

Mr Richard Greenoff the recently retired Bacup postman and I were talking one day this week of the great changes that have taken place in and about the main streets of Bacup since the time when he commenced his life's work as a letter carrier now 33 years ago. I found the reminiscences interesting as doubtless will others who can carry their minds back twenty or thirty years and can recall some of the personages one was most likely to meet in those days in a walk say from Bulls Head corner and Lee Mill. I mention this particular route because this was the route that formed the main part of Mr Greenoff's walk during his first years as postman.

In 1877 when he became a servant of the government, Bacup's post office was in a little low building at the corner of Market Street and Burnley road and was carried on in connection with a stationary and printing business owned by the two brothers Tom and Dick Harris. The two latter were responsible for all the post office business and the total staff in addition consisted of four letter carriers four messengers six females in the telegraph department. The four postmen of 30 years ago were R Greenoff, David Hargreaves, Webb and Joe Thomas of whom the two latter have passed over. Mr Greenoff's beat commenced at the corner of Market Street, the old constitutional club was then next door to the post office and in one walk he had to cover the whole of Market Street, Henrietta street and the adjoining streets, Bankside Lane, Huttock top, Rockcliffe, Newchurch road, and Lee wood,. There were only two deliveries a day at that time - now there are four, and Mr Greenoff's second delivery ceased at New line end. Some time later however, when a certain gentleman from Stacksteads was brought out a candidate for the Town Council, Mr Greenoff did a little canvassing in his spare time. This seemed to rouse the ire of a certain political opponent in the neighbourhood of Lee Wood, who said if the postman had time to canvass he had time to deliver letters. They therefore petitioned the post master for the afternoon delivery of letters to be extended to Lee Mill and Lee Wood the same as the morning delivery and their petition was acceded to.

At that time there was no sub post office at Lee Mill, and the only letter box was at Pippin Bank, from which letters were collected twice a day. One of Mr Greenoff's duties was to empty the box at Britannia at 6.30 in the evening, then walk down New Line to empty the box at Pippin Bank, and then walk back to Smelt in Rochdale road. Having done this he had to despatch the eight o'clock night mail and walk to Weir terrace, to empty the box there for another train at twenty minutes to ten. This was a four mile walk every evening. It is worthy of note that during the whole of his 33 years service Mr Greenoff never had a day free from railway station duty and he estimates that at the very lowest computation he has spent over 4,000 hours on the Bacup Railway station waiting for the mails. During that period he has of course, seen a great evolution in regard to the railway itself and the station accommodation at Bacup. Up to 1880 the line from Rawtenstall was a single one, and there was only one platform, which could be approached through an entrance in Manor Street, now walled up. In this Manor Street, old Henry Firth had a blacksmiths shop. The old engine shed ran alongside Rockcliffe mill. In the year just mentioned a station employee was working some empty coaches down the line by means of a hand brake when they got out of control and dashing into the booking office completely demolished it. In the following year the double line was opened from Rawtenstall to Bacup and the line to Rochdale also made. About the middle of 1882 Mr Greenoff had a narrow escape from being killed whilst making his customary wait for the mails. It was always his practice to stand leaning against the pillar lamp at the extreme end of the platform until the arrival of the train with the bag, but one day just when the train was due something at the top end of the station attracted his attention. He walked down the

platform, but hearing the train coming he turned back, At that moment he saw the engine strike the points and begin to jump, within the space of a few seconds it had thrown its iron bulk right across the platform exactly over the spot where the pillar lamp had stood smashing it to fragments. This is not the only occasion when Mr Greenoff believes providence as intervened to save his life. Some years later he was walking along the line at night when he heard clearly and distinctly something shout " Dick thou'rt wrong" immediately he stepped aside onto the six foot and even as he did so the night mail ran past him on the line where the moment before he had been walking.

Mr Greenoff proceeded to speak of some of the better known personages who were on his beat 25 to 30 years ago. The mention of their names will no doubt conjure up many recollections. Opposite the old post office George Lord better known as " SF" kept a kind of salt business and had a number of lime gals. Henry Cardue had a ironmongers shop where Mr Newman's tripe shop now is, and Westray Benn had a similar business in the premises now occupied by Mr Sam and Mr Walter Pilling. Edmund Lord better known as " Carrier" kept a grocers shop next door to the Market Hotel, and on the site were the Lancashire and Yorkshire bank now stands Teddy Sep sold tripe, puddings and fried fish. Dick Baldwin had a greengrocery business in a little shop which years ago was transferred into the well known drapery and ladies outfitting shop of or Mr James Schofield. Lower down on the site of the present Victoria working men's club the now defunct Rossendale news was printed. In the same block of buildings the father of Mr Sutcliffe Midgley had a furniture shop. Barkers had a foundry where the now theatre is and Forest mill was in the hands of Messrs Haworth. In Forest mill yard Hammond had his photographic studio before he built the new place now occupied by Mr Morris. On the whole length of what is now Market Street, between Bulls head corner and Curve buildings only three tradesmen who were in business thirty years ago are still at their shops. These are Mr Jonathon Sutcliffe a boot and shoe dealer, Mr George Hargreaves general dealer, opposite Zion chapel and Messrs Croppers wholesale grocer. At the corner of King Street was Joe Crowthers, auctioneers, and about the middle of the same street was " Dirty Name " while in Union street Old Flamper kept a grocery store. Father Mulvaney lived at St Mary's priory and was followed by Father Steel. The late Mr Emmott Entwistle occupied Rose Hill house, lately in the occupation of councillor Greenhalgh and now used as the vicarage for St Johns church. Mrs Lord the mother of the late W H Lord and Mr Richard Lord, lived at Bankside House, now in the occupation of Mr Alex Wright. Forest house was occupied by Mr James Smith Lord and Mr William Bentham. The latter gentleman despite his age was a splendid walker, and Mr Greenoff recognised him as the only man who could beat him in the walk from the station to the post office. The lower house at Forest Bank, in Bankside Lane just above the Dandy shop, was built about this time by Mr Joseph Noble out of the first draw made in connection with well remembered Starr- Bowkett Building Society for many years now carried on in the offices of the Rates office.

The terrace of houses now known as Cocoa Lee Terrace, adjoining St Saviours school, occupy a site known as Lumb Hall, which 20 to 30 years ago had a very different appearance to what it has today. On a level with the present school playgrounds, and beneath where Cocoa Lee Terrace now is was a fine piece of garden stretching back from the roadway above which was fenced off by iron railings. In this plot of garden were five picturesque old houses and Mr Greenoff still remembers who lived there. They were Ann Bowker, Ann Lowe, Jim Heys, George Keeble, and Dick Cropper. Old Bentley kept the small grocers shop which is now the sub post office at Lee Mill. Mr Greenoff used to wear clogs on his rounds but eventually the government began to pay boot money, and even though Mr Greenoff made application to be allowed to continue in his clogs his application was refused.

