

# My Memories – May Rhodes, nee Walker

*May Rhodes wrote this in 2015 with the help of her daughter, Chris Kinsella. May will be 103 on 21 June 2024. She moved from 6 Rhodes Street to Shipley Manor Care Home in April 2024.*

## Chapter 1 – Beatrice Street

In 1921, I was born on Beatrice Street in Shipley. I had a brother named William and sisters named Irene and Edna. I never remembered having a grandma and grandad. Our house was a back-to-back with streets called Queen Street, Elliot Street, Oxford Street, and Park Street. Shem Hodgson came every Friday to collect the rent. My street was the best. It was full of life, always with something going on. We had such fun; we roamed all over: Up Northcliffe woods or into Saltaire park or up to Nab wood (the posh part) to raid apples. I was caught by the police with an armful of apples; my mates had escaped!

My friend Eileen and I used to fill a tin bath with wood from Normington's wood place and sell it for a few pence, and going to the shop for neighbours was a nice little earner for us. We used to play games on the delf at the top of the street; tin can relieveo, skipping, marbles, whip and top, and tennis. I used to make a tent with mum's clothes horse against the wall using mum's rug and blankets and ate bananas and carnation inside.

At Christmas, we always went to the toy fair at Shipley Co-op to see what we wanted Santa to bring, not that it mattered, as we didn't get what we asked for!! I always tried to get to sleep on Christmas Eve before Santa Claus came. we didn't get lots of presents, an apple, an orange, a selection of sweets, and a shiny new penny. Mum always crocheted a new outfit for my doll. I loved the Salvation Army coming round the streets on Christmas day playing "Hail Smiley Morn" and other carols. I still love Christmas.

Our gang always had houses to visit. Mrs. Hanson had a radio set which we didn't have, so we used to ask if we could listen to Reginald Dixon playing his organ at the Blackpool Tower ballroom. I remember when we got gas and electricity, what a treat, light at the flick of a switch. A pie and pea man used to come round the streets pulling his cart, selling brown or green peas. We loved them!

At Whitsuntide, we always got new clothes, and dad always took us to see the Whit Walkers. Mum and Dad never took us for a week's holiday at the seaside until I was older, when we went to Scarborough. A good day out was a ride on

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the Glen tramway and the amusement park and then to the Japanese gardens for sandwiches.

On the run-up to plot night, there was a lot of propping to do, and we had to protect our fire from other kids raiding it. I never liked bangers, and I kept running home until mum said that one more time and I would have to go to bed! We kept our bonfire going for a few days.

One of our gang, Norman Dale, put a sheet in the cellar for a cinematic show. we had a small charge of a safety pin and in the interval, a pet mouse used to run around in his shirt. Mrs. Metcalfe was having a baby, and when I saw the nurse carrying a black bag, I thought the baby was in it.

Before I went to Saltaire Road school, I went to Albert Road infants, and one day we heard an angry parent shouting at a child. Edna and I thought it sounded like mum, so we asked her when we got home. It was her, but fortunately she had lost her bearings in the school and had come home. She had a bit of a temper! She also had diabetes which affected her eyesight. I liked my time there except when I had to dance in a ballet dress and my mum and sister were in the audience. I ran out before I should have and hid behind the piano. Miss Mason forgave me! If you were off school poorly a boardman would walk round to see if you were really ill.

Mrs. Bootham, who lived next door, used to say to mum that she had caught one of her mice and mum would respond by saying, “How do you know it was mine?” She thought she was cleaner than anyone else. She wouldn’t allow a baby in her house who wasn’t christened. She wasn’t married, and we say, ‘lived over the brush’. Her partner was a tram driver, who unfortunately ran down a little girl who ran out in front of him. Poor man, he never worked again!

Alice Feather was an old lady who didn’t like her next-door neighbour Mr. Dale. She used to shake her rugs on the midden top just when he walked past in his best suit. In her cellar, she had a hole in the wall, and she would shout abuse through it until he threw a glass of water through it.

Mr. Johnson and his wife lived in our street. He had a war job at Avro, but he joined the army. Unfortunately, he wasn’t abroad long before he was taken prisoner and died from pneumonia in a prisoner of war camp. He was a lovely man.

Not many houses had bathrooms or inside toilets. I had the job of tearing newspaper into pieces and putting them onto a piece of string. I bet we all had

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black bottoms from the print. At bath time mum put up a clothes horse with a blanket round it to make it a bit warmer in the cellar. When we were small we were put in a tub. Mum always tested the water with her elbow, but it was still too hot for me, and I came out like a lobster! Then we had a tin bath which hung on the wall. Being the youngest I was the last one to go in and had to empty it with a ladling can.

My sisters had short hair, but mine was very long so mum sat me on a chair by the fire to dry it. I hated that.

Edna and I went to see Aunt Eva in Wakefield. It was like going for a holiday abroad. Aunt Lily had a smallholding just outside Wakefield. She had a horse in the field, but I was too scared to ride it. She used to bake her own bread and flat cakes. Delicious with best butter.

Uncle Albert, dad's brother, had a horse and cart selling fruit and vegetables in Wakefield. He then used to go to the Bullring for a drink. Aunt Milly, his wife, was in the Salvation Army and sold War Cry in the pub. This didn't deter Albert, but Gladys, Albert's horse, tied up outside the pub, would only give him a short time before making so much noise that Albert had to stop drinking and continue with his round.

When Mum did the washing, I used to help her to turn the mangle. The clothes were always boiled, not like today.

Sometimes if Mum got shock news, she would pass out! It happened when I told her that Doreen had fallen 30 ft down a quarry on the Delf, but after a few hours, she would be okay and back looking after us. Mum would cook rabbit and a lady in the next street liked the brains, so I had to take them to her in a basin; HOW AWFUL! On a Wednesday she would do her ironing with an iron that used charcoal. It smelled lovely but our tea was always a bit later than usual as she couldn't let the charcoal go out and had to continue with the ironing until it was completely finished.

When the coalman delivered the coal mum had me in the cellar counting the bags; I never could be sure I had counted them correctly! In the cellar, we had a black stuffed horse with staring eyes and underneath was a board for us kids to sit on. It was as big as a real horse. I never knew what became of it when all the houses were demolished.

Dad worked for a builder called Mr. Chippendale, carrying bricks. When it rained he never got paid and with hanging about waiting for the rain to stop, he

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eventually got lumbago. Mum used to rub him with Winter Green hoping he would be alright the next day. These were hard times.

Gypsies used to come round begging and mum never turned them away. She gave them clothes that we had all grown out of. We also had men with big suitcases selling towels; they used to take them out and put them back again. In those days doors were never locked and nobody ever broke in.

Mum withdrew an insurance policy worth £30 to enable us to stay for a week in Scarborough'. It was the first time in our lives we had ever had a holiday. Dad had a chance to go sea fishing; he didn't catch a fish and never wanted to do it again! He wasn't a sportsman at all.

The first time mum let us go away on our own Edna, me, Eileen, Marjorie, and another girl went to Scarborough'. It was the first time we had been in a pub. I didn't know what I wanted to drink and thought cider was non-alcoholic. After drinking a few the barman threatened to throw me out and back at the lodgings, even the bed was trying as well! I woke up with my head in the chamber pot and vowed never to drink again.

All my mates wanted to try smoking so 1/2d each and we got a packet of Woodbines for 5d. Everyone smoked in those days. No one said it was harmful and I wish I hadn't smoked, even through my pregnancies. Dad filled his pipe with shag tobacco and thinking it would put me off, he told me to smoke it, which I did. It was 6 months of hell before I stopped later in life.

Dad used to make rhubarb wine, but the trouble was the corks kept blowing off. It was really strong! He used to go to the working men's club and one day brought two Belgium soldiers home. They were very untidy, and we sewed their buttons on their tunics. He also brought back a Scotsman, Jack, who took a fancy to my oldest sister, but she wasn't interested.

Dad didn't like thunder and lightning and one night put his trousers on back to front. I always wished I had asked him about the 1914-18 war. In France, he got off the lorry to spend a penny and the lorry set off without him. He was posted missing for a few weeks but found his unit again. My sister Renie's son told me that my dad was in the flying corps in France and his friend Albert Ball, who was a fighter pilot, had his plane shot down and was killed.

When Mum was mad with Dad, she would go to the small organ in the corner and sing and play, "I wish I was single, my pockets would jingle, I wish I was single again." I always wanted to learn to play, but Mum couldn't afford it. Dad

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once took us on a day trip to Morecambe by train. The train didn't have a corridor but was separate carriages. He was desperate for the toilet on the way home, but the train went really slowly, and he couldn't get off until we reached Saltaire. He ran like mad when the train stopped.

We wanted to learn ballroom dancing and went to the Monday night 4 penny hop, the Thurs ranch house, and the Victoria hall on a Sat. I met my husband Tommy at the Victoria Hall; he was a good dancer. The Conversazione was held once a year in the Victoria Hall in the main ballroom. I used to watch my sister Renie in a beautiful long dress and shoes with fancy stones in the high heels. I would wait outside and watch the cars dropping people off in their lovely dresses. The next day it would be for the children. Years later my own children went; I made a dress for Christine in white and pink panels of which she was really proud. She went with her cousin Pauline. They eventually stopped the Conversazione but brought it back this year.

Tommy was in the Bradford Wheelers doing road racing on his bicycle. He got mum to buy me one, but it was a man's bike with toe clips. I had never been on a bike before and every time I went on it, I fell off and always had busted knees! When we went up Hollins Hill he used to push my bike and the cycling club were very amused.

My first ballroom dress was an off the shoulder dress with net skirts in pink and blue. I got mum to cut the straps, but I came home very sore under the arms.

My sisters and me slept in one bed in the attic and my brother was in the other bed. Mum and Mrs. Mason used to lay out dead people and mum had a white counterpane. If she tried to put it on our bed we made her take it off, in spite of her denials that it was the one used for the dead!

Betty next door was a bit older than me and ran a Fairy Tinkerbell club and we would all go on the Delf to watch a flock of birds; the front bird was always fairy Tinkerbell. Funny, it worked every time. Aunty Phylis who lived opposite used to let us dress up in crimson paper and we danced to Tiptoe Through the Tulips in her yard.

One winter in heavy snow we built an igloo big enough for all of us to sit in. Unfortunately, we lit a fire and it melted and we all ended up with heavy colds. We built a bogey with a piece of wood and 4 wheels. I fell off it and hurt my knees. I had to go to Salts hospital (now flats). I was so grateful for the treatment that I gave them all my savings.

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I always got the job of washing the flags outside our house and used a white scouring stone for the edges of the steps.

Whenever we had company, the guests always ate first: We hoped they hadn't eaten all the cream cakes.

We children never had a fish from the fish shop, it was always fishcake and chips. That changed when we started working and we became entitled to a fish. Our fish shop was at the bottom of the street. It was owned by Mr. Copley and his daughter. We occasionally bought a pennyworth of chips and took our own bread and made a chip sandwich and listened to her playing the piano. The shop next door was Miss Bruins hat shop and had lovely hats in the window. They are still standing today. Saltaire Road was full of shops, (now all flats, except for one street where the Vic pub still stands). Billy Midnights always stayed open late. Butcher Booth sold savoury ducks which I collected in a basin hot out of the oven. Bilney the barber. The Coop. Two pubs. The fish shop. Chester's fruit shop. Shoe repairers and Sayner's sweet shop. It was full of life, not like today. We would buy Ogo-pogo eyes which changed colour as you sucked them and Spanish which we put in a bottle of water to make popalolly. At plot night we brought home leftover fireworks to set off for us kids. At the Coop when you paid, the money was put in a cylinder, and it went up to a lady who sent the change down again. When we went to Sunday school, the preacher had 2 glasses. 1 was water which he said was pure like us and he added some of the other glass which turned it red. He told us that was our soul if we drank alcohol. We all promised not to drink, but we didn't keep our promise for long.

Not having a TV, we went to the picture house. At Saltaire, they always had two good films on. There was also the Princess Hall and the DeLux (which we called the bug ole because you always got a flea.) Saturday was children's matinee day and we sat on wooden benches at the front. I had plaits and when cowboy films were shown I got my hair pulled: The upstairs was better. The usherette, a rather fat lady, used to shine a powerful torch in your eyes. She never moved an inch! The Old Palace was a picture house and theatre and there was a piano player watching the screen because it was silent. I remember Edward G Robinson in a sea film and the piano player was going mad keeping up with the film. They built the Glen Royal (now pulled down) which was a very modern one and had twin seats, very popular with courting couples. I saw lovely films like Camille with Robert Taylor and Greta Garbo. I came home with puffy eyes with crying so much. Our heart throbs were Tyrone Power, Bette Davis, Mae West, and Judy Garland. I loved Bud Abbott and Len Costello, Elvis Presley and Laurel and Hardy. I used to cut pictures of them out

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of the paper to make a scrapbook. Edna and I went with Cousin Walter to see the film Dracula. I had a nice woolly cap which, when it came to the frightening part, I pulled down over my eyes. I stretched it so much I couldn't wear it again. When I went to bed Walter put on a white sheet and frightened me so much I dropped my knickers in the potty.

Sundays were special days. I went to the chapel three times and on anniversaries. I always sang Hallelujah more times than I should. I won a Lord Walton bible at Sunday school. We had to learn three Psalms to get it. Dad wouldn't let us play out with a ball on Sundays.

Dad was good with his pocket money and went down to the market place to buy lots of fruit. All the stalls were lit by oil lamps.

On Sundays we always had my brother Bill, his wife Nellie and their sons, Brian and Geoffrey for tea and my dad loved a game of Newmarket, but they only played for pennies. When he won his eyes twinkled and it made his day. TB was very common in those days. My brother's wife Nellie, who I loved very much, died at 48 from it. Bill had to pay for her treatment until the NHS started. She had to go to the sanatorium in Grassington. The treatment was wooden chalets and plenty of fresh air. Thankfully, it is not much of a problem now. Nellie was like my own sister and when my children were born at home, she was always there looking after me.

Before I started working I told Mum I was not going to work with long hair. She said I wasn't to have it cut, but I sneaked off and did it. When Mum saw me she cried, but I was happy. At school, the teacher thought I was a new girl.

At school, Gladys Mason and I had to wash the floor in the cookery room. The teacher, sitting at her desk said, "How are you going to get back across the floor?" We had finished our cleaning in the centre of the floor and could not get out of the room without walking over the clean floor.

Norman Dale gave me a sweet called Love Hearts Loving Words and a snake bracelet which was broken, but when you are a kid it was lovely. Edna my sister always fancied Teddy, but he was fair-haired with lots of curls and every girl fancied him. His brother Lionel played the guitar and sat on the doorstep strumming. We used to play with Edna Sharp. Her father was always reading the bible and ended up at Menston Asylum.

My first date with Tommy was a walk up the Glen. The rain just poured down. My hair then was in a page-boy style, and I wore a lovely dress, a boxer coat a baby boy hat and high-heeled shoes. I didn't want my hat to get wet so Jimmy

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Saxton, Tommy's friend, said he would look after it. Not realizing, he folded it into 4 and stuffed it into his pocket. When I got home my dress had shrunk, my hair was wet, and my hat was ruined, and I never could wear it again. Mum was not very pleased!

Shipleigh had lots of textile mills and it was normal when you were 14 to go with your mum to get a job. My older sister Renie was very good at shorthand and typing and the head teacher said not to let her go in the mill and she would get her a typing job, but Mum said, "No, she goes in the mill." My brother Bill worked in the spinning, so Renie went there as well: The wages were very low. My sister Edna was also a weaver. There were three flights of steps to go up and it was the longest room, with no pillars. The roof was glass and it would get so hot that the workers had to go home at lunchtime to change out of their sweaty tops. There was a gatehouse to go through and if you were late you had to go back home! A man would come round knocking on your house window to make sure you weren't late. Once a year we were given a day out at Blackpool. That was a treat.

I eventually reached 14 so Mum and I went to Salts mill for a job. I started in the winding department putting the yarn onto bobbins to be used in the making of cloth. I was also a 'dropper'; every thread had a metal piece (the dropper) which stopped the loom if an end broke. I wanted to be a weaver and ended up in the pattern weaving. For months I had to stand and watch, clean the looms and help other weavers. I eventually got the chance to work on my own and I loved it and couldn't wait to go to work each day. Then I learned to go on the big looms; on one I had khaki and the other Airforce blue. The noise was so bad that most weavers were able to lip-read and could still have a conversation, but I could never do that. When the cloth was made it went to the burling and mending dept. across the bridge, so any faults could be rectified. It was so quiet in there it was like a public library. They did issue ear protectors eventually, but only a few months before I left. New looms called Sulzas were put in the shed. We had big shuttles in our looms, but in the new ones they were like little bullets which were a lot faster and wove more cloth. Sometimes a shuttle would fly out and I once got a bang on the side of my head. Pattern weaving was moved to a building on its own.

One of our overlookers had joined the army and on leave, wearing a kilt, got surrounded by a load of weavers with brushes demanding to know what he was wearing under his kilt. Poor lad, he was so embarrassed, but it was only a harmless piece of fun! A fellow weaver died in a terrible accident. Her friend didn't know she was looking underneath and set the loom on. At Christmas, we

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had a 'join' with sandwiches and wine. This ended one time with one girl flat out on the ground and she was taken home wrapped in a piece of cloth! Her husband was not a happy man. The King and Queen visited the Mill and I had to clean every loom. They walked straight past. I remember they wore loads of makeup.

I wasn't christened until I was twenty-one. Aunty Phylis was having her baby done at Shipley Parish Church. The vicar was expecting me to be a baby and said he couldn't really put me on his arm, but I was happy to have it done.

I remembered the R101 airship coming over Shipley. You could see the passengers waving. I had started courting Tommy. He was a gent's hairdresser, taught by his dad and had a small lock-up shop in Windhill. When the war started he joined the army RASC and was overseas 4 ½ years, serving in the 8th army in the desert and then in Italy. We had a bomb dropped in Heaton Woods. We couldn't get nylons in the war, so we used leg make-up; a line down the back and they looked like nylons. Edna and I wanted to join the WRAF, but Mum wouldn't hear of it so we left the mill and went to work at Avro in Yeadon. We didn't like it, but the only way to get out was if you were pregnant. At Avro women on the Ansons used material to cover the planes and found it made nice underwear. They were found out and told never to do it again. In the canteen EWSA used to play while we had dinner. Not popular with everyone talking and the clatter of knives and forks. We bought joke cigarettes which, when the smoke came, turned to snow. We worked on Anson trainer planes, covered in fabric, then sprayed and moved to the flight shed. Women pilots flew them to the aerodromes to train would-be pilots. Edna got pregnant, so I was on my own and I was moved to Avro Lancasters on nights for 2 ½ years.

Tommy asked me to be engaged and I got a lovely engagement ring. He came home after 4 ½ years away. Mum took me for a wedding dress to Novello's in Bradford. I still have it. It was a one-off from London in white ivory satin with a train costing 23 guineas. This was an awful lot of money when wages were £6 a week. Mum said I deserved it. Mr. Raistrick and Mr. Watson who lived down our street wanted to be the first to be invited. They had such a nice time they had to be brought home in a taxi, too drunk to walk. The wedding was at the Methodist church which is now Northcliffe garage, the reception and dance at the Friendly Hall and the honeymoon in Blackpool. We went dancing in the Tower ballroom and the Winter gardens. All the neighbours came out to see the wedding. Tommy's leave was then over, and I went back to work at Avro. When I got married, Doreen's husband, Harry, was in India and George was in Holland. George trained for the invasion at Strenshall Head Malton and then

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Scarborough with the boat landings. Tommy was a despatch rider in the 8th army, fighting Rommel. A cousin of his in the tank corps took a direct hit and was killed, leaving a wife and 2 children. Tommy went to Naples where he loved the music and the country. He always said he could have lived there permanently. Tommy's brother Maurice was in the RAF stationed overseas. Tommy and I liked opera, and the great tenor Gigli was performing. Tommy and I went to see him as we realized we would never get the chance again. He was very small, but when he started singing it was fantastic.

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## Chapter 2 – Helen Street

We were married on October 27th, 1945, and Tommy was demobbed the following year. With his money from the army, we bought 8 Helen Street in Saltaire for £450. It was a terrace house with one large and one small bedroom, a lounge, a bath in the kitchen, and an outside toilet. I loved it. I was used to living in a street, but Tommy hated it.

No washing was allowed to be put out to dry on a Sunday in Saltaire, and Titus stipulated that there would be no pubs or gambling.

I was soon pregnant, and Christine was born on March 24th, 1947, Michael on June 21st, 1948, and Philip on February 23rd, 1953. They played in the street, playing marbles in the grates and on the spare ground at the bottom of the street, which is now Washhouse Gardens. I took them every day to Roberts Park just to get them out of the streets. Tommy got a motorbike and sidecar, so we went on Sundays to Ilkley Moor for Tommy and my brother-in-law George to go climbing.

Tommy loved his AGS motorbike. He bought a Watsonian sidecar to take us out. He used to scramble at Post Hill in Leeds and won about £1. Unfortunately, he had two accidents and ended up in Leeds General Infirmary for an operation on his shoulder, which gave him a disability for the rest of his life. It was hard for me because he worked for himself and got no sick pay. How I managed I do not know!

I used to make stews, and my niece Pauline liked to have her dinner with us. The children loved a meal of vegetable soup and dumplings done in the oven, which made the dumplings brown and crunchy. I learned to sew and made clothes for the children. We didn't have a TV, so every day they asked Aunty Betty (whose husband had a TV shop) if they could watch. Tommy thought we would buy one, so they wouldn't bother her anymore.

One time I forgot to put the fire guard round the electric fire, Christine and Michael were playing, and Michael was pushed and fell on the fire. He had burns on his bottom and had to go to Salts hospital to have it dressed for a few weeks.

Christine and Michael shared the small bedroom at first, but as they got older, Christine had the small bedroom to herself, Michael and Philip shared the big bedroom, and Tommy and I had a studio couch downstairs in the living room, which pulled down to make a bed.

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The children used to play on the spare ground at the bottom of Helen Street. Someone dumped a piano there, and the back was open, and the children made heavenly sounds on it! It wasn't so heavenly to my brother-in-law George, who charged over to make them stop as he was working on nights and couldn't sleep. Someone also left a car there, and within a few weeks, it had to be towed away!

At important events, like the war ending and the Queen's coronation, the streets of Saltaire had street parties with tables put together down the street. We all made sandwiches, jelly, and pop for the children. I have a photo of the coronation party, and Philip was only a baby.

One Christmas Eve, the children wouldn't go to bed and were excited at the thought of Santa coming. Aunty Shirley had a red coat with a hood on, and Uncle Maurice put this on to look like Santa and knocked at the back door. He asked the children why they weren't in bed. Michael said, "We're just going," and raced upstairs. Next morning he said that Santa looked just like Uncle Maurice.

On Christmas morning, Christine always woke at the crack of dawn shouting that Santa had been. There was no sleep after that! Every Christmas, Tommy took photos of the children for Christmas cards. They hated having to sit still. They would have gone to bed early to avoid that!

I went out and did a cleaning job for two mornings a week for 25 shillings while the children were young. Tommy didn't like me doing that. When Philip went to school, I went back to work at Salts Mill doing pattern weaving part-time and taught three others how to weave. I retired at 58, and Salts and Masons stopped making cloth shortly after that.

We went every year to Reighton Gap, camping in a large and heavy tent which took a long time to put up, but never blew down. Sometimes it rained every day, but the children never grumbled and often we lived on beans on toast.

Michael and Philip joined the 5th Shipley scout group. Philip played the bagpipes in the scout band and went in for band competitions. He got a scouting certificate for helping a sub Aqua member out of Wastwater, in his canoe, when his wife drowned.

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### Chapter 3 – Victoria Road

We moved to a house and shop at 79 Victoria Road in about 1959. This again had an outside toilet, but a bath and washbasin upstairs. When Christine got married, we converted her bedroom to a proper bathroom complete with a shower cubicle. Tommy converted a room in the cellar into a kitchen and made his own beer and wine. He used another room in the cellar as a darkroom for developing and printing his photos. He worked hard in the house and built stone fireplaces upstairs and downstairs and got the shop ready to use as a gents' hairdressers.

Christine was at Bingley Grammar, and Michael and Philip were at Salts Grammar, and I was working in the pattern weaving at Salts.

I loved the house and was pleased to have left Helen Street to get more room. At Christmas, all the family came to us for a meal. My sister Edna, her husband George, and daughter Pauline all called round for drinks. Pauline always loved Tommy's wine! I was in the cellar kitchen cooking the turkey and making mince pies, and Edna, all dressed up, would say how lucky I was - she was going out to dinner and didn't have to cook!

One day I was down in the kitchen, and on the draining board were some baby frogs! When they blinked, I ran upstairs to Tommy and asked him to come and look. He didn't believe me. Another day I saw a rabbit, and Tommy had to take it to Hirstwood, and it hopped away. He taught all the family to drive, and they all passed first time. He then tried to teach me, but it all ended in tears, and he threw the L plate into the yard. I'm glad I gave it up; I would never have passed the test.

We had a little dog called Rex. Philip thought the world of him. He took him to the vets to have some teeth extracted under a general anaesthetic. Philip brought him home, but poor Rex, still a bit woozy, tried to cock his leg on every tree down Victoria Road, swaying as he did so. Every morning Rex had to do his rounds of visiting people for biscuits. My sister Edna had him visit every day and really missed him when he died.

Tommy later closed the shop and went to work at Hepworth and Grandage, which he really enjoyed.

Tommy joined Bradford Sub Aqua Club, and we had lovely holidays on the Costa Brava. We had an inflatable dinghy and went to Scarborough to try it out. I was scared as I liked to have my feet on the ground, but Tommy showed me how good and buoyant wetsuits are. I hated it; I was always scared of water!

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When Tommy could no longer dive due to asthma and irregular heartbeats, we started to go walking. Every year we did the Lyke Wake Walk, the Crosses, and the Masters. The Fellsman Hike was the hardest; 60 miles non-stop. We went walking in Holland and Belgium.

We did the London Marathon when I was sixty. I must have been fit then! Then Stoke on Trent, Leeds, and Bradford. We won a meal for four in Halifax after the Bradford, for being the oldest couple. Tommy and George started the Tykes Walking Club and organized a twenty-five mile walk. It went over the moors to Ilkley and back round through Baildon. Finishers got a woven badge and certificate. It became an annual event, and monies raised went to charity. It is now run by Bingley scouts.

Christine married James Kinsella and went to live in Baildon and had two children, Andrew and Sarah. Michael married Jenny and has lived in Bradford, Queensbury, Cardiff, Guernsey, and the Pyrenees. They have Paul, Emma, and Rebecca. Philip married Edwina and lived in Frizinghall and now Baildon, and they have Claire and Laura.

We had a trip to see Michael and Jenny in Guernsey where Michael had his job with the foreign branch of Barclays Bank. At Kings Cross station, I was wearing a black leather coat and black leather boots, and Tommy had to look for a connection, leaving me on my own. When he came back, he said, “I don’t think you should stand in one place for too long or some man may ask you, how much!”

Michael did a lot of rock climbing in the Lakes and was chosen by Barclays as their representative for Chris Bonington’s Everest Expedition in 1975. I have a book with his photograph in. He still climbs in the Pyrenees.

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## Chapter 4 – Rhodes Street

Tommy eventually sold the shop to Jonathan Silver, who put his barber's chair in the mill, and we bought 6 Rhodes Street. Tommy worked hard again getting the house in order. It had a lounge, kitchen, two bedrooms, two cellars, and a garden back and front.

He had an allotment by Salts Mill and grew his own vegetables, once winning first prize for the biggest cabbage. I used to help him with the weeding so he would make tea. One day it was curry. He liked using spices in his cooking, and this curry was really hot. I didn't want to hurt his feelings, so I got a glass of water, but when I looked at Tommy, he had sweat running down his face and said, "Ah, that was a bit hot. I think I put too much curry in it."

We went for ten weeks to visit Tommy's sister Doreen and her family in Emerald Australia. I was scared of flying, but Philip and Clare saw us off at Manchester airport, and I really enjoyed the flight. Doreen had a lovely house with an orchard and swimming pool. They took us up the coast to Sydney and onto the south coast. The scenery was wonderful, Ned Kelly terrain! Harry was really good, driving us all over in the caravan. It was a holiday of a lifetime, but Tommy still preferred Yorks and the Yorks Dales.

In October 1995, we were going to be celebrating our Golden Wedding anniversary. Tommy booked The Lakeans and a band and had all the invitations printed. Sadly, on August 6th, he had a massive heart attack and died aged 75. I am now 93 years old and am managing on my own. I have a nice house near the shops, trains, and buses into Shipley. Without Tommy, I wouldn't have a lovely family, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

After Tommy died, I went to a painting class at the Anchor Club in Shipley. I created lots of pictures, and I get a lot of pleasure looking at them. I then did a bit of line dancing and Latin line dancing at the Lakeans in Shipley. I now have to use a walking stick.

They say a cat has nine lives; a car coming down Crowgill Road ran out of control and hit me in the back, knocking me into the air. I got mugged in Shipley, and he stole my handbag with my mobile phone and £70 in it, and I fell down an escalator in Shipley. Someone must be looking after me!

Michael loves to surprise me when he comes home to visit from France. Once I was expecting a taxi driver to take me to St Luke's, and with his cap pulled over his face, he helped me into the car. I told him that Jenny (his wife) had booked it, and he told me he had been sleeping with her for over 30 years. I looked at

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him, and he pulled his cap up; it was Michael! Another time Christine and James took me to the Halfway house for lunch and sat me at a table with a man reading a paper with his back to me. He turned around, and it was Michael. Andrew, my grandson, recently called to see me. He married Steph and now lives in New York. Pauline married Robin a few years ago, and I was her stand-in mum. I was pleased to take my sister Edna's place as I loved her to bits. Pauline takes me in her sports car for a meal at Christmas and birthdays.

People always make comments about my name being Rhodes and living in Rhodes Street. It's funny that I only live a stone's throw from where I was born when people nowadays end up living on the other side of the world. I can't walk far now, and I am trying to grow old gracefully. I never want to go in a care home and pray I will be able to continue living in my house.

That's the story of my life. If it hadn't been for Tommy, I probably wouldn't have experienced half of the things I have.

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