

## PART FOUR: WORKING CLASS BEGINNINGS, 1929-1942

**O**n<sup>1</sup> the 7th July 1929 I was born in a small “Two-up-two-down” terraced house built in the mid nineteenth century by a cotton mill owner for a weaver’s family in a small industrial town, Rishton. This house, 24 Henry St, was my paternal Grandmother’s home. My parents married on 24th December 1928 to legitimize my birth: I had in fact been conceived “out of wedlock”. Through taking out a double mortgage which covered the entire cost of the purchase, they soon bought 25 Clarke Street. It must have been an enormous financial struggle. This also was a terraced house, a hundred yards from the coal mine, the pit where my father worked. Slightly larger than 24 Henry Street, it had a bathroom and hot running water heated by a back boiler situated behind the open fire in the living room. (My father told me that when his mother, who was crippled with arthritis, came to tea she insisted on washing up because, she said, “I have never lived in a house with hot running water”. That must have been balm to her arthritic hands.) That was my home until I left to work at Farnborough Royal Aircraft Establishment in 1949.

[See also [Part 7](#) re my early childhood. I think Richard Hoggart speaks of the ‘silence of childhood’, but I cannot remember the reference.]

### 1. FAMILY BACKGROUND AND ASPIRATIONS

<sup>2</sup>My attempts last week to get on with my vocational autobiography have shown me that I am prone to exaggerate the vocationally inhibiting aspects of my early life. Producing a balanced account is proving to be enormously difficult if not impossible. My mother and father were utterly committed to doing anything they could to help me to “get on”. They were “for me” all the way. To my shame I have not acknowledged this in my recent reflections. They were all for me going to the grammar school. At end I got a scholarship but I am convinced that there would have been no question on their part of my taking it up. Without doubt they would have made it possible just as they did when I passed the exams for the Junior Technical School. With some emotions the memory of an incident comes to mind with some emotions which confirms this. My father saw a draft of Human and Religious Factors in Church and Community Work when he was staying with us, probably in 1981. When he read the dedication “to my mother

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1 2.10.08

2 6.10.08



*I believe this was my Maternal Grandmother with my mother in 1900. Her name was Jane (Hudson) before she married my grandfather. Tragically she died in giving birth to Thomas (named after my grandfather) who also died in 1907. She was only 28 yrs of age.*

and father to whom I owe so much", he filled up and said, "We were not much help to you". To which I replied that they did all that they could and I appreciated that. I cannot remember seeing him so moved unless it was when I had to tell him the heartbreaking news that my mother was dying or when Elaine was killed. Understandably they had a much better understanding of the nature and value of technical vocational training than they had of general academic education. They had direct personal experience of that.

My father had studied mining at Burnley Municipal Technical College at night school classes in the early 30's and got his deputy certificate. (As I understand it he refused to go on to take a colliery manager's qualification because he took offence at being disqualified for a prize because he did not live in Burnley – or something like that.) Doing those studies must have been extraordinarily difficult for both him and my mother. His work underground at the pit was physically very tiring. They had two or three small children. Financially it must have been punishing – he told me that on some occasions he had to borrow sixpence from his mother for his fare to Burnley. All this shows how they were able to see the long-term advantages of getting the qualifications and disciplined to sacrifice to get them. In my teens I was aware of and impressed by my mother's ability to think long-term, to plan and to save to achieve objectives such as buying new clothes, furniture and equipment and raising money for holidays and events. So in some important respects they

had surmounted the short-term and living for immediate gratification associated with some working class people.

<sup>3</sup>As a family we were certainly working class, or more precisely a working class family which was hard working, disciplined, living decent lives but not particularly religious and aspiring to a better standard of living. So, for instance, as my father earned more money we enjoyed a higher standard of living and the house was improved. Whilst I hesitate to use such language, I suppose we were approaching the top end of the working class community but we were not lower middle class by any means. Socially, they were above and beyond us in attitudes, status and speech and way of life – and we knew and accepted it as the way things were even if we felt this should be different. We were deferential to them and all too easily made to feel uncomfortable and put at a disadvantage. <sup>4</sup>My father, I think, tended to be more deferential than my mother, she was a socialist, a member of the Independent Labour Party. So was my father but not as passionate about social issues as my mother. But then I think he was socially more adept than she was in these encounters – possibly because of his experiences in the army of relating to officers in carefully regulated, ordered and hierarchically structured relationships in which he knew his place and how he had to behave.

[I can trace these encounters back to my attitudes to and my relationships with people who had gone to grammar school and particularly Raymond Routledge. I began to feel inferior. They increased in my teenage and early twenties. I certainly felt them, for instance, when I went to the RAE and Richmond.

As I write this I am reliving (or revisiting as they now say) some of the negative effects upon me of encounters with



*My father, mother and me, c 1930*

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3 7.10.08

4 8.10.08

those better educated than me and from what is generally considered to be a socially superior group or class. (This is taking me into a very complicated area of my life and is emotionally disturbing. I wonder whether I should continue, I will and see where it takes me!). Words that come to mind which describe aspects of the complex direct/immediate psycho-physical effects upon me of these experiences when they occur are: disconcerted, thrown, intimidated, overawed, ill-at-ease, inferior, embarrassed, insecure. I lose confidence. My ability to communicate is impaired. I am likely to do something out of character and even compromise myself. I have had these experiences throughout my life. The circumstances under which they occur have changed as my social, personal and professional circumstances have changed and I have become in many ways “middle class”. The frequency and intensity of them has become less but I can still have them. Undoubtedly they have many causes: my psychological make up/constitution; my personal formation; my early socialization, formation and education. Whatever the initiating causes might have been the sustaining cause is my lack of what I think of as a proper education in the arts or is it my lack of ability in this field? I am very conscious of this. To be more precise it is my feeling that I have never mastered the grammar of my own language and never learned other languages except the basics of NT Greek. And this feeling continues even though I can be fluent and write quite well at times. (Possibly more on this later, there is certainly much more to be said!)

Another cause is that in my earlier days, possibly up to my mid-twenties, I tended to think of people from middle and upper classes to be innately or intrinsically more intelligent and clever than me. Possibly because, generally speaking, they talked better than I did and used language more correctly and accurately than I did or people in my culture did. For instance they made greater and better use of subordinate clauses (cf Basil Bernstein’s work.) Similarly I thought that people who had had a more traditional and arts based education than me were ipso facto clever or more intelligent than me. How stupid could I be!

At this point I need to simply note long-term effects to be considered in more detail later.

- a love-hate relationship with middle and upper class modes of life and culture; (I have been variously repulsed and critical of it and attracted and envious of it. I have aspired to a different culture, roughly middle class and I am now comfortable in it.)
- a love-dislike (I cannot say hate) of working class culture; (I am attracted by some aspects of it but highly critical of other aspects.)

- snobbish to my shame;
- intolerant;
- reactionary and sometimes bolshie and uncooperative.
- at the same time envious of some aspects of upper class people especially their confidence and their assuredness of their own worth, value, place in society and rights.

The truth of the matter, I suppose, is that I no longer belong exclusively to any one class. I am a native of and a refugee from a working class community and a resident or a naturalized member of a middle class community. My class identity is somewhere between them: characteristics of both are interwoven complexly within my persona. Thank God that above all I am a “citizen of no mean city”, the Kingdom of God.

## **SILENCE AS A MEANS OF CONTROL AND PUNISHMENT**

<sup>5</sup>My father used silence as a means of control and punishment and a way of showing his disapproval. He simply did not speak to anyone who had crossed him for days or even weeks. I suffered greatly from this. The way in which he did it made me feel that I had lost my place; I did not exist to him at such times. I hated it. He used this inter-personal device to elicit confessions or to get me to ‘tell the truth’ or to beg for forgiveness. Prof. John G. McKenzie wrote the attached article on ‘The Cruelty of Silence’ in 1958. I have kept it ever since. It helped me to understand my experience. To my utter shame, I too have used this frightful control mechanism – even though, or possibly because I had found it so painful and undermining. For months if not for years I deployed it against my sister Ruth and both Molly and I have used it in relation to each other. God forgive me. Mercifully I cannot remember using it against my children.

## **2. ELEMENTARY SCHOOLING**

Returning to my early childhood, I was not aware of much interaction with middle class people or possibly more precisely I did not see my parents interacting with them apart from the doctor, dentist, and occasionally the minister. My extended family was much as we were. Some of them were a bit better off. Auntie Constance mixed with quite well to do people. My parents didn’t go to church except on special occasions. Most of the people in the church to which we went to Sunday School, Mary Street, were much as we were but there were some professional people (mainly teachers) and

a farming family who were near to being middle class. In the day school, Rishton Wesleyan Day School which I attended until I was thirteen some of the children came from similar families, a very small number from lower middle class but most were from lower working class families.

<sup>6</sup>This latter group were rough and tough and hardened. The boys could fight viciously. One of their combative tricks, for instance, was to kick their clogs at their opponent or victim in such a way as to hit them preferably on the head. It was much easier to do this with shoe shaped clogs with clasp fittings rather than donkey clogs (like boots). And iron shot clogs (similar to horse shoes) were more deadly than those with “rubbers” on. (Iron ones were much more prized because you could make sparks by striking them on the flags, pavement stones, as you ran down the street. My mother didn’t like me wearing these!). Some boys were expert at the art; they flicked open the clasp of the clog with the other and with a sharp kick sent the clog gyrating in accurate trajectories towards their victim, at times over a long distance. Rarely did I fight. Once I did so in the “back”, a cobbled alleyway that ran down the rear of the houses. It was an intensive fight, arms and legs thrashing around. I have no idea what it was about but I can still feel the anger and the emotion of the experience and the cries of the group senseless egging us on. Nor can I remember the other boy or who won. As I walked away I was really shaken.

For the main part I was clever (? more intelligent) and more sensitive than most of the boys. From being nine or ten until I was thirteen I was in Mr. “Billy” Shaw’s class. My place was on the left hand side of a long front row desk which, I think seated four boys. The others often copied my work. When Mr. Shaw inspected the work he invariably started at the other end which gave me the opportunity to correct any mistakes he identified in the copied work! Shaw, the headmaster and teacher of the “top” class was vicious. One of his favorite terms of rebuke was “blithering idiot!” which was frequently accompanied by a swipe across the head. He was so vicious that I was occasionally knocked off the desk by his striking a boy at the other end. There was, in fact, a considerable amount of violence in the school between teaching staff and students and between students of both sexes, some of which was sexual. From time to time a boy punished by Mr Shaw, “I’ll get my brother/father to see to you when he comes up the pit.” And in some cases the said elder brother/father would come into the class in their “pit black”. On a few occasions I saw Shaw pinned to the blackboard if he had not managed to lock himself in his office. Corporal punishment coupled with authoritarianism was repressive and generated

fearful submission. For me, and I think for others, it was not an atmosphere conducive to learning and good experiences of education, anything but.

Most subjects and lessons I managed without undue difficulty. In my two final years I was bored I now realize, under-stretched. The predictability of the syllabus was monotonous. An incident occurred when I was probably twelve. Shaw asked the class when a number is divisible by five. He chose me to answer: "When it ends in 5 or 0," I said. "Very good Lovell, how did you know that?" "Because you told us so last year, Sir." He was not pleased! Two subjects were a nightmare to me, literally so. I dreaded them. Poetry and music were on Wednesday and Friday afternoons I remember. I could not remember poetry and when I did it went from my head as I panicked and got into a state when asked to stand and recite a set piece. "How is it, Lovell, that you can do arithmetic but not poetry, your sister (in the same class for a time) does it beautifully?" No answer! The other was music. I cannot sing. This annoyed him enormously. Music was his first love. I believe he had wanted to be a professional musician or a music teacher but had not achieved this same to his deep frustration and disappointment which he took out on us. During some lessons he would stand us in a line and we had to sing whilst he played on the piano. I would try. He would get very angry and berate us that someone was out of tune. Then he would insist we sing and come along the line until he found the culprit, me. Another angry outburst as though I was doing it purposefully. It was my first experience of the double bind: it was simply impossible for all to sing and for the group to be in tune. Eventually he learnt and when we assembled in the school yard before the music lesson he would say, "All into the music class except Lovell who will do spellings!" It was a relief but humiliating.

A recurring experience I had of Billy Shaw was quite disturbing and unnerving. Having set us work to do privately he would raise the lid of his tall teacher's desk, manicure his nails and talk to himself in a muttering voice. As I looked at him my gaze could become transfixed and his head and shoulders were framed by a halo effect and appeared quite disembodied. It was only in the late 60's when I was studying the psychology of education that I realized that I was being hypnotized by fear. (I think it was whilst reading E A Peel's book *The Psychological Basis of Education* but I cannot locate the passage that revealed this to me.)

All in all it is not surprising that I failed the eleven plus examination even though Billy Shaw worked hard to get us through despite his oft repeated "blithering idiot" with its meaning that we were contemptible. Sadly, part of me feels he meant it, but I cannot deny he seriously tried to enable us

35 West Street  
Olney  
11<sup>th</sup> September 2011

Dear George & Molly,

You must wonder why it has taken me so long to reply to one of the most wonderful letters I have ever received. I was most moved by your letter & it was a bad fall (which like happily was nearly successful from) which physically prevented me from writing.

Your letter brought back so much to me and I will treasure it always. I wish I could express as movingly all your friendship means to me.

My view about education (or one of them) is that often the wrong things are valued. Grammar is a mechanical process in a way and so is/was selection for grammar schools. The 11+ was a lottery. I happened to get a grammar school, <sup>booked</sup> place because my mother went to the Student Educational

to aspire to a grammar school education. But more of that anon. Nor is it surprising that I have suffered from - and still do - a feeling that I did not have a good basic education. Nonetheless, I owe Billy Shaw a great debt because it was he who pointed me to and entered me for a Junior Technical Scholarship and the beginnings of my route first to my career as an engineer and then to my vocation as a minister.



with her Welsh friend & they coached their children & compared notes. If I had only the school I went to to rely on, I would have failed - for we only learnt how to do long division (for example) a few weeks before the 'scholarship' exam. Any sensible system would have accepted you & thought itself lucky, but the 11+ was not a sensible system. When you compare this with the kind of education you gave to hundreds of us (some with Oxford etc degrees) over the years - THERE IS NO COMPARISON. And through this and on top of this we have our friendships and you have represented, better than I ever could, what it means to us.

It is truly wonderful to think that way back in 1960 two people, three really, were accepting to dedicate their lives to God's work in completely different ways, in different communities & God knew they would be true friends one day, in his good time. God of Surprises indeed.

Thank God. And may God continue to bless you both.

With my love, Margaret

### 3. FAILED ELEVEN PLUS AND ALL THAT

<sup>7</sup>For whatever reasons or motivation Billy Shaw (as he was generally referred to but always addressed as Mr Shaw) was highly committed to getting as many people through the eleven plus examination, the gateway to a grammar school education and white collar jobs. For this he was highly regarded in the local upper working class community. My preparation for the exam was during the school year 1939–1940, the first year of the war. School life was disrupted to accommodate the education of the children who had been evacuated to Rishton. Natives of Rishton went to school in the morning – a longer morning then – during this particular year. Evacuees went in the afternoon. For much of the year I remember long afternoons

with gangs of boys in the local countryside and especially on Closebrow, a hilly area. This engendered an enormous sense of freedom and adventure that returns as I write. Apart, that is, from the afternoons we spent with Mr Shaw in coaching for the all-important examination. These took place in the lounge of the house in Blackburn Road where he lodged during the week. (He was a bachelor, I am not sure where his home was.) It was my first experience, I think, of being in a middle class house which I considered to be “posh”. Molly was in the same group but she passed the exam. As I recall it, I did very well in those sessions. I remember him complimenting me on my ideas for an essay on Rishton reservoir or my adaptation of ideas from another essay. I had been put down as a certainty to pass.

M reminded me of members of 11 plus scholarship group  
 George Bentley (failed, later was offered chance to take Technical  
 College scholarship exam but declined)  
 Eric Beaghan (failed but unclear)  
 Edna Cross (passed but did not take up place)  
 George Lovell (failed)  
 Molly Taylor (passed)

However, the examination was entirely different. It was the first examination of a public kind that I ever took. There wasn't a mock exam to prepare me! The middle class lounge took me marginally out of my comfort zone. The baronial type hall in which we sat the examination on, I think, a Saturday morning took me entirely outside it. I was utterly and completely bemused and fazed. I had never been in such a building. No one had prepared me for it. I was overwhelmed and overawed. Not surprisingly I did not put up a good show. In the months before the results came out I recall walking around avoiding the joints in the “flags” and cobbles saying to myself, “I have passed, I have not passed, I have ....”. My conclusion depended upon whether I ended on a joint or in the centre of a flag! When the results were published I had failed. After my mother, I think it must have been, I stood beside the window in our living room and sobbed my heart out. I had failed and I was a failure. Of that I was convinced and I was crying about that and the sense of despair and desolation that went with the accompanying awareness that my chances in life had been reduced, doors would not open on a wider and better world of education and work. It was devastating. As I recall the experience I realize the symbolism of standing at that window, at that time the view from it was dominated by the “pit wheels”, the iconic winding gear of the mine where my father worked. My view and my future were to be in the industrial world as a blue-collar worker. I was sobbing because a single exam had

allocated me my subordinate place in the scheme of things and of life. My status had been prescribed.

Three and a half hours later! Whilst I have retold this critical event in my life countless times I have never written in down before. Writing it brought out new nuances such as the significance of the window (see opposite for illustrations) and generated so much emotion that I had simply to distance myself from it in order to reflect further in a balanced way. So here I am after a swim and lunch! Feelings that still surround the event sixty eight years later indicate how it has scarred my soul and marred my life. I have never got over it completely, I remember Molly and Catherine saying that. The fall out has been experienced in my feeling inferior, a lack of confidence, at a decided disadvantage, outside the main academic stream. This latter point is quite important. It left me with a feeling for years that I was pursuing a course to get the education I required in an educational stream that flowed alongside the grammar-university elite stream but which never seemed to enter it fully. A second rate education system. I was an outsider to the main stream, always marginal to it. This weighed on me most heavily after I had completed my HNC in mechanical engineering and realized that I had been deprived of a broad based education in engineering science and philosophy. I had been trained technically with an emphasis on praxis to meet the needs of industry. Realizing this made me very angry, I would be 19 or 20 at the time. I immediately enrolled for English lessons even though this meant five nights a week at night school. I felt it acutely in the Army when I did Forces Preliminary Exams to compensate. (1951) One might have expected it to have receded or disappeared when I entered a theological college and started on a BD course. Not at all, it took a different form. I found I was at a serious disadvantage because I had not had a grammar school education when I came to study Greek. Once again I found myself marginalized from the accepted educational stream. And at least one of my tutors made me feel that I had missed out big time (Marcus Ward). But more of that later. I still feel marginal to that prized stream. I need to do more work on this, I am resisting the attempt to do so now because I think there is more to unearth and get out on paper before I am able to do so to best effect.

One thing that has occurred to me which I had not thought out before, is that this experience has possibly induced deep inside me the will, desire, drive and energy to really make something of my life and to compensate for the major set-back. I am persuaded that this is so and has therefore been a blessing that I have not previously acknowledged.



*The view from the window  
as I remember it.*

## 4. HELPING ON ALF HARWOOD'S FARM

However that might be, it lay dormant for the next two years. I returned to Billy Shaw's class to go through the same annual syllabus twice more. By that time I knew it by heart and was bored by it. Academically I vegetated. I read little. I had very little contact with grammar school boys. All my spare time was spent working on Alf Harwood's farm, Dunscair. It was 100 acres

of land (from those days I have always been able to assess and picture the size of a piece of land). Two thirds of it was rough grazing on the side of Closebrow. One third was meadowland at the base. These two areas were divided by a rough farm track about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile long which joined the farm with a side road. It was about a mile (?) from our house. The farm had a milking herd, two horses, a flock of sheep and some pigs and poultry and had a milk round (he delivered to our house in a horse drawn float). All the cows were milked by hand; I have precious memories of milking



*This was a view I knew intimately until I was twelve years old. (The mine closed in 1941) As a child and a young boy I spent countless hours playing around the "pit gate" situated at the point from which this photograph was taken. During weekday and Saturday mornings there was a constant procession of coal carts of all shapes or sizes - all horse drawn. I have no remembrance of petrol lorries. Full carts came out of the colliery and empty ones went in all day long. We used to jump on the backs of the carts for short rides. As the arrangements of the drivers - we'd get the box carts or two wheels and coal fell off!*

during winter mornings by the light of oil lamps. The atmosphere was quite something. I helped with the haymaking, all done by hand with the help of horse drawn mowers, rakers, shakers and carts. I loved it. Driving the float. Riding horses back from the blacksmith's. The farmer and his wife were very fine people. (I also had some experience of a farm at the top of the hill. That was much more primitive. They didn't use plates; they served helpings on to the table in front of you! But they were good and clever farmers.) Gradually, I came to the decision that I wanted to work on farms. Farming was to be my life but that was all to change when I was thirteen.

## 5. BUT I CAN THINK AND I REJOICE IN IT

An incident occurred on Alf Harwood's farm through which I discovered that I had the nascent ability and aptitude for independent or original thinking (even if I cannot remember for and in exams and generally!). As I remember it, it was on a hot summer's afternoon. Three or four large men were struggling to rearrange a small pigsty. They sweated and cursed gently as they failed to move some heavy boards. I was standing in the doorway, there was no room for me and in any case I did not have the strength. In a lull as they got their breath I said why didn't they do it in a particular way. It was immediately obvious to them that it would work and that it was comparatively easy to do. They looked at each other then at me quizzically and bemused. In that moment I knew that I could think and I was glad and thankful. For me it was a high moment. I felt really good. That was a redeeming moment. I can still feel the glow and joy that it brought and the quiet confidence. I was being remade. The knowledge and assurance that I have the ability and capacity for independent and original thought has never left me since that day. It humbles me. I treasure it as one of my greatest and most prized gifts and thank God for it and for all that subsequently it has enabled me to do and to be.

<sup>8</sup>Some eight days later, early in the morning I found myself reflecting yet again about my ability to think and composing more thoughts; reflecting on them and wanting to write about them having quite forgotten that I had written the few lines above until I came to do so! Certainly it is one of the things that has given me great joy and satisfaction in life one of the faculties I most dread losing. One dimension is conscious thinking and another is the thinking activity that goes on in my subconscious and/or unconscious. Before I turn to that there is a feature of aspects of my conscious thinking that I must try to describe. Strangely, my thinking about a particular subject

or problem seems to take on a life of its own which is tenacious, persistent, demanding, unyielding and determined, until it completes its task/work. It is or becomes active without my having consciously decided to think about that particular topic. The process of thinking seems to be self or other activated. It causes me to say, "I cannot stop thinking about that." When this kind of process is operative – and it is for most of the time regarding one thing or another – I cannot put the subject out of my mind. (There are of course times when I find it difficult to face up to thinking something through and easy to avoid doing so. In those circumstances considerable determination, self-discipline and perseverance is required to work things out. And frequently I need help especially from people with non-directive skills such as Catherine and Charles.) My hunch is that this aspect of my conscious stream of thought and thinking is closely associated with and probably generated by what is going on in my sub-conscious or unconscious



This is a photograph of my Grandfather Fletcher my mother's father and her stepmother. I do not know the date when this was taken but they were certainly much younger than when I knew them although he looked just as dapper when I did know him. When I was nine or ten he gave me the Maltese farthing which up to that point he always carried with him. I met him in the street one day and he stopped and spoke to me and asked me how I was going on and how my mother was. He was always a man of few words, after a silence he took the farthing out of his pocket and gave it to me telling me to keep it. When I went home I told my mother what had happened, her spontaneous response in a voice of surprise was, "My word, he must like and love you." I still have the farthing.

as they work at a whole complex and interrelated mix of stuff. This would mean that it lives at a considerable depth in my being and erupts into consciousness as though it came out of the blue.

Alongside this there is a type of experience which has recurred frequently throughout my working life and which still occurs but much less often. It has a basic pattern: during the day and evening I work on some complex material but fail to discern or find connections, order, coherence, systemic shape or design which satisfy me; I go to bed at say 11 pm; wake up between 3 and 3.30 am with that which had eluded me the night before clearly in mind; after churning it over with relief and gratitude and in an hour or so I am able to put on paper in some detail that for which I was searching. Sometimes before sleeping I instruct my unconscious or beg of it to work on the particular issue without disturbing my sleep or keeping me awake! But it invariably wakens me when the process is satisfactorily concluded. The secret is to trust the process sufficiently to know when to leave the thinking to the unconscious and to resist the desire to get it all done and dusted before retiring. This is not easy when you have to make a presentation to a course or conference the following morning as I had to. But to stay with it through the early hours as I have done times without number has ended in what I refer to as a mechanical solution, the bolting together of things which are an uneasy fit. Creative thinking, and that is what is of most value, requires that time is given to allow the things to work through the human system at their own speed and rhythm. And that is true of creative writing I find.

<sup>9</sup>One of the things which became common practice for me when I was writing something was to prime my mind for something I needed or wanted to write the following day. Last thing before I retired I would survey/scan rough notes or relevant material without working on them simply to bring them to mind and into proximity with each other. This invariably paid dividends.

I believe that my ability to think somewhat originally – as they now say “outside the box or the frame” – was enhanced and possibly induced by my empathetic gifts; by my aptitude to attend intently to people and to listen to them deeply and to read events and to let them speak to me; by my capacity of the right hemisphere of my brain. I count myself blessed to have been endowed with this enormously creative triad. Trained, disciplined, developed, informed and deployed by and through the non-directive concept and approach it has been the secret and source of all the

best and most satisfying work that I have done. I thank God that I have been endowed in this way.<sup>10</sup> For a long time I have been aware of these abilities and gifts but I have never put them together in this way. My hunch is that there is much more to be done on this combination of gifts and that of language for instance. Possibly I need help to do this. In spite of all my self denigration about the inadequacy of my command of the grammar of the English language and the way that this has and still does undermine my confidence, I have a gift of language and speech. I was first aware of this in my teens when, seemingly from nowhere, I would spontaneously wax eloquent. This always took me by surprise; I simply did not think I was capable of it; I was in flow using a much wider vocabulary than was normal for me and without hesitation – the right words and sequence of ideas simply appeared without effort. These experiences normally occurred when I was excited or stimulated by something. I thought of it as a gift and for some strange reason associated it with my Grandmother Lovell (my father always said she was very literate and could spell any word although her formal education, such as it was, probably ended when she was about 9 years old I guess. She read the Bible from cover to cover twice a year. That must have influenced her use of language profoundly.) In connection with all this something Margaret O'Connor said to me when we were working together on a course probably in the 1980's. She had been an English teacher and checked drafts of several of my books for grammar. Overnight I wrote a note about a difficult discussion we had in a post graduate diploma group we were leading. This note impressed her greatly and she said, "And you say that cannot write!" That reminds me that from time to time I experience the phenomenon I have just described in writing – at other times I struggle enormously. (I am in flow at the moment.) Also it makes me realize that I have not valued the triad of gifts and my abilities to talk, speak and preach eloquently and to get things down on paper, to write, as much as I should have done. To my disadvantage and shame, I have been active in using/ causing/allowing my grammatical and linguistic insecurity and sense of inadequacy to eclipse and overshadow my gifts and abilities. In spite of this I have, thank God, been able to use the gifts to good effect even though it has been psychologically and spiritually costly. I am repenting as I write and at the same time rejoicing and, I believe readjusting my thinking about these things (An incident is going through my mind. I was admiring Ros Colwill's gifts with languages and she said, "I would exchange all my gifts in that direction for your ability to think in the ways you do". That was

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10 I have developed the significance for my praxis of this in *A & D* chapter 7 and particularly pp 182ff. See also pp181ff for ideas about listening to, reading and conversing with situations derived from the work of Gareth Morgan. See also *Consultancy, Mission and Ministry* pp 71-101, et al



salutary. It brought me up with a shock. I realize if there were such an exchange and most (?), despite all my desires to be gifted with languages, I would not exchange my gifts for them!) I thank god for what I've got/had and for the numerous opportunities to use them in his service in the Church and the World. Often and fervently I have prayed Charles Wesley's lines from his great hymn "O Thou who camest from above"... (745 H&P) (4 726 v4)

Jesus confirm my heart's desire  
To work, and speak and think for thee,  
Still let me guard the holy fire,  
And still stir up thy gift in me. (v3)

John Summerwill's service and sermon on Sunday morning<sup>11</sup> led me to new thoughts on thinking and the mind which I will explore below and to this verse from a hymn by Jack Winslow (699 H&P)

Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,  
Rich truth that surpasses my knowledge to find;  
What eye has not seen and ear has not heard  
Is taught by your Spirit and shines from your word (v3)

There are downsides of my ability to think somewhat originally or outside the frame. Sometimes what I come up with seems unorthodox or even quirky. Earlier in my life I found people ignoring what I said or being embarrassed by it. In meetings I had those awful experiences when a momentary deathly silence followed what I had contributed which dropped dead like a stone and without reference to it the discussion took another turning. What I learnt from those experiences was to be more careful and circumspect in the way in which I put ideas which were going against the flow. Now, it is rare for me not to get a hearing even if people do not agree with me. Another downside is that I can get stubbornly stuck in an odd idiom or an eccentric way of describing things in my writing. I get trapped, ensnared. I just won't let go. Stupid. In the 80's I got stuck on the idea of "landscaping work" and before that I really did get into a mess when I first started to write *Churches and Communities*. But that in part was grieving for Dorothy. I had expected her support and help in writing that book and suddenly she wasn't there. How she would have loved to be involved in that all that has followed it and how I would have liked her to be so. Undoubtedly her contributions would have enhanced my books. But sadly it was not to be.

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11 It was Bible Sunday!

<sup>12</sup>Reg Batten gave me a very hard time after he had read my first attempts to write *Churches and Communities*. Uncharacteristically he was harsh and seemed angry. He was swingeing in his criticisms and dismissive of all I had done. He came over as analytically ruthless. I felt I had offended or outraged his academic standards and disappointed him. Failed! Only on one other occasion can I remember him reacting and responding in this way, when I proposed a taskforce in P70-75. It seemed an aberration, a reversal to the academic teacher for the under worker. I was entirely debilitated. I was grieving for Dorothy and worried about Molly and her future health. My educational insecurities were activated with a vengeance. Catherine had to warn him privately of the effect he was having upon me.

<sup>13</sup>Two people enabled me to take quantum leaps in my ability to think and in my self-confidence as a thinker. I mention them here but they come much later in my story. When I was thirteen I went to Accrington Junior Technical School and met Mr Lawrence Marsden, the maths and science teacher. He taught me as no one else had done; he freed me to learn. That was in 1942. Twenty four years later in 1966 I met Dr T R Batten. His impact upon me was incredible, it was fundamentally transformative. He took me into a new world and liberated me and my mind.

Last Sunday morning in a service conducted by John Summerwill, quite suddenly and without warning, I became aware of the sanctity and preciousness of the human mind in all its wonder and mystery. (Possibly this realization was incubated by my reflecting on thinking which was brought to the point of revelation by references to “mind” in one of the hymns which I will quote below). A combination of two thoughts gripped, moved and excited me. The first was that the human mind must be approached with the deepest reverence and respect and treated with enormous care not least because whilst it is resilient and immensely and deeply resourceful, it is sensitively intricate and complex and easily damaged. As must the soul. Unlike the brain, however, the human mind is not universally treated with respect and care. Focusing on and holding to this perspective puts in their proper place all approaches to the mind, to mental processes and to thinking; it helps to evaluate them and to assess their value and effect. In a blinding flash it came to me that it was the sanctity and preciousness of the mind that made the (unclear) so important. It is an instrument that facilitates radical operations upon the mind with minimum danger of damaging and rupturing it. Starting with the nature of the mind, rather than that of approaches, (unclear) and towards it, was a highly significant

reversal of my habitual perspective. Why had I not thought of this before?!! Amongst other things, it demonstrates quite conclusively the importance and value of using refined apps and methods in education and developmental programs and avoiding those which are dangerous and damaging. Brain washing, manipulation, coercion, indoctrination, simplistic teaching, undue persuasion, misrepresentation through selling things.... They have the potential to develop erroneous concepts and flawed thinking and to promote inappropriate action and behaviour. And above all, they can damage the mind, harm the soul and make people sick. Thanks be to God for the Batten and the non-directive approach and for my commitment to it.

<sup>14</sup>The quotes from hymns to which I refer above are as follows. I am not sure they were used in the service!

O may we all the loving mind  
That was in thee receive.

CW H&P 773v5

Give me a new, a perfect heart,  
From doubt and fear, and sorrow free;  
The mind which was in Christ impart,  
And let my spirit cleave to thee.

CW H&P726v4

I pray these lines fervently. But what I am still looking for are lines which thank God for my mind. <sup>15</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Reflecting again about this two-year period of my life, ie, from failing the 11 plus to gaining a Junior Technical Scholarship, I have depressing and sickening feelings that they were in so many ways wasted years. During a period when my learning capacity and potential was at a high point I was deprived of intellectual stimulus. In fact I was being retarded and stultified by going through the educational syllabus that I had already covered twice more in two successive years almost word by word. (This desultory and soul destroying process is illustrated by the incident re numbers divisible by 5 that I have recoded on pS4.9). It makes me angry. And as far as I can recall there was no stimulus academic or intellectual stimulus from other quarters. Certainly I did not do any serious reading – or very little reading at all for that matter – as far as I can recall and I was not encouraged to do so. But as I reflect there were some stimuli:

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14 10.11.08 Home!

15 I need to edit and sharpen these two pages,

16 20.9.2010

**Going to Alf Harwood's farm** which I have already described and how I discovered that I could think.

**A supply teacher.** I cannot recall his name but he had a great impact upon me. He was quite different from any other teacher that we had at Rishton Wesleyan Day School. He was tall, athletic, very strong (he lifted up with one hand big boys, carried them to the door and threw them down the steps outside the new wing classrooms) and he was charismatic. He had two cars of the sporting kind and came to school in them on alternate days and parked them in the school playground. I remember helping to park them to get them started! None of the other teachers had cars – few people did. He mesmerized me by talking about model engineering about which he was enthusiastic. It was he, I think, who made me decide I would like to be an engineer – certainly a model engineer. Thus, I was predisposed to the idea of a technical education when the opportunity came in the form of a Junior Technical College Scholarship.

**The caretaker** of the Rishton Wesleyan Day School, Mr Harold Ayers. He had quite an impact on me during this period in several ways. Ayers was a highly intelligent, self-educated man. I was one of several boys who used to help him after school to clean the classrooms and put the chairs on the desks for the princely sum of 6p (old money) a week. The money was an attraction but by no means the main one. Frequently, when the work was done he would explain to us how electric motors worked, how yachts sailed against the wind by tacking etc. I can see myself now as a twelve year old boy spellbound as he drew diagrams on the board to show the processes and the forces acting on the sails. My father bought a six foot model yacht off him for me. It had a 'braine' steering gear/mechanism. We spent the winter renovating it and my mother made new sails. It stood on a table in the parlour. But I cannot remember sailing it! Mr A told us how to make a small electric motor to power Meccano set models, something I had always wanted but I never made one now got one. I loved making things with my Mechano set. During this period I helped him to re-wire his house – crawling under the floor boards to take the wires from room to room. (I wasn't claustrophobic then but I certainly am now!) If I remember rightly, Mr A had a workshop on the road leading up to the pit gates, minutes from our house, I spent hours there and still have the large vice which I bought from him for 5/- (a considerable sum for me then but now only 25p!) All in all my association with Mr. A was a profound learning experience: at one level an enormous amount of know-how; at another knowledge and academic understanding; but at yet another level I was learning by osmosis that there were real and exciting sources of knowledge in beyond teachers,

classrooms and books in ordinary people who had educated themselves and been educated by other self-educated people and that this source of knowledge runs wide and deep in working class culture. I was not conscious or fully aware of this; but I had got hold of it at some level and absorbed something of its significance. Undoubtedly, and in retrospect, I can see that it has influenced my future approach to education, self-help, the non-directive approach to formal or informal education. It has given me respect for the intelligence and resources of people with minimal formal education. It is only now that I have traced back this aspect of my working life and ministry to this primary source of influence.

One of the things which I have felt since failing my 11 plus is that I have had to educate myself through course and methods which are tangential to the main stream of academic formal education. For years, especially during my National Service, I felt I was studying on the margins through unorthodox means. There was, still is but to a less extent, a feeling of exclusion, I was on the outside of something I could not get into: the official/proper entry point had been closed to me. I must come back to this and try to express and explore it more adequately.

During this period I gradually accepted that I was an academic failure and that I was destined to live the life of an artisan in the culture in which I had been born. I was not entirely happy about this but I became reconciled to it even though I had some residual feelings/stirrings that I wanted something more. But I smothered them. Strangely, I can re-live some of these feelings. They were very deep and sometimes very painful. I am not as clear about what I felt when the idea of the technical scholarship was suggested. I certainly wanted to go for it but not without the fear that I might fail yet again. I do not think that I saw it as much more than proper initial training for the life of an artisan, a skilled one. Certainly, I saw it as a way out of the awful educational cul-de-sac in which I found myself. But there is no way in which I saw it as the way to redeeming my life that it proved to be: the way to a new life; the opening of my intellectual abilities locked in a moribund educational system and suppressed by a neurotic teacher or headmaster.

Dayley, John (1999) *Iris and The Friends: A Year of Memories*

P23 After describing how he kept a cap pistol bought for him by his elder brother secret, Bayley says:

So much of childhood seems to have been spent in secret, and most of its pleasure comes from this. Most of the memories I have of it too.

This was something of a disclosure to me of my own experience which resonates with it.

98 Memory has a much larger appetite for small things than for anything on a scale not easily managed.

158 “Who was it who described post-modernism as ‘pre-emptive Kitsch’? Not a bad definition.”

## POSTSCRIPT

This cutting is from a local Lancashire paper. It appeared under the heading ‘Memory Lane’ along with several other pictures. c1985

I have vivid memories of seeing this team in action at ILP garden parties/fetes in a garden near the Parish Church. I hardly recognize the picture of my father but that of Mr Galligher (Jack Gal as he was known as or Gal) is unmistakable. I have many memories of him. He worked for my father in the pit who chose him for any tough/dangerous work they had to do including working from the top of the pit cage. He said he was the strongest man he had ever known. My father used to tell how he made two potato pies in enamel washing up bowls for the tug of war team – one for the members of the team and one for him!

Another memory I have of him is when I was about 9 or so. My father was having one of his problems with his back and could only crawl around on all fours much as he would have done in the mine. A large settee had to be moved to the front room and Gal had come to do it. I was a small, thin spindly lad. I remember saying, ‘Can I help you Mr G?’ He looked at me with utter disdain, put out one hand, inverted it and carried it effortlessly into the next room. Another and quite different memory, a very sad one, is of seeing him towards the end of his life standing at Harwood Road corner (unemployed and old men used to stand or (unclear) as they had done in the mines for hours at street corners.) He had been seriously ill and lost weight, consequently his clothes hung on him. I felt so upset. His wife, Annie, was as thin and small as he was fat and large. My father told me that he had a terrible death. Apparently it took two or three ex miners to hold him down in his bed in the throes of his agony. (18.2.11)

