATER TROUGH MEMORIES** – Lea Road troughs at Salwick were sited below the level of the canal, and the water supply was gravity fed, giving no trouble as long as the canal bank sieves were kept clear of weed and debris. The water at Brock on the other hand had to be lifted 35 feet from canal level into the storage tank before supplying the troughs. In the event of a pump failure a float switch on the tank warned of low water by operating a buzzer in Brock signalbox, some 200 yards away. The signaller notified Control, and the message was passed to O.D.M. This gave us time to get to site and re-prime or repair the pump before the tank was emptied and the troughs ran dry. On one occasion the buzzer failed to operate, and with the tank empty it was panic stations. With no priming head of water the local Fire Brigade had to be called out to put sufficient water in the tank to restart the pump. The float switch was found to be working correctly, the fault being caused by a wedge of paper jammed in the buzzer ... of course none of the signallers admitted responsibility, and it could have been jammed for weeks from a previous failure, the constant buzzing would obviously cause annoyance ! But a good example of a failsafe procedure being defeated by human intervention. Another word on water supplies: apart from the Preston area, Preston-Kendal canal also supplied water to Lancaster Station and Green Ayre locoshed, Hest Bank troughs, and Carnforth Station and locoshed. How many thousands of gallons would have been supplied daily from this old waterway ? And finally, when the canal was foreshortened at Preston, and the aqueduct demolished at the foot of Aqueduct Street in around the mid sixties, a new pumphouse had to be constructed at the canal head and a pipe laid to connect into the existing system.

**OTHER MEMORIES** – At Barton and Broughton, north of Preston, prior to a Track Renewal job, the Permanent Way staff had unloaded one of the large generator sets on to the



trackside that were in use in those days. Myself and Big Stan and a couple of mates were setting up temporary lighting. I was fitting a new set of injectors into the cylinder heads. With one still to couple up I can't remember the reason why someone turned the starting handle but there was a loud 'PHUT' and the injector shot out of the hole on the compression stroke, and we found it up the embankment yards away. Only now can this scary story be told !!! On Blackburn Station the staff messroom was gas lit, the only daylight coming from a small skylight. A large cast iron kettle simmered permanently on the gas stove – it was always a pleasure to go in for a brew on a cold day in winter. It was very warm, with a sickly sweet smell. With the gentle hissing of the gas lamp and stove I probably nodded off part way through my cup of tea, probably being slowly poisoned by carbon monoxide. Nobody ever stayed in there for long. Winter 1962-63 at Brock troughs, and gangs of men on duty round the clock, icebreaking. Every loco that took water splashed gallons all over, adding to the ice, till the running rails were nearly covered. As the ice was broken with picks and shovels it was thrown onto the embankment, leaving it 3 or 4 feet deep, and it was still there in May 63 when bluebells were out in the adjacent wood.

One evening, being called out as I was having my tea – an 8" water main had burst in the trackside at Fylde Road, with water running off the bridge and down the road. Police were on site directing the traffic, and Up trains stopped because ballast had been washed away under the track. I isolated the supply to stop the leakage and arranged for trains to pass at reduced speed. Civil Engineers' Staff worked through the night to renew a length of main pipe. One afternoon, watching the demolition of Preston Shed Coaling Plant in 1965. Seeing contractors battering the structure with the iron ball without success. Going back to Butler Street to clock off, and in the morning finding out that it fell just a half hour after I left.

At Garstang and Catterall station one winter's day lying on the sleepers in the sidings under a Plasser Tamper dismantling the rear axle differential gear while a stiff westerly wind blew snow in horizontally at me, at the wondering if I was in the right job! And in the signalbox later, thawing out and having a brew, being invited by Bobby (signalman) to pull the lever for the Knott End branch signal some half a mile to the north. Failing miserably then watching as this small wiry man crashed the lever over with ease. I tried on another couple of occasions but I never did manage it. Also at Garstang, going into the Creamery adjacent to the station for hot buttered toast and coffee in the canteen there, sold at extremely cheap prices. The downside of the 60's was the regular and depressing loss of work for the Department. Steam loco sheds closed, Preston, Blackpool Spen Dyke, Lower Darwen, Skipton, Accrington, Fleetwood, Blackpool North. Fortunately the last three in the country were in our area, being Lostock Hall, Rose Grove and Carnforth. As freight patterns changed, Goods yards and warehouses closed, together with their cranes, capstans, handling equipment and Yard lighting. Water supplies were less required... Lea Road troughs were decommissioned. It was also depressing to realise the rate at which steam engines were being scrapped. Seeing dead locomotives with motion rods removed being towed through the station on their way to various breaker's yards.

Suddenly I realised that I would never again see on of Stanier's magnificent 'Semi's' passing through. Living within sight of the railway at Ribble Sidings as a child I had known them since the end of the war. Seeing the great black bulk of streamlined 'City of Lancaster' and others, and watching eagerly for the final pair of the Class, Nos. 46256/57, built in 1947. Watching them heading south along the embankment at Factory Lane, with the tender pushers occasionally shooting their twin jets of steam into the air. Truly unforgettable engines !

***By Robin Bamber .... More next month***

# Diary of James Green 305712

**8th King's Liverpool Regt.**

**B.E.F. France**

**1914-1918**



Got marked 'D111' by the doctor, May go to Heaton Park later on. Started on treatment here. What a waste of good stuff. I am being treated for a few weeks then I have to go before a 'Travelling Board' (medical). I should get something out of it, I hope so.

I have had the Medical Board, they could not class me on account of not having an eye report from the specialist, got it the day after the board had gone. The report said my eyesight had been impaired so I don't know what will happen now. I have been put on a light job until the board come round again. I am in charge of the coal yard. It's a good job, still, I don't like the place. My girl, Emily, came down on her holidays and spent a week here. A girl called Dora Dawson, she travelled down in the train with, got her lodgings in the house of one of the Leeds City footballers, I think it was Hampson. A lot of the Leeds footballers used to come down. I used to go to the house every night, I was made very welcome with them all. Emily had a wonderful holiday Dora used to take her to her father's and mother's house in the country she had the run of the place. Wish I was out of the army for her sake. It's rotten having to keep parting. I am sick of it. I feel a lot lonelier since she has gone back.

**Friday August 30th.** Same old routine. I drew 12/- pay. Last night me and Edwards treated ourselves to a ham and egg supper and a picture show after. It's the last we will have together as he is going to Chester to the Army Pay Corps. I wish I was going I think my luck must have run out. Wrote to Emily at Yorkshire and we decided I should get a leave and we should get married. So I put in and got a leave. I went to Elland and we got married at the Halifax Registry Office on Saturday morning September 28th 1918. Our Billy came from Preston and was Best Man. Emily's friend, Edith Taylor, was Bridesmaid her father gave her away. We went back home, had a party and me and Emily left and went to Blackpool. We stayed at her Aunt Caroline's house in Whitegate Drive. We had a lovely time. I wrote for an extension and got 2 days, we went back home to Elland. Emily's mother had not been to well, she was ill. I went back to camp, hung around, then the Armistice was declared. A week later I was on my way back to France again. I was drafted to the 'Royal Army Service Corps'. I was put in charge of a group of

26 Chinese, I had to take them round the food sheds and tell them what I wanted and they carried it to the railway wagons and loaded it for our troops going up into Germany. That lasted a few weeks then I lost the Chinese and got a group of Germans instead. They were a lazy lot. I had a German Sergeant Major he was my interpreter. I was doing very well I could tell them what I wanted and how many, I could count up to a hundred in German also I learnt to count up to a hundred in Chinese, so I was well away with the job.

About this time an order came out that any long serving soldier who had a job to go back to could apply to his employer for his release. I wrote to my father and he saw the manager at 'Horrockses Mill'. The manager knew me very well it was old Hodgkinson so I got my release. I left the camp and went down to the base, crossed over to England, travelled by train to Catterick Camp, stayed there 1 night and was demobilised next day. I drew all my clothes allowance, kit money and sent a telegram to Emily. I arrived at Elland Station and dashed to Emily's house. She had not got the telegram in time as she was at work.

Ah well, that's the end. I am now:

MR GREEN  
Civilian

We believe these articles from the Lancashire Daily Post relate to the James Green of the above diary -

**NEW AMATEUR FORWARD FOR NORTH END** - North End have signed as an amateur, James Green, local forward, standing 5 ft 8 ½ in, weighing in at 10 ½ stone, who hopes to be demobilised from the Kings Liverpool Regiment in a few days. Green, though only 19, is a player of distinct promise. He occasionally assisted the club in wartime, and originally figured at inside left, but his real position is in the outside berth. He is the 16th forward signed by the club this season.  
Friday August 29th, 1919.

**CHANGE IN NORTH END'S ATTACK** – The most interesting feature of the selections for North End's first game in the Central League is the bringing back of James Green to his old position at outside left in which he shaped very well in the Cup-tie against Stockport County in January. He was subsequently moved to the inside position, but this has been given for tomorrow's game at Bolton to Greveson, who has hitherto figured on the extreme of the left flank. Casuer, who received a kick over the eye in the last practice game will keep the goal. The Wanderer's reserve have chosen a strong eleven.

Friday, August 27th 1920

# A PRESTON LAD

The trouble is our memory tends to let us down and our yesteryears are shorter in the telling and as a result my story is nearing its end. I left school at Whitsuntide, along with Norman Waddington, Jimmy Hogg and another Waddington, no relation to Norman, whose date of birth was the same as mine, 24th April, 1917. We two orphanage boys, Norman Waddington and myself were found jobs on farms. Norman went first to a farm in Garstang, and I went to a place in Cuerdale in the October. It was about a mile as the crow flies from the orphanage, and as I got clear of the trees I was looking in the opposite direction to the scene I had often look upon from my former bedroom window, ironical indeed. Miss Hall gave us the facts of life by telling us 'If you don't let your hand go past a girl's knee you won't come to any harm'. The headmaster Mr Lamb's advice was 'Keep out of the hands of police, lawyers, moneylenders and doctors'. One good thing happened to me about three months before I left school. Mr Lamb wanted to know why I was late so often. 'My best scholar, top of the school, spoiled by being late'. I explained that I had to do my quota of work before I came, he enquired what I had to do, I told him and he took notes. He must have taken it up with someone important because I had not left school three months when I saw one of the Home lads and he informed me that they did not do any work hardly now. A charwoman had been hired to do all the cleaning etc, and they got tuppence to spend each week. Best of all was, as they left, lodgings were found for them and they were entering jobs with a trade. I had missed out again.

The time arrived for me to leave the orphanage that had been my home for the past seven years or so. I never even bade the boys, who had been my fellow boarders goodbye. The man who would now control my life came for me while the other children were at school. Miss Hall grudgingly shook my hand and wished my well. I never saw her again. I only returned once and that was to show my erstwhile friends my new bike, swanking I suppose. Miss Hall was not in residence, being her night off. Miss Taylor, the girls mother, invited me in to have supper with the boys. A decade or so later, Ivy and Sunny Bank became under the jurisdiction of Preston Corporation, and a certain Miss Florence Oliver was matron. She could not help but be an improvement on Miss Lily Hall. The misguided religious bigot with the cruel streak in her, which made her tyrant and caused me so much misery and unhappiness. In later years I read her obituary in the local paper, she also left fifty pounds to the children of the Homes she had previously ruled with an iron fist, conscience maybe. I wonder how God greeted her. She was a great believer in the recording angel .... And had she a record! I have no photos of myself to accompany this missive. I had some given to me by Mr Thornley, which I ripped up in a fit of pique when I fell out with him. I have rued doing that ever since, childhood photos from the age of one to seven. I might have been clever at school, but I think I had a slate or two missing in other directions. My first job on a farm, the smell, the back break, the hours, the pay. I hated everything about it, but then that's another tale.

**This is where Volume 1 of 'A Preston Lad' ends, we now take up Eric's memories written about his life when he left the orphanage in Brockholes View.**

**A PRESTON LAD VOLUME TWO – Teenage years and early twenties.** I have now left school at Whitsuntide and all my days are now being spent entirely at the orphanage, full time. Thank goodness Norman Waddington finished school at the same time, at least I have company, fancy a twenty four hour day in close proximity to Miss Hall. Its now August and Norman has been informed that he has been found a position on a farm in Garstang and will

be leaving anytime. Miss Hall bought him a good leather suitcase that fastened with straps, a nice gift for him. Miss Hall informed me not to expect anything, only good riddance from her. If she bought me anything I would flog it at the first opportunity anyway. I was sorry to see Norman leave knowing I might never see him again. His brother, Bob, left two years ago, and they haven't seen each other since. They did meet during the war years when Bob was on leave from the army. Norman stayed at his place of work, he was not called up, as he was on war work. The days passed slowly and seemed to last a week. I had to listen to the name of Norman being lauded to the skies by 'Horrible Hall', and why could it not have been me that had gone first. I agreed on the last part. Then in late September I was told that I too had been found a place and that my new master, that was the word used, I felt like a slave, would be coming to collect me. The year is 1931 and I at fourteen years of age started work. Come to that I had been a working lad since I was seven. I can never understand the teenagers of today. Some say they are bored so some indulge in fighting, stealing, wrecking any they come across. The authorities say and talk of unemployment, deprivation and shortage of money. Hell fire, we were short of money and we went to work ! The shops didn't close till nine on Saturdays. Young butcher boys had to scrub down and clean the shop after that. Woolworths and Marks and Sparks employees were busy till nine and all the factories worked Saturday mornings. The children from poor homes would all descend on the markets on Saturday evenings armed with sacks or dragging orange boxes by some raffia rope. They went through all the rubbish the stallholders had discarded. Most of the stalls by the way were lit by naphtha flares. The children, sometimes their mothers with them would pick up cabbage leaves, discarded carrots, potatoes, turnip, oranges with mould on them, apples going bad. The offending parts were cut off and consumed and enjoyed. Sometimes grapes and grapefruit, which were a real treat. I knew one family who always called on a kindly butcher and he would give them the lungs and the lights – stomach offal, etc. that was Sunday dinner and as the youngster I knew said 'Its good, we have a good dinner on the Sabbath'. 'Have you a bone for the dog' was a regular query, but it was boiled with a load of the vegetables picked up and it made soup. If we ever went to the pictures we would also go, but we were looking for any money that might have been dropped, mostly the old halfpenny, although Pongo Wareing once found a half a crown, and Bert Sutcliffe found a florin, or two bob as we called them, right outside the police station in Earl Street. Twice I found a fag packet half full of cigarettes. I didn't smoke really then, so I halved them with Eddie Turner. Once Saturday was over, we were all broke for the week, so we would stand on the corner of the main road one night a week, naming cars by their radiators, Ruby's, Trojans, Jowetts, Lanchesters, Vauxhalls, with their distinctive bonnets, Singers, Standards, (I once bought a Standard Big Nine, had a fabric body) the odd Leyland Straight Eight and the quiet running Velocette (motorbike) with the water cooled engine. The three wheeled Morgans, the Baby Austin Seven. There were still steam wagons on the road – lets see – there was Hankins, I think their depot was in Salmon Street, off London Rd. The two sons Ben and Jack attended the same school as I had done, St Marys C of E, older than myself and I recollect that Ben was a good drawer. He always had some drawings pinned up when he was in Standard 7. Jona A Leys the corn millers had some steamers, they were based in Mill Lane, Walton Le Dale. Chris Mallinson, brother of my first employer drove one. Vineys, whose headquarters were in Water Lane was another who used steamers for transport, as did Ingham and Tippings at Bamber Bridge another cattle feed manufacturer. They did the Liverpool run bringing grain etc to their mills. They could do a fair old bat, sixty mph at times.

***More next month ..... By Arthur Eric Crook (1917 –1997)***

# My Mate



I've been sittin' starin', starin' at 'is muddy pair of boots,  
And tryin' to convince meself it's 'im.  
(Look out there, lad! That sniper—'e's a dysey when 'e shoots;  
'E'll be layin' of you out the same as Jim.)

Jim as lies there in the dug-out wiv 'is blanket round 'is 'ead,  
To keep 'is brains from mixin' wiv the mud;  
And 'is face as white as putty, and 'is overcoat all red,  
Like 'e's spilt a bloomin' paint-pot—but it's blood.

And I'm tryin' to remember of a time we wasn't pals.  
'Ow often we've played 'ookey, 'im and me;  
And sometimes it was music-'alls, and sometimes it was gals,  
And even there we 'ad no disagree.  
For when 'e copped Mariar Jones, the one I liked the best,  
I shook 'is 'and and loaned 'im 'arf a quid;  
I saw 'im through the parson's job, I 'elped 'im make 'is nest,  
I even stood god-farther to the kid.

So when the war broke out, sez 'e: "Well, wot abaht it, Joe?"  
"Well, wot abaht it, lad?" sez I to 'im.  
'Is missis made a awful fuss, but 'e was mad to go,  
( 'E always was 'igh-sperrited was Jim).  
Well, none of it's been 'eaven, and the most of it's been 'ell,  
But we've shared our baccy, and we've 'alved our bread.  
We'd all the luck at Wipers, and we shaved through Noove Chapelle,  
And . . . that snipin' barstard gits 'im on the 'ead.

Now wot I wants to know is, why it wasn't me was took?  
I've only got meself, 'e stands for three.  
I'm plainer than a louse, while 'e was 'andsome as a dook;  
'E always was a better man than me.  
'E was goin' 'ome next Toosday; 'e was 'appy as a lark,  
And 'e'd just received a letter from 'is kid;  
And 'e struck a match to show me, as we stood there in the dark,  
When . . . that bleedin' bullet got 'im on the lid.

'E was killed so awful sudden that 'e 'adn't time to die.  
'E sorto jumped, and came down wiv a thud.  
Them corpsy-lookin' star-shells kept a-streamin' in the sky,  
And there 'e lay like nothin' in the mud.  
And there 'e lay so quiet wiv no mansard to 'is 'ead,  
And I'm sick, and blamed if I can understand:  
The pots of 'alf and 'alf we've 'ad, and ZIP! like that—'e's dead,  
Wiv the letter of 'is nipper in 'is 'and.

There's some as fights for freedom and there's some as fights for fun,  
But me, my lad, I fights for bleedin' 'ate.  
You can blame the war and blast it, but I 'opes it won't be done  
Till I gets the bloomin' blood-price for me mate.  
It'll take a bit o' bayonet to level up for Jim;  
Then if I'm spared I think I'll 'ave a bid,  
Wiv 'er that was Mariar Jones to take the place of 'im,  
To sorter be a farther to 'is kid.



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