



Charles Braithwaite, Memories of my early years.

I was born in 1929 at 4 Atlas Place (off St. Thomas St.) Scarborough. Having then moved to St. Mary's Walk, my earliest memory is of being taken by my mother for my first day at school – Friarage Infants. I was three and a half years old. For reasons best known to my mother we moved home several times during my childhood and teenage years mostly from one council estate to another; no housing problems in those days it seems. It is worth mentioning that Atlas Place, Brook Square and Seamer Moor Road have all been demolished; fortunately on each occasion we managed to get out first. Like most able-bodied men of his generation, my father was in the Army. Needless to say perhaps, without their husbands many mothers with young families faced difficult times throughout the war years and beyond.

The Edgehil Estate had 300 or more houses, very few without children, and one can imagine such a concentration of youngsters would, these days, create chaos. However, by today's standards the behaviour generally was almost angelic. This was due to the disciplinary measures imposed by parents, teachers and police and remained so until these groups were gradually shackled by the do-gooders and what was regarded as relatively mild forms of mischief eventually escalated into vandalism.

Actually it is only fair that I confess to a transgression that resulted in my appearance, along with 4 or 5 others at a Juvenile Court. Behind our row of houses was a field sloping up towards Seamer Moor, a feature of which was large clumps of gorse bushes. During the summer the underside of the bushes became quite flammable and on one occasion we inadvertently lit a small camp fire little realising how close we were to the carpet of tinder dry gorse needles and the fire quickly spread out of our control until the entire bank was ablaze. I can vividly remember the noise of the fire engine sirens as they drew my attention to the vehicles racing down Seamer road. This was not a case of arson, nor even a childish prank gone wrong, but our punishment was a severe warning from the magistrates and a belt across the backside on returning home.

Sadly lacking in worldly goods, many families may have been but they were blessed with something money can't buy – neighbourliness. A call next door to borrow a cup of sugar or couple of slices of bread, or whatever, was never refused. Anyone could safely leave their house empty for hours on end with the front door key, usually one per household, dangling on a piece of string behind the letterbox. Such was common knowledge throughout the estate but I can't recall anyone taking advantage, most probably because there was nothing worth pinching.

Most houses had an attic, no conversions in those days, and if this was required as an extra bedroom the accommodation could, at best, only be described as primitive. No heating and only candles for lighting. There was a skylight, a small window fitted flat into the sloping roof and floorboards, but

no insulation between the rafters. On a clear night, one could see the stars through the cracks in the slate roof and God only knows what variety of insects shared the accommodation.

No Giro cheques in those days, just the weekly visit from the Council rent man who had no fear of being mugged. Just the frustrating job of sneaking up on the occupant before they escaped through the back door. Heaven help the child who answered the door and turned his back on the rent man calling out "You aren't in are you mam?" Anyone who paid their rent a week or two in advance usually had a visit from the police demanding to know where the money had come from.

When my parents moved to the Edgehill estate my education was disrupted for the third time when I was transferred from Northstead to Hinderwell School. At the latter I started class, age 9, with the disadvantage of not having been taught to write which meant catching up but somehow managed to gain a scholarship to Scarborough Boys High School within 18 months. It was during this period that WW2 began and my most vivid memory of that time was the issue of a gas mask to each pupil, the fitting of which was quite an ordeal as I recall the sense of suffocation. I often wondered how long I could carry on breathing should the need arise. The mask was contained in a cardboard box which had to be carried around at all times, by means of a loop of string over the shoulder. The box often disintegrated after a spell of wet weather and it was difficult to understand the long wait for a replacement, during which time the mask became quite an embarrassment.

No account of school days would be complete without a mention of discipline, although the teachers cane might these days be regarded by some of later generations as an instrument of torture. I and I'm sure many others who deservedly experienced such punishment, came to realise that I was learning in the all important matter of respect. I was surprisingly reminded of one particular offence for which I received two strokes of the cane across the palm of one hand when local author Richard Percy, kindly sent me a photocopy of a page from the Hinderwell school punishment book. Richard had discovered this while researching the school's history. The page was headed:

Date: Name of Child: Age: Offence: Nature and extent of punishment: Signature of teacher:

The page covered a period of 6 months with the names of 13 children aged between 9 and 10, all boys except one. The offences were described as "Disobedience, Inattention or Throwing items." In my case "Wilful damage to a ruler". Rather significantly, only 2 boys re-offended during the whole 6 months.

I left Hinderwell School in 1940 at the age of 11 to go to High School and for quite long time felt out of my depth. The reason being that I found myself in a class (Form 1A) with several pupils who had moved up from the school's preparatory class which usually meant they were from families of means. Also in the class were the form master's son and two boys from big business families. Having regard simply to the quality of the clothing my mother could afford me the situation was embarrassing to say the least. During the winter months I had often walked to school through the snow with a piece of cardboard inside my shoes to cover a hole in the sole. Unbelievable it may seem, and I sat half the morning in pain before circulation was restored to my wet feet. What a pity there were no charity shops in those days. The situation gradually improved a little when my mother called to see the headmaster, Mr Marsden, affectionately known as Joey. Due to his kind consideration I was granted items such as free boots, school dinners, school uniform (jacket and cap) and sportswear. Also my mother received an allowance periodically to purchase my text books.

Charles Braithwaite has lived in Scarborough all his life and worked at the goods yard in Gallows Close which opened in 1902. The depot was a major lifeline for the town before goods came by road, causing its closure in the late 1970's. One or two trains a day brought a dozen wagons loaded with hundreds of deliveries for all the local traders. These stocked the shelves at Woolworths,

M&S and Rowntrees. Goods were also dispatched from Scarborough back to the rest of the country. There were over 50 staff working at the yard including clerks, cashiers, messengers, checkers, loaders, shunters, stock and number takers. They worked 6 days a week to operate the complex system of collection and dispatch for British Railways. The horse drawn carts which delivered to specific areas of Scarborough were replaced by flat bed trailers drawn by 3 wheel cabs. A canvas tarpaulin covered the load.