

ALFRED WHITLOCK Born 28th April, 1890 - Died 23rd June, 1983

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I was born in the year 1890. My memory takes me back when I was three years old. I had a little chum called Dick who was about my age. I never knew his surname, but he drowned in the River Clyde at Glasgow Green. That was a severe lesson never to go near that river unless accompanied by my parents.

We lived at Crown Street above a draper's shop. My Mother gave me three pence to go there and buy a half cut of wool. The shop was so crowded and the assistants were too busy to attend to a small boy. I came out of the shop and a big boy stole my three pence. That was the first spanking I ever got, as money was scarce in those days and wages very small.

My father was a joiner and his wage was 28/- per week for 51 hours. (Twenty eight shillings in the old currency). Mother had a hard time making ends meet, feeding and clothing a family of six. At the age of four we removed to Stanhope Street which got the name of Purgatory due to it being situated between a church and chapel.

At five I went to Martyrs Public School, Parson Street. I remember a coalman with a lovely horse and lorry who delivered coal to our house at five pence per hundred weight. I think it was then that I took a great love to horses. Mr. McGregor who owned the horse used to sit me on its back and give me a ride to the next street. The harness was always shining. Father became unemployed at this time and Mother must have found life difficult.

My eldest sister Susan got a job with a handkerchief firm, folding and boxing them at a wage of five shillings per week. As I became older I went messages for neighbours who were better off than we were. My eldest brother Walter got a job delivering milk every morning at one shilling and sixpence per week which helped Mother a little.

At the age of nine my love of horses still remained and I frequented a stable connected with coal. The owner was Paul Gay of Castle Street. He owned two coal barges on the Canal and twelve horses who pulled the lorries selling coal. How I loved the horses! The owner gave me five shillings per week for cleaning out the stalls and preparing the feeding for each horse when it came in at night after the day's work. I did this work after school each day. At the age of fourteen I left school. My Father had arranged for me to start work with Blackie the bookbinders of St. James's Road. My job was in the blocking department assisting the man at a large machine which stamped the gold on the print of the book cases. I had to remove the surplus gold leaf from these book cases with a special rubber. I didn't like the job and the heat from the machines was uncomfortable, so I left at the end of three months. By this time we had left "Purgatory" and moved to 173, Albert Street which has since been demolished.

Although wages were very small, food and heating were cheap. Never-the-less living was tough going. My next job was a grocer's message boy. The shops were open until 10pm weekdays - midnight on Saturdays. My wage was seven shillings per week. On my first Hogmanay in that shop my boss asked me to take a heavy basket of messages to Alexandra Park district but I refused. The other two message boys' had been employed a bit longer than myself. The boss was emptying the window at the time. He brought out a board with some Aberdeen haddies and stretched over the counter and slapped my face with a haddock because I had refused to go to Alexandra Park district. I ran home, so Father went to the shop and told the boss a few home truths, collected the pay due to me and that ended that job.

My next job was with a Mr. Erbe who was an Austrian Jew. He was a very good boss and I got ten shillings per week plus a lot of tips from the various chemists when I delivered the medicine bottles. However, my Father insisted I leave the job and start an apprenticeship as a plumber, which took six years in those days.

The Great War started in 1914 and I enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps in 1916 as an air mechanic. In July 1917 I married Agnes Millar Gillespie. My squadron was No. 123 and I was stationed in Duxford in Cambridgeshire. I got my discharge in 1918 shortly after my first

1918 shortly after my first daughter Agnes was born. I then continued my job as a plumber with William Miller. Meanwhile my wife was living with her Mother in Dunlop in Ayrshire and I could only manage to travel there at week-ends. My Father-in-law had a Contractor's business there and Agnes my daughter was only a few months old when my Father-in-law was involved in an accident with one of his lorries and died. My Mother-in-law then came to live with us in Glasgow in 1922 as she didn't want to live alone in Dunlop, so her cottage was sold. Grace my younger daughter was born on 23rd May 1921 at Dunlop.

After about a year in Glasgow I got the chance of a job at Bridge of Weir Quarrier Homes. We then moved to Houston to a lovely cottage in the Main Street. We remained there for about 3½ years and when the job was finished at Bridge of Weir the firm in Glasgow namely John McCombe whom I had served my apprenticeship with, offered me a job. Mr. McCombe was getting on in years so I was asked to try and get a house near the business in West Nile Street to enable me to be "on hand". By this time my Mother-in-law had died so we moved to a flat in West Nile Street near the business.

Mr. McCombe died 10 years later and my brother Walter and I put in an offer for the business. My brother Walter was going to be a "sleeping partner" as he was a Civil Servant employed by the Ministry of Labour. My youngest brother Bobby had trained as a Textile Designer and was employed by Black & Borthwick. He became a director of the firm in later years. Meantime to our disappointment a higher offer was accepted for Mr. McCombe's business and a Mr. Colin McLuckie took over.

I retired in 1955. My wife Agnes Millar Gillespie died on 1st April 1936 at the age of 45 from cancer. This was a dreadful blow to me and my two daughters Agnes and Grace. We were such a happy family and this left a great void in our lives. On 3rd February 1939 I remarried. Mabel Rossiter came from Muswell Hill in London. We were introduced by a nurse whom I had helped with her Sanitation exam papers whilst working in the Royal Maternity Hospital. Mabel was a good housewife and looked after us all well. She was accident prone and suffered quite a lot in latter years. Her hobby was writing and she had over 100 pen friends in the U.S.A. She was excellent at knitting and sewing also cooking and the house was run in the same way as before. Mabel died on 4th July 1971 from breast cancer.

In 1952 my sister Susan who remained unmarried died and my sister Agnes Blane who emigrated to the States in the early twenties died on 4th November 1972. Bobby died nine months after Susan on 30th November 1952 from a second coronary attack. He was only 54.

Bobby had one daughter Betty who was an executive civil servant with the Ministry of Labour. She married a Bert Duff who was an accountant. They had one son Leslie. Bessie (Bobby's wife) died on 15th November 1969 from Parkinson's disease and in the latter days of her life was looked after by her daughter Betty.

Betty was a heavy smoker and smoked about 60 cigarettes per day. She had a cerebral haemorrhage in her forties which resulted in losing the sight of an eye. She had a second cerebral haemorrhage which resulted in her having to take early retirement from the Civil Service. ~~Betty died in~~

My daughter Grace has lived with me all the time as she never has married. She has been a wonderful daughter, likewise my other daughter Agnes who is married and lives in Edinburgh. She and her husband Richard have one son Michael whom I love dearly. He is my only grandchild and I am very proud of him. I was able to attend his wedding to Heather in September 1982.