

Big Day Watched By Crowds

Mayor's Sunday was a very important day, the mayor elect attending whichever church or chapel he was connected with for divine service. It was an annual pageant as the mayor and organisations of the town made their ponderous way along the streets from Stubylee where all assembled. The procession was preceded by Irwell Springs or Stacksteads band. Behind the band came the mayor flanked by 2 policemen carrying halberds ferocious looking weapons then the aldermen and councillors and town clerk complete with wig followed by the gentlemen of the borough. Then came boy scouts, girl guides, cubs, brownies struggling to keep in step and not being very successful at that. Of course all the town characters turned out to watch, 'Charlie Brown, Billy Amos, Billy Willsy (complete with bowler) he was the organ blower at Christ Church, Micky Luke, Scotch Molly, Hughy Dunn. It was quite an impressive occasion and if the day was fine worth turning out to see. For those who didn't get up early they could see the procession return to the market ground in front of the police station where the mayor thanked all present for turning out.

WASHING BY HAND

Monday was the recognised washing day, every article washed by hand. The operation started with a big black pan that held about 2 gallon of water being placed on the fire to boil and the whites placed in followed by colours, when they had had a good boiling. These were then put in the dolly tub (a wooden tub that held about 6 or 7 gallons of water) ready to be passed (twisted and pushed about) by a clothes dolly (looked like a 5 legged dairy stool with a hole in the middle through which was a spindle or handle to twist and turn it) then it was the turn of the rubbing board. The clothes were lifted out of the water in their turn and given a rubbing with Dr Lovelaces or Mother Shiptons or carbolic soap then rubbed hard on the ribs of the rubbing board.

Then to the mangle a huge cast iron contraption made by Pioneer of Accrington, almost 5' tall with two wooden rollers almost a yard long and 7 or 8" in diameter. These were turned by a huge cast iron wheel at the right hand side about 15" in diameter and connected by large cogs to the rollers. Pressure was applied to the rollers to squeeze more water out of the clothes by means of a handle on top. They squeezed water out all right but what hard work it required when articles such as blankets were placed between the rollers.

STREETS BLOCKED

Even though it was hard work some women on account of their meagre finances had to take in other people's washing each week and for a family wash and ironing would only receive 6d to 1/- and that included fetching and delivery of the load usually in a large wicker basket. After the washing and mangling had been completed the clothes were hung out on a line to dry, the back streets used to be blocked with washing on lines.

IRONS IN FIRE

If it had been a good drying day the washing was ready for ironing, no fancy electric irons just a box iron which as the name implies was a box shaped like the present day iron but the box was about 4" high with a handle on top and with a sliding door at the back into which was placed a cast iron heater, shaped like the box but slightly less which had previously been put in the fire until red hot. This heated the base of the iron and as this rapidly lost its heat another heater was kept in the fire as reserve. White stiff collars were worn by many men and these required special washing and starching. Starch was a specially prepared liquid into

which the white collar was dipped then ironed and it dried stiff. The operation called washing day even then was not completed, patching and darning had to be done. Stockings all wool were usually above the knee length and knees and heels wore out. Wool was easily obtainable and the method of darning was to insert a wooden gadget shaped like and called a mushroom and place this behind the hole then stitch wool in the hole from one side to the other until the hole had been covered then stitch the opposite way but going under and over the strands stitched the opposite way, thus a new piece of stocking had been woven into the old. This happened time and time again and was an economic necessity in the days of which I write. When the feet would darn no more the legs were used to cover table legs to keep clean and free from knocks and damage.

CLOTHES WITH HOLES

Clogs which were the common mode of footwear but were the main culprits in wearing out the heels of stockings. Jerseys which most lads wore invariably became a bit holey at the elbows and these required darning. Short pants which were the style until lads became about 15 years of age were often patched on the backsides, economies demanded this, most clothes where there was a large family were handed down one to another and when no longer wearable were cut up and used to make a peg rug. This consisted- of a piece of sacking or Hessian the size depending upon the size of rug one wanted and a special tool was used to push through the Hessian and grip a piece of cloth which was pulled i of its length through the Hessian and after the process was repeated hundreds of times with different cloths a handy hardwearing rug was available.