

Interview with Mrs Grace Bremner nee Watkinson born 1908. 1/11/06

An article in the Scarborough Evening News on 28/10/06 reported on the final service at the Wesley Methodist Church in Hoxton Road. I telephoned Lynne Reed to see if they had anything to contribute to the Comm@net archive. Lynne said I should speak with Mrs Grace Bremner, one of the oldest members of the congregation. She is living at the Priceholme residential accommodation.

Mrs Bremner is 98 years old and lived in 33 Barwick Street when the Germans bombed Scarborough in 1914. She remembers hearing the bangs and people coming out in the street in their pjamas. Grace's mother took in a lodger during the summer months to help pay the bills.

Grace remembers when Peasholm park was just waste land. She also remembers when it was built they had a huge aviary with every sort of bird imaginable.

Grace had to go into St Thomas' hospital when she was a child for an appendix operation. They had no anesthetic so put chloroform on mask over her face. She remembers being very afraid of the matron, Mrs Richardson. When they cleaned the operation scar they did it with hot water and scrubbed around the wound. It hurt a lot and if Grace complained they would say they would do it harder if she didn't keep quiet.

Grace went to the Municipal school in the Valley (Westwood) when she was age 11. She helped in the classroom as there was shortage of teachers due to the war. She had to ask her grandfather for the 30 shillings for a school uniform. At that time he only earned 3 guineas a week.

Grace left school before her 16th birthday and started work at the W.H.Smiths stand at the railway station. She earned 10 shillings a week and sold newspapers to the business gentlemen in top hats that used to take the train to York. Grace had to start at 6am every day.

Grace later worked at the family's grocery shop, previously known as Sawdon's. The shop was requisitioned during the war. Due to rationing they had very regular customers and got to know them all very well. Sometimes they had to give them credit or loans until they could pay the money back. The shop had an errand boy and a van to collect the merchandise from the wholesaler in Eastfield.

Grace's father was an air raid warden (ARP) during the war and they preferred to go to the cellar during a raid as the Anderson shelter always smelt bad.

Her grandfather, Robert Watkinson had a building firm which helped build the Marine Drive and built the Wesley chapel. They helped repair the lighthouse when it was damaged in the 1914 shelling as well as many damaged houses in Wooler street, Candler street and Filey Road. Their yard was at 11 York Place and had a horse and stable. Rowntrees was next door. They were friendly with the Quakers and Methodists.

Grace's cousin, Stan Ranes, played the accordion on-board the Coronia pleasure cruiser during the 1950's and 60's. Grace remembers going to the Londesborough Theatre to see films, it cost 6p.

Grace's grandfather's wife was a Burnett and their family can trace its routes back to the 1780's. In 1848 the family moved to Brazil and had 6 children there. She had 11 siblings, 7 brothers and 4 sisters. Her mother died shortly after having the youngest boy, Tom. He moved to Canada later in life. One of the older girls had to look after the other children and never got to school to learn to read or write. Her son became a vet. Another of the girls got married but both died during a flu epidemic.