

Michy Luke and Alice from Wigan

Local characters were numerous. Those that spring to mind are Micky Luke, a little fellow with a large moustache who always wore a kind of overcoat into whose pockets his hands were always tucked. He lived at the Doorstones lodging house behind the Natural History Society's room) and only when he died did I find his real name to be Michael Mc Mahoney. Another Doorstones resident was Hughy Dunn, who could give a good turn on a mouth organ. Alice from Wigan was an ex-coal sorter from the town of her name.

Scotchy Molly, Berny Tighe, the Rag and Bone man, Bob Chow and a chap who lived up gardens we called Squire Pitchfork (he worked for Monks who farmed Blackthorn Farm), not forgetting Owd Mather who lived at Lower Newgate (behind the Nat) and made home boiled toffee which he sold from a round black tin at the entrance to the pit of the Empire Theatre and Bacup football matches for Id per bag.

His plaintive toneless cry of "Old Mather's Cough Drops a penny a bag" will be remembered by many. Hawkers were many and their cries were well-known "Chairs to mend" (wicker seats), "Scissors to grind" "Tubs (washing) to mend", "All sizes of pan lids", "Firelighters". Owd Slattery, chimney sweep, who cried in a deep bass voice "Do ya want me-e-e".

RAGS, BONES AND ICES

During the summer months people like Chrissy Howarth and Chadwick from Whitworth would come with their icecream carts and shouting "Ice-cream". Various rag and bone dealers whose cry was "Rags and Bones, Donkey Stones", all except Happy Jack (John Whitehead). He was a thin man, always wore a bowler hat, and, on account of a faulty voice box, used to sound a ricker. Folks knew it was him. He was a grand chap and a friend of the family. My father always had a fond memory of Happy Jack who took him on holiday in a Gipsy type caravan pulled by a horse • They reached the distant place of Freckleton before having to turn back. Only one week for holidays in those days, and more people never left their own doorsteps than went on holiday. For those who did go on holidays, distant places like Great Yarmouth meant leaving Bacup station at 10pm Friday and lads from the back streets (Irwell Street - King Street) used to hang round the centre of Bacup and accost anyone seen carrying a portmanteau with "Carry you bags, sir" Some had soap boxes on wheels which they used and the reward varied from 2d to 6d. The process was reversed when the holidaymakers returned the following Saturday.

SOLID TYRES

Other rail trips went to Blackpool, Southport and Morecambe, and in Burnley Road by the Boston (between the Post Office and King George Hotel) solid tyred motor charabancs stood behind each other with notice boards propped up against each one stating the destination of their trip and the price. Seaside trips usually left about 7 am and half-day around noon to Brungerley Bridge (near Clitheroe) 3/-, Whalley, 2/6d, Stoneyhurst 3/-, Higher Hodder 3/-, and the North Bound, a combination of each of these 3/6d.

The people running the charas were Bacup Motor Garage. De Dion Bouton (where Uni Coal now garage in South Street) owned by Holden's who had a cycle shop in St. James Street directly opposite South Street, and who was reputed to be the first man to ride a bicycle from Todmorden to Bacup without getting off.

BOTTLE AND CHARA

Greenwood's who had a bottling shop in King Street this chara had pneumatic tyres on the front); Turners from Todmorden; Tattersall (Reekers), Reliance from Rochdale and I just

remember a firm called Overtons who had a Glove Manufacturing business in Yorkshire Street Mills and garaged the chara in what is now a shop next door to the Queen's Hotel in Todmorden Road. In the late 1920s Holts of Rochdale (later Yellowway) added to the array. The same firms were on this stand on fine Sundays usually for the half-day trips and I went on them all with my Grandmother and Grandfather Read many, many times. Apart from the statutory holidays, the seaside trips were usually booked well ahead for special occasions for which those intending to go paid so much per week to the organiser, whether it be Sunday-school club or workshop: The speed limit for the charas with solid tyres was 12 mph and later 20 mph for those with pneumatic tyres. I remember going on a trip to the Yorkshire Dales when Holts introduced some spanking new Reo coaches with a centre aisle and pneumatic tyres and after ascending the hill from Buckden through Cray, we were made to walk down the other side as it was not felt safe to descend the hill with a full coach load. At the present time this hill is classed as ordinary. Sunday cycling was becoming very popular. At first I was not allowed to use mv cycle on Sundays but fashions were changing.

CYCLING PLUS FOUR

The only way I was given permission was because my best suit was becoming shabby and, as my parents could not afford to buy me a new one, I was allowed to use my cycle as I wore a pair of plus fours for that and would not require new clothes. We used to go to Malham, Settle, Skipton, Arncliffe, Grassington, Blackpool, Morecambe, and every Saturday after I had played cricket with Zion Baptists, I would meet the lads at Whalley where we met at a cafe, now demolished, called Sally's, had a pint of tea then sometimes we walked QP Whalley Nab or had a row on the river before riding home via Accrington or Simons tone and Padiham. If the latter we stopped for a glass of beer at the Towneley Arms. The fashion of putting your cycles away for the winter after greasing all shining parts was now passing and we went runs a lot of winter days. There were plenty of cafes dotted around the countryside where a good fire always welcomed you and there was usually a good number of cyclists.

Michy Luke & Alice