

## **Chapter 6: Aspects of Sunday on Various Sutton People**

Six days shalt thou labour and do all that thou hast to do. The seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.

The appointed Rest Day for the Hebrews was the seventh day, which falls on a Saturday. It differs from the Christian day of rest, which falls on a Sunday, which is the first day of the week.

During the thirty years spanning from 1910 to 1940, the majority of people in Sutton looked on Sunday as a full day of rest. Most people gave it the respect with which they had been brought up to enjoy it. It was a day away from the day to day work occupation, a day for the religious to attend church and meet people outside their homes. But most of all, it was a day when all the family could be together to enjoy their meals together, to wear their Sunday best clothes and, weather permitting, to walk after Sunday's teatime around the countryside or to walk to the park, where brass bands came to play for them.

There was a sprinkling of maintenance workers who made their way to the local works and collieries, for work which was essential. Our father was one of these. He turned out to work every Sunday for seven o'clock, so we had dinner when he came home at half past one.

But most of us took advantage of an extra hour or two's rest. After breakfast and with the washing up done, it was a case of a good wash and change into our Sunday best to go, in our case to Catechism, which started at 10.30am in the old infants school under the guidance of Miss Whitfield. The quietness and lack of noise was so evident, apart from the church bells ringing at St. Nicholas and St. Annes welcoming and summoning the parishioners to worship. Not like the work days of Monday to Saturday, when the works and colliery buzzers were continually blowing at six o'clock, seven o'clock, eight o'clock, eleven and twenty past, twelve and half past, one o'clock, two and half past, three 'clock, four o'clock, five o'clock and half past, accompanied by the Sheeting Shed bell ringing at 8 o'clock, 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock and half past five. Also contributing to the noise were the engines continually shunting coal wagons and other rolling stock up and down the Runcorn Gap Railway and into the sidings. This work continued twenty four hours a day, and then there were the loud, explosive noises of the steam exhausts from the colliery, winding engines, especially No. 1 Pit at Bold. If you took the trouble to listen to these, you could tell which of the three pits was working. It was my pleasure to watch the giant steam engines at and inside No. 1 pit's winding house. It was larger by far than those at No.2 and No.3 pits.

But back to our routine on a Sunday. After catechism, we rushed home and the table was moved out from the wall of the kitchen so that all the family could be seated around it. Grace was said, and we used the following little prayer for thanksgiving.

*“Be present at our table, Lord  
Be here and everywhere adored  
Us creatures bless  
And grant that we  
May feast in paradise with thee.”*

Dinner generally comprised roast beef and vegetables, followed by either a rice pudding or a Yorkshire pudding, washed down by ginger beer, poured into cups from the stone jar which was left each week by Edmund Barton. I have still got one of these jars. They were used at times in the winter months as a hot water bottle.

After dinner, and when we had all helped with the siding of the table and with the washing up done, we got ready again for Sunday School, held in the boys school, whilst my older brothers attended the Guild at St. Nicholas. Our father generally had a rest in the afternoon and my mother looked to the preparing of Sunday's tea. This generally comprised of blancmange, jelly with cream, bread and butter, cream crackers and a sandwich cake. Brother Fred, now fourteen years old, left higher Grade school, having passed his "Junior Oxford" and took up a position in the office of Wm. Neil & Sons, the iron foundry at Bold. I was expected, at home, to run all the errands and other small jobs which Fred had done before. One of these was, after Sunday School, to take the "Sunday Chronicle" to my aunt and uncle at Bank House in Bold. I was now nine years old and for five years, in Winter or Summer, I walked it there and back, apart from the time I spent with them at Bold in the school holidays, when I walked to Burtonwood for a Sunday paper. The reason for this was that there was no delivery of papers around that district.

Many a time in the depths of winter, having walked there, I ran all the way back home to try and beat the darkness. There were no lamps that way and no proper paths, and the only company I had was the eerie cry of the Lapwings, sometimes called Tewits or Peewits.

As one left Bold Road, Sutton and crossed the boundary between St. Helens and Bold, leaving Hills Moss Road and the Boundary Vaults on the left, you would enter Travers Entry. On your right was Travers Farm. After you had walked, say three hundred yards, standing in the entry with your back to the farm, you would see an expanse of open fields where Bold Power Station once stood.

Across the fields you would see the Bold Colliery sidings running parallel with the London Midland and Scottish Railway and at the other side of the railway was Bold Moss. On these fields, running from the boundary right the way to Bold and Collins Green, one would see great flocks of Lapwings. These graceful black and white birds, with a crest on their heads, are now practically all gone, apart from the odd pair I saw around the Gorse Lane area near the old Clock Face colliery during 1986. The flocks were so numerous around these parts, that the Burtonwood Brewery used the picture of the lapwing on their labels on the bottles. It was referred to as the Tewit probably introduced by Old Tom Forshaw in 1839, over a century and a half ago.

Before I continue details of Sunday in Sutton, I would like to refer to the old road running to the Moss, just inside the Sutton boundary. It was called the Hills Moss Road. It became a cul-de-sac due to the advent of the railway dividing parts of Sutton.

Due to its blank end, very few people ever walked down it, although nearly everybody in Sutton passed by it when walking to Bold. Turning left from Bold Road and leaving the Boundary Vaults on your right, you would see a row of two up and two down houses with an unpaved road. In these houses lived quite a number of colliery workers, miners, surface workers and girls who worked on the Pit brow and in the screens at Bold,

Collins Green and Clock Face. They were a rough and ready lot and could be tough. They were almost like a tribe and everyone in Sutton referred to this last part of Sutton as “The Indian Village”.

Away from the pits, their leisure time was spent on a Saturday afternoon running whippet races, using an upturned bicycle to pull the cord with the white rag and rabbit’s tail to act as a pacemaker. These races were held at the end of the Sutton Commercial Rugby ground, between Normans Lane and Hills Moss Road. At night, they filed into the Boundary Vaults and any event concerning them was an excuse on a Saturday for a “Prater Pie Do” at night, cooked and served by the licensee, Mrs. Gladys Sutton. I visited the Village twice. The first time at the latter part of the 1926 Miners Strike for a Safety Worker to come back to work, permission being given by the Colliery Manager, Eric Richardson and Jimmy Dixon, the miners Secretary. The second time was to inform a family of an accident at Bold.

### **Powder Works and Charles Davey & Co.**

Lying between the Hills Moss Road and Normans Lane and between the Boundary Vaults and the Farmers Arms, which has now been pulled down, was an acreage of land, which a friend of our family, named Willis part owned. It was the Powder Works. The owners of the Powder works was Bickford, Smith & Co. Ltd, safety fuse manufacturers. I believe, according to my friend, Jack Willis, now departed, that Charles Davey & Co. had a small firm there making the old Davey Safety Lamps for the miners around these parts. Quite a number of girls were employed by these two firms and the ones employed at the powder works were often called “Powder Monkeys”.

As you walked down Normans Lane, you could turn in halfway on the right and pass two fairly large houses., I suppose these were, at one time, the residences of these firms’ employees. The road then turned to the right again and came out on Bold Road. I believe this was called Pye Street. Walking further down Normans Lane, there were four “double houses” occupied, when I was a boy, by officials of Bold Colliery, and the last one was lived in by a Mr. Swift, known as “Owd Mant Swift”, who looked after the Sutton Commercial & AFC. Later, in 1926, this became Sutton Commercial RFC, of which I became a player. The land lying at the railway end was an enclosed football ground, and further to Hills Moss Road was the ground on which the whippet racing took place. Standing at the bottom of Normans Lane and looking across the railway, you could see one of Stephenson’s old crossing gate houses. Leading to Houghton Road was the old Sutton Cricket Field, so one can assume that Reginald Road, Normans Lane and Houghton Road was the old road through that part of Sutton, before the advent of the railway.

Reginald Road, stretching from the bottom of Mill Lane, embracing Normans Lane, was, when I was a boy, called “Long Lane”.. This, I suppose, was the original name for it, before all those streets around the Junction were given “Christian” or first names, such as Reginald, Lionel, Liza, Francis, Norman and Helena.

### **Sunday Evening Walks. Courtesy and Consideration**

Spring had arrived and the chilly winds had disappeared. People took advantage of the warmth, and Sunday evenings were the time for families to walk out together to enjoy the countryside, to visit friends, to go to Sutton Park to listen to the band, to catch a tram to go to Taylor Park and take a row on the lake and enjoy the band.

And so people and their families left their home streets behind to turn into Robins Lane, the main way to walk in the direction of Bold or the Sutton and Sherdley Parks.

Families could walk through Sutton Park, but not through Sherdley. However, you were allowed to walk around Sherdley Park, taking the "Long Wall" in the direction from Sutton Park to Eltonhead Road and turning right, enter the "Score", right round eventually to come out at "Green End" and into Marshalls Cross Road again. The sandstone wall on the main road was called the "Long Wall". It was the wall on Marshalls Cross Road which enclosed the Sherdley estate. The trees around the Score were alive with songbirds - blackbirds, thrushes, finches - all doing their best to out-sing each other. As a child with my parents, I first heard the pure, unique call of the cuckoo, and my first sighting of it was in that part of the countryside.

Sometimes from the Score looking across the Park, you would see Colonel Michael Hughes' racehorses being exercised, and what beautiful creatures they were in comparison with the horses and ponies we saw everyday, pulling carts, with the heavy breeds pulling the large, two-wheeled carts.

When the Sunday evenings darkened, the "Long Wall" was the habitual meeting place for the teenagers from the surrounding districts to "parade" - groups of boys and groups of girls walking continually up and down the path alongside the wall. Usually there was a friendly policeman slowly walking up and down to prevent these groups from joining up and causing an obstruction. It was all done in a cheerful way, and the police were given the respect which was their due - so different to the present day. The older boys and girls who wanted to dally made their way around the Score, where all was quiet, and there no-one interfered. It was a favourite place for courting couples.

To retain the right of way around and through the Score, gates were pulled across the red gravel pathway and locked at Christmas Eve for 24 hours to ensure Michael Hughes' right of ownership.

The parading of teenagers on a Sunday night was an age old custom, and was peculiar to Church Street and Duke Street in St. Helens, as well as the one along the "Long Wall" at Sutton. These were also known as "Monkey Walks".

Referring back to the families walking out on a Sunday night, it was as if you were in a different world. The women folk and the young children, some pushing a go-chair or perambulator, would always be on the inside of the pavement or pathway, with the men folk on the outside. People greeted each other by wishing a "Good evening to you", accompanied by the raising of the men folks' hats. Young men gave way and stepped off the pavement to allow families the right of way - a show of courtesy seldom displayed in the present times.

By half past seven and onwards and the evening drawing to a close, most families had retraced their footsteps towards home. The children had to be washed and put to bed, and in our home, my two younger sisters had to have their hair put into curlers. The strands of hair were entwined in strips of white cloths in the form of bandages. This was the period of time when the girls wore their hair long, and the shortening of the hair called "bobbed" had not arrived. Many a fond mother wept when this fashion came in. My mother kept my sisters' short tresses in two envelopes as keepsakes. Then, there was

the inevitable preparing for work on the Monday morning. I remember my mother cutting three lots of sandwiches - four when I started work - and tea and sugar wrapped in paper. My dad took a bottle of water to work each morning - needless to say, you couldn't brew up down the pit. Porridge had to be made and placed in the oven to cook slowly overnight and was always warm when we got up for breakfast.

Another chore I did when I came in was to set the boiler fire in the washhouse with paper, sticks and coal and to make sure there was enough coal slack to keep the fire going while my mother washed. This was stacked in the corner by the boiler fire. Monday was washing day, the worst day of the week, especially if it turned out to be a rainy day.

Summer and Autumn passed us by, followed by the dark nights of Winter. Now was the time to build a good coal fire up, and its warm, cheery glow aided by the soft gas light did a lot to comfort us during the winter months. Sunday evenings were spent sitting around the fireside, reading a book or us younger ones playing Ludo, Snakes & Ladders or Tiddley Winks until early bedtime, and then the older ones played Whist or other card games. These were the times when outside entertainment was non-existent. I remember my older brother tinkling about with the "Cats Whisker Wireless". You wore ear phones to catch the sound coming through, and then there was the old type of gramophone with the horn. You placed a record on and wound it up by the handle on the side. People had to make their own entertainment.