

Margaret Baker was born in Scarborough in 1924.

Her grandfather came from Sunderland and was director of Hopper and Masons drapery shop at 100-102 Westborough. Mr Mason died in 1912 and Mr Hopper in 1936.

The shop sold clothing, haberdashery, materials, linens, carpets and linoleum, shoes and millinery. There were over a dozen counters over 3 floors and the customer's bill and money would be put in a metal tube and sent by vacuum to the counting house where change and a receipt would be sent back. During World War 2 the delivery vans were commandeered and a horse and cart had to be used. The shop closed at lunchtime on Saturdays and Wednesdays. Margaret remembers dancing around the empty shop on a Sunday morning when her grandfather went to his office to complete work.

Goods were purchased from travelling salesmen or collected from as far away as Manchester. Some linen could be recycled if brought back in. It was dyed, ironed and re-sold. Many people purchased items using coupons. The shop closed in 1936 when nobody wanted to take over and so was sold to Boots the chemist who destroyed the building and put up the modern block now in its place.

Margaret grew up on Prospect Mount Road, they had gas lights and candles, with coal fireplaces in bedrooms. Electric was installed in 1929. The family had no car and often walked to Cayton Bay, Forge Valley, Raincliffe or Hackness for a picnic, games and then walk home again, all in a day. She rarely got to go on the beach donkeys or travel by train anywhere as it was seen as quite expensive. The family took a fortnight's holiday a year and often went by bus to a farm where they had ordered their week's food and meals in advance. The food was purchased and cooked by the staff for them. A real treat was chicken or fresh cream.

Margaret went to the Scarborough Girls High School in the Valley. Margaret remembers the assembly hall which also doubled as a gym. It had a large open fire surrounded by a fire guard. The children had to take the chairs from the classrooms and carry them down narrow stairs for assembly. They played tennis and hockey on Oriel Crescent and swam in the pool near the Spa bridge. When the school later moved to the new 6th form college site she remembers air raid warnings when they had to go to brick shelters with a jug of water and a lamp. During the war years some evacuees from Hull came to join them and they had an extra term of study in the summer. On her graduation day she went to the Odeon Cinema only to be caught in air raid on the way out.

Margaret worked for the midland Bank until she was called up for National Service. The choice was Nursing or Foreign Office. She chose the later and ended up sorting bits of high speed Morse Code print out for the code breakers at Bletchley Park. When she returned to Scarborough she was kept on temporary staff as she was engaged. Married women were not allowed to work and all the cashiers were male with the women working behind the scenes in the office (perhaps the opposite of today's banks!) In 1948 she left the bank and was presented with a butter dish, toaster and fireside chair. She married a train driver and piano player and had a son. She did lots of voluntary work and especially treasurer jobs for such organisations as the Trefoil Guild, Mother's Union, Scouts and Dance group.