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MY LIFE BY GEORGE BODDY

Edited by Malcolm Street

SYNOPSIS

This is the autobiography of George Boddy of Pateley Bridge. It has been copied from the manuscript that he produced at the request of a group of students some years ago. The manuscript was not written as a story, more as a chronological list of his thoughts and remembrances. These have been copied, with the addition of extra words and punctuation to make a more readable account of his life in the early 20th century.

I was born at Bridgehouse Gate, Pateley Bridge, on 5th May 1900. I am the eldest son in a family of four. My father worked for Mr T. Gill at the corn mill, which was later owned by the Stockdale family. As well as working in the mill, travelling and gathering orders, he also dressed the mill stones. Later on we moved to Dacre Banks and this is where I started school. The school was in the building which is now the Youth Hostel. I attended this school until I was nine years old. One night, just before we were to move, my sister and I were out sledging a little way from home. It was about eight o'clock at night. Suddenly we saw a bright light in the sky with a long tail of light trailing behind. We were so frightened that we ran home as fast as our legs could carry us. It was much later that we found out that it was Halley's Comet.

Every Sunday we attended the Congregational Church Sunday School, even through deep snow in the depths of winter. This was-much to the amazement of the men clearing the snow. They were not slow to remark; "Fancy going to Sunday School in this weather!"

I used to go with the other boys to the sawmill, with a box on wheels, to collect the bark that had been stripped from the trees. This was all free for the taking and, as we were local boys, they were glad to get rid of it. On other nights we would ride the wood waggon horses back to the stables, after their days work.

Another days amusement was watching the moulders at Joe Todds foundry, making sure that we kept well back. If we got too close, one of the men would throw a bag of soot at us and, believe me, it took some cleaning off. Later that year we moved to Glasshouses (1909).

My father was a local Wesleyan Preacher for forty years, and he would be planned most Sundays on the Pateley Bridge circuit. We sometimes didn't see him for three or more weeks at a time. This was because he would be off to work in the mornings before we got up, and back long after we were in bed. If he was planned to be preaching at Lodge, near Scar House, then he would be up early to meet two other men. Then they would all travel together with Mr Kaberry in his horse and trap, not returning until nine thirty, or even ten at night. Then he would be up for work again before seven the following morning.

During the summer holidays, I once went with my father to gather orders for the corn mill; we set off at seven thirty in the morning, up through Guisecliffe wood, past Guisecliffe end, calling at farmhouses on the way, until we reached Padside Hall. This Hall was once the country residence of the Ingilby family of Ripley Castle. The courtyard was surrounded on three sides by the living quarters. Our knock on the door was answered by two old ladies wearing harden aprons. We entered the kitchen to find the floor covered in sand. There was a huge fireplace and the ceiling was held up by two large stone pillars. Our next port of call was Humberstone Bank, where my father always dined when he was in the area. The large fireplace contained a large fire of peat, burning merrily. The table was a rare site, a large roast of beef surrounded by Yorkshire Puddings and roast potatoes. After lunch, and on our way once again, we headed for Dacre Banks, calling at other farms on the way. The Dacre Banks corn mill was owned by the same man who owned the Pateley Bridge Mill. The orders that we had collected during the day were handed in. These would be delivered by horse and cart from Dacre Banks mill. We then turned our faces towards Glasshouses and walked home through the fields, arriving home about six o'clock in the evening.

Whilst living in Glasshouses, my brother, two sisters and I attended the Methodist Sunday School. We arrived at ten in the morning every Sunday and stayed on for morning service. Back we went for the afternoon at two fifteen, and again at six in the evening. It was there at the age of about twelve that I got the job of organ blower. My brother Frank and I shared this job so that if either of us was ill, there was always someone to work the bellows. At this time the church boasted a full choir, so we had to attend choir practice during the week as well. All this for the princely sum of one pound per annum and a free day out at the seaside. Also there were organ recitals, when it really taxed our strength to keep plenty of air in the bellows. We had this job for a number of years and then two more lads took over, again it was two brothers.

At this time the Primitive Methodist Group held quite a lot of Evangelist meetings in Glasshouses. All the young people in the area, including myself, always attended these meetings. During the Harvest Festival they had a sale on the Monday evening, the produce being so plentiful that it was often eleven at night when they finished.

At the age of fourteen I was apprenticed to Glasshouses mill as a mechanic. I was bound to stay there for seven years as the company put by one shilling per week, until I was twenty one. If I left before that time I would forfeit all that money. The pay was five shillings per week, with one shilling per year rise. Mr Thackery rang a bell at five thirty in the morning, and again at five forty five to make sure that we would start work promptly at six. We had half an hour for breakfast; eight to eight thirty, one hour for dinner; twelve until one, and finished for the day at five thirty in the evening. In winter time when the river was likely to flood, I used to go to the damstakes at Castlehead at quarter to six in the morning to lift the cleugh up to let the water down for driving the waterwheel, and again at quarter to five to put it down at night. Mr Atkinson senior, who owned the Glasshouses mill, used to live at Folly Gill mill at Darley, and came to work in a horse and trap. In winter time he

used to wear a sheet of brown paper under his waistcoat to keep out the cold. He used to come into the mechanics shop where I worked to see what we were doing. There would be four or five men working in there. He usually came just before he went home at five o'clock, and then his first call in the morning to see how much work we had done after he went the previous evening.

One of our pastimes in winter was sledging, and we would go when the roads were well covered with snow. The best run was from the top of Blazefield down Lupton Bank, then turn down through Glasshouses, right to the bridge without a stop. A distance of about a mile. We had no fear of meeting a car as there were very few of them on the road at that time of night. We might meet a horse and cart, but it nearly always was night time when we were sledging. It was in 1912, at the age of twelve, that I had my first ride in a motor car, and even then I only stood on the running board. I recollect that it was a voting day. One of the first cars that I saw was taking King George the fifth to Bolton Abbey with a shooting party.

We had a reading room in the village at that time; it was a, small cottage in a row just below the Post Office. Downstairs housed the reading room where most of the older members would gather, and upstairs held a small billiard table. Sometimes when a game of billiards got hectic, the balls would fly off the table and go bouncing down the stairs. This used to disturb the peace of the older members in the reading room. All in all there would be about forty members.

During the winter months, a travelling company came to Pateley Bridge and presented a series of plays in the Oddfellows Hall. In the interval there were competitions for teenagers. One such competition was to pin a tail on a large donkey, which was made out of cardboard, whilst blindfolded. The one who placed the tail nearest its correct position was the winner. Another very popular competition was to have two boys standing opposite each other, trying to whistle 'God Save The King', without laughing. One evening I took part and turned out the winner, after beating five or six other boys. The prize was a book called, *'Kings of the Quarter Deck',* a most unsuitable book for a young boy; I still haven't read it.

Another entertainment was a film show, which was held two or three times a week. If the film broke down, which was not an uncommon occurrence, the pianist would entertain us with a sing song. There were also woodwork classes in a hut on the site where Mr Walkers hut stands today, on Park Road. Mr Allan Thorpe was the master and he taught three or four of us there. Usually on the way home we bought a fish and a pennyworth of chips, total cost 3d.

We also spent a lot of time at the cobblers shop in Glasshouses after we finished work. The cobbler once made me a pair of boots. He filled the soles and heels with hob nails, and added heel and toe plates. When they were finished we weighed them and they weighed in at seven pounds.

In summertime we all went to help the farmers with the haymaking. When we weren't required in the hayfield, we would go to Hawkshaw Gill, a wood about a mile away. There we would collect firewood and, when in season, blackberries and raspberries. Near to the wood there was an eight hole golf course. When the players were without a caddy to carry their clubs, we got

the job for two or three pence a round. We had to make a tee with sand, and when the player had struck the ball, he expected us to be able to tell him exactly where the ball had landed.

Also in summer time, my friends and I would raid wasps nests. We used to wait for a wet day when most of the wasps were inside the nests. First we cut a sod of grass large enough to cover the hole. Then we got about a quarter of a pound of gunpowder, and dampened it so that it would wrap around a stick. Then we would light the stick and push it down the hole, and replace the grass sod. After waiting for about five minutes, until the smoke had stunned the wasps, we would cut out the cakes. Some nests had three or four cakes and each one was six or seven inches in diameter. We then took them to the fishermen, who gave us a few coppers for them. Hornets generally built their nests in a tree, so we used to hold a shovel underneath, knock the nest down, then run away to a safe distance.

In wintertime we spent a lot of time in the gasworks at Glasshouses helping to charge the retorts. There were six of these, each with a large coke fire beneath it to keep it hot. Each retort held four hundred weight of coal and had to be drawn twice a day. To draw a retort we just slackened the lid a little, put a light to it, and then took the lid off. We then drew out the burned coal and threw water on it to stop it burning. Whilst we were doing this, the man who was supposed to be doing it was putting lime on the lids ready to replace them, when we had refilled the retorts with coal. Then we would go home black as the ace of spades.

At Guy Fawkes time we would make our own big bang. First we would find a nut with an inch hole, then fill the hole with potash and brimstone. We would then stand the bolt in this and set it near a high wall. Then we would stand on the wall and drop a large stone on it. If anyone had been passing when we did this, they could easily have been killed by flying metal.

When I was eighteen, I was called into the army. Before I went, my parents took me to Ripon for a day out. We travelled there by horse and trap. I served two years in the army, nine months of this was in the occupation of the Rhine. Once when I came home on leave, I missed the last train from Harrogate to Pateley Bridge, so I set off to walk. It was a very wet night, and I arrived home sometime after one o'clock in the morning. The next time I was stranded in Harrogate, I enquired at the booking office and was given an address to stay at for the night. The lady of the house told me that I could take the servant girl out to the pictures; so I had a night out, supper, bed and breakfast, for three shillings and sixpence. At one point in my army service I was stationed at Ripon camp, and from there I was allowed a weekend pass (Saturday noon until Sunday midnight). When I was due for leave, my sister would come out to meet me on her bicycle. We would then ride home in what was called a 'Ride and Tie' fashion. First I would ride for a mile or two, leaving my sister to walk. I would then park the bicycle in a hedgerow, and start off to walk. When my sister reached the bicycle, she would ride and catch me up, pass me, and then the sequence would be repeated. This way we reached home only having walked half the distance each.

After my army service, and just turned twenty one, I got a mechanics job in Manchester. The firm I worked for was Waites, Son's and Atkinsons, at double the wage I had previously been earning. I lodged for a while with the man who had got me the job. I arrived on the Saturday, to get settled in ready for work on the Monday morning. At six thirty on the Monday morning I was awakened by, what was to me, a strange noise; it sounded like someone throwing stones at the window. When I got up and asked what the noise had been, it was explained to me that it was the 'Knocker Up'. Nearly everyone working in a factory or mill in those days used one. The 'Knocker Up' carried a long pole with a wire on the end, and used it to knock on the bedroom windows at a prearranged time. The mill I worked in was only five minutes walk away from my lodgings. There was a lot of hooters and factory whistles for starting time, and it took me quite a few days to sort out which was ours. There was a cat at these lodgings, and if it got under the feet of the landlady of the house, she put it in a drawer. After a time I moved on to other lodgings. One of the other lodgers, at this place, was the grandson of the house. He worked for a firm that made barrels. Getting him up for work was really hard, yet on a Sunday, he would be up and about by five o'clock to go fishing. Another of the men staying there was about fifty, and worked for British Oxygen. He liked his drink, and came back drunk every Saturday night. One weekend he offered to show me round the town, and, as expected, we ended up in his favourite pub. Soon after we entered this establishment in came the Salvation Army. After giving me the *War Cry,* one of them asked me what I was doing there. She could see that I was a stranger, and thought that I was there by mistake, but I explained that I was with a friend. However we got him home that night without him getting drunk. One day I took the dog for a walk without a lead, and it ran straight under a tramcar. I thought that would be the end of him, but he came out the other side none the worse. Another day the landlady was making teacakes for tea. She put them on the fender to rise. When I came back for dinner, there was the dog, very comfortable and fast asleep, with it's head resting on the teacakes. Some of the women in Manchester would don their black shawls at nine o'clock on a Saturday night. They would then go to the butchers, and sometimes the fishmarket, to see what was left and going cheap. As there weren't fridges and freezers in those days, most things would be sold off before closing. Unfortunately the firm closed down after about six months, and as there wasn't any jobs going in the area, I returned to Pateley Bridge.

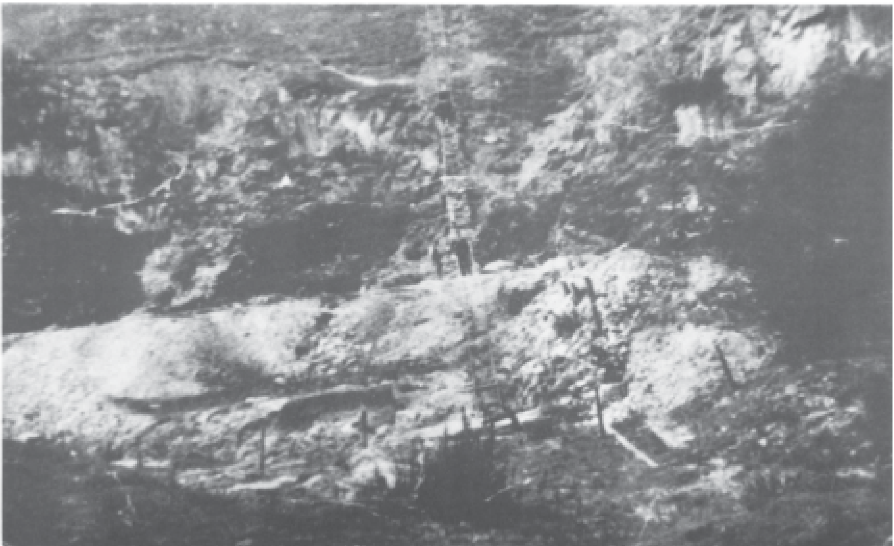
Next I applied for a job at Scar House Reservoir, and got one in the fitting shop, working on a lathe. The hours were seven in the morning to five at night, with half an hours break for lunch. I had to make my own tea by boiling the water over a blacksmiths' fire. There were nine or ten hostels at the reservoir, each had a landlord or landlady, with one or two servants, and sixty or seventy men in residence. They charged eight pence a night for the bed, breakfast and dinner, the latter bought over the counter. Weekends I went home to the family. Coming back one Monday morning the gate of Lofthouse was locked, this meant leaving my motorbike there and walking three miles. However, after several tries, I managed to open the gate with a pair of callipers. What a relief, they were very strict about timekeeping. One week I asked for feast Monday

off to go to a show, but the foreman said I needed ‘nought with the rabble’, so that was one show that I missed. If you went to the toilet, you were only allowed three minutes. The hourly rate of pay for all this was one shilling and threepence, with one shilling and sixpence for overtime. I enjoyed the work though, and I suppose I should have stayed. However winter was coming on, and working in a big shed with no heating held no enticement, so I decided I would like a change, even though the foreman asked me to stay.

My next job was in the corn mill where my father worked. I had to mind a grinding machine. This machine could grind a hundred weight of corn in about ten minutes, against thirty minutes with the stone ground corn. I worked here during the winter.

Then I moved on to work for the Greenhow Mining Company, in their lead mines at Gillheads. This was a drift mine in the hill side in Trollers Gill. As we still lived at Glasshouses, it was a four mile walk into Greenhow Village each morning, to catch the lorry. This left at six forty five to get to Gillheads to start work at seven. We worked two shifts, seven to three, and three to eleven at. night. It was my job to keep the water out of the workings. This was done by a centrifugal pump, driven by a five horse power Petter engine. One Sunday night I left home just after midnight to walk to Gillheads. When I got to Greenhow there was about two inches of snow. At that time I didn’t have a watch, so I went to look at the church clock. However just as I reached it, it struck two a. m., and I still had three miles to go. However I made it in time to get the mine pumped out before the miners arrived for work, so that they could start on time. This was important to them as they were on piecework, so time was money. They could earn twice as much as me that way.

Plate I. Gillheads Incline, circa 1922.



One particular night I came out of the mine and saw a faint glow in the grass, about twenty yards away from me. On further investigation I found a glow worm. I took it home with me and put it in the garden, where it remained for about six months. This was the first and last glow worm that I have ever seen.

It was about this time that the Company started to work a shaft at Appletreewick, about a mile across the moors from Gillheads. To get there we laid a two foot gauge railway across the moors. We also erected a dressing plant at Gillheads to treat the lead ore from this mine. We had an eighteen horse power diesel engine to drive the screens, jigs, pump and table, and a steam engine to drive the crusher. The dressing plant was in a big wooden shed, open at one end. We only had carbide and vaporising paraffin lamps for lighting; the nickname for the paraffin lamps was ‘Lucy Jane’. They were the same kind as were used on the stalls at Pateley Feast. If they blew out, we had to run sharp and relight them before they got cold. We got the water for washing the ore from a dyke, that brought it a mile from Dry Gill House. Then we had to pump it fifty feet up to the mill and into a storage tank. One night the pump broke down, and when I had opened it up, I found that a frog had got stuck fast under one of the clacks. It must have been sucked up the pipe.

The Company bought a vertical boiler for the mine at Appletreewick. They took it down to the village, intending to take it up the lane to the mine. There they found that the lane was too narrow. It therefore had to be brought back to Gillheads mine and rolled over the moor, using a horse and a wire rope. One of the ladders at this mine was twenty two feet long, made of iron, and so narrow that it was impossible to get both feet on one rung at a time. We had a small steam locomotive to pull the trucks over to Gillheads, but the track was too light, and the ground too soft, so it had to go back to the makers. We next got a Fordson tractor. It did the job well on the whole, but if the rails were wet or frosty, it started to run back, and sometimes went half a mile.

One night in the dressing mill the rollers got clogged up. They were awkward to reach and we had to clear them with a long rod. The boy got it clear, then put his hand on the cog wheel. The wheel gave a turn, and trapped his hand. As we didn’t have a telephone or means of transport, and it happened at nine o’clock at night, he had to wait until the lorry came at eleven o’clock before we could take him to hospital.

One frosty morning, my brother and I were going over to Appletreewick mine to repair a compressor. We had our tools on a flat bogie which we were pushing. When we came to the top of the hill, we put a bar through the back wheels to use as a brake. The line was frosty and the bogie started to slide. As it gained speed we jumped off, and the bar caught me and knocked me down. The bogie carried on and crashed through a gate, which the manager made us pay for.

During the summer of 1924, I went to the Wembley Exhibition, in London, with four friends. We stayed for four or five days.

When we were on the three to eleven shift at Gillheads mine, we had tea break at seven o’clock. One of the men used to put down snares to try and catch a few rabbits. There was always a lot of them around after dark. At the end of the shift he would go round to see what he had caught. I went round

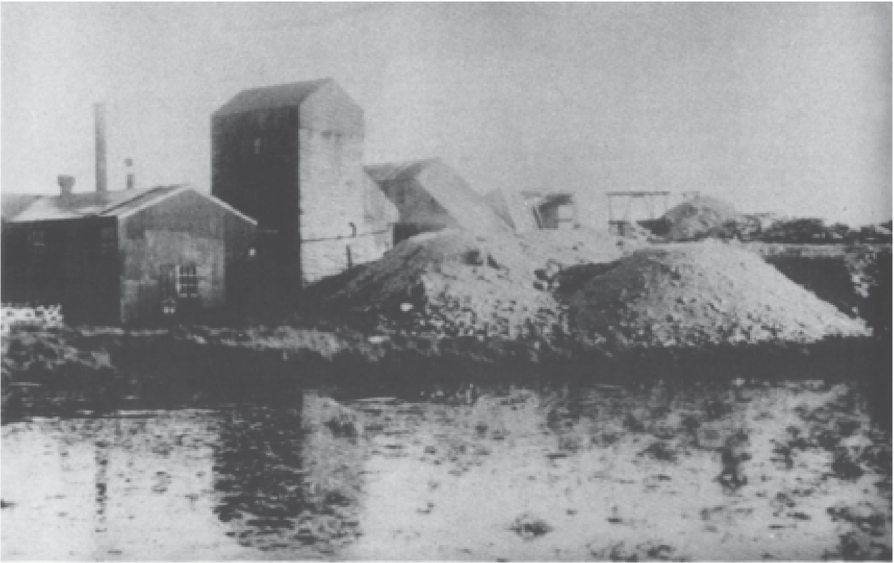


Plate II. Number Two Shaft, circa 1925.

with him on one particular night, each of us carrying a miners lamp. I spotted a rabbit running around a peg and shouted to tell him, as I was afraid that it would get away. His answer was, ‘Put th’ foot on it lad!’.

It was during 1925 that Gillheads mine was worked out of fluorspar, and the Company also closed the Appletreewick mine down. However, a new company started up, Bewerley Mines Ltd., and they started to work the Cockhill mine at Greenhow. This was under the same manager, so we moved over there with him. Round about the same time, Pateley Mines started to work the No 2 Shaft, on Craven Moor, which belonged to Bradford Corporation Water Works. This shaft is 420 feet deep. The manager wanted to inspect the shaft, so the joiner made a large platform to just fit the shaft, about eight to ten feet in diameter. We put six or seven hundred weight of stones on the platform to give it a trial run. We let it down about a hundred feet and then wound it up again. Just before it got back to the top, the winch slipped out of gear, and down it crashed to the bottom. That is what I call a lucky escape, as the manager had invited me to go down with him! There were two men winding at the time, one of whom was supposed to be watching to see that nothing went wrong. After that they installed a larger winding engine and a proper cage. One night the rope burst out of the side of the drum, and eight or ten men were trapped down at the shaft bottom for ten hours before they could be got out.

I was in charge of the dressing plant here and I used to go down the mine to repair the pumps. Each shift turned out quite a few tons of fluorspar, along with some lead ore. We made our own electricity for lighting, with five horse power generator. It was a hard job in frosty, wintery weather to keep the plant

working. Three or four of us had to walk from Pateley Bridge and Glasshouses to the mine, to start at seven o'clock, when men living quite near were just getting up.

I had to go down to the Cock Hill mine to help with the pumping. This was a drift mine, a quarter of an hours walk from the village. The level was driven to drain the mine of water. It runs dead straight for six hundred yards, and is three or four feet wide, and seven feet high. A pony was used to haul the bogie; in with coals for the boiler and out with the ore. After the level cuts the Waterhole vein, it follows the vein, twisting and turning, for about six hundred yards. The old miners had put down a sump, thirty fathoms deep, and worked the Greenhow Rake vein from there. This was the shaft that we pumped out. First we tried a two and a half inch Merryweather petrol driven pump, but this made no impression. Then we used an eight inch Evan's steam sinking pump. We were working three shifts with three or four men to each shift. As it was winter time and there was so much water coming in that even this pump could not cope. So we raised it six or eight feet and waited until the weather eased off a bit. The pump, steam pipes and water pipes, weighed about a ton, and were all suspended on one big chain. There were three boilers here, two were condemned and the other was used at a pressure of forty pounds per square inch. This was used in conjunction with a locomotive type boiler, some two hundred feet above on the surface. This boiler was working at one hundred and twenty five pounds per square inch. The steam from this boiler was led down a shaft, which was also used as a chimney, for the boilers inside the mine.

Plate III. Cockhill Underground engine room, circa 1925. *[(Left to right; behind steam pipe: Eddie Clarke; unknown; in front of steam pipe: Stan Craddock, Fred Heaton, Jim Thackrey (Pumpman), Harry Ray (Pumpman), W.W. Varvill manager)).*

During the 1926 general strike it was difficult to get coal. We got some from Belgium, and some from Tan Hill in Arkengarthdale. The boiler on the surface used a vast amount of coal. I have seen seven cart loads of coal delivered on a Saturday at noon, and we would be borrowing coal from No 2 Shaft on Monday morning. It also used forty gallons of water every quarter of an hour.

The telephone that we used from the boiler house on the surface, to the one in the mine, was a sal-ammoniac type. The wires for this also went down the chimney. If the telephone stopped working it meant a walk of three quarters of a mile.

We had a little pony to take the coal up to the boilers. When the pump was working the water came down the level a foot deep. When it was time to change shifts we yoked the pony to the waggon and rode out this way to keep dry. Otherwise, we would have to walk out and dry off on the surface. When we rode, there would be two men in the waggon and one standing on the buffers at the back. We never needed reins on the pony as it would walk away in the dark, keeping it’s feet between the rails. I have seen this pony stand about six inches from the boiler, with it’s legs in the water when the pump was working. It was roasted at the top half and frozen at the bottom. Sometimes when we arrived for the night shift at eleven o’clock in the evening, we found that the pony had escaped as someone had left the stable door open. It was useless trying to find it in the dark, as it had quite a large allotment to wander in. Wellingtons had hardly come into use at this stage, so we used to take our socks off, replace our clogs and then dry off at the boiler when we got to the sump top.

After the directors decided that it would not be profitable to go on working the mine, we removed the pump and the copper firebox from the boiler. After this I went to work at No 2 Shaft at Craven Cross. There I worked on the dressing plant until the Company went into liquidation in 1929. By this time I was married and living at Greenhow.

On my wedding day we invited the whole village. We boiled a home fed ham in the clothes boiler, which we called a “Setpot”. The reception was held in the local school.

I was out of work for a few months until J.H. Clay, of Thornton-in-Craven, leased the Craven Moor mines, and I started working for him. We were seeking a mineral called ‘barytes’ at Nussey Knott, near to Stump Cross Caverns. It was whilst cleaning out a shaft here, that four men out riding in a car stopped and came to see what we were doing. There was one man down the shaft, which was forty feet deep, filling a bucket, and I was pulling it up on a jack roll. They were amazed and remarked, “One half of the world doesn’t know how the other half live”.

Later on we moved to the Glusburn mines, four or five miles to the other side of Skipton. We took the dressing plant that we had used at No 2 Shaft with us. I stayed at lodgings in Cononley with two other men. We were paid 12 shillings a week, and I also paid the lady next door 2 shillings to wash my overalls. We took a packed lunch to work every day. The landlady usually put an apple in each day, which I saved, and then took them home at weekends. We got dinner at night, and very often there was more than I could manage. One of the other men used to eat it up, so that they wouldn’t get their portions

cut. Eventually I was able to rent a house in Cononley, about half a mile from the mine.

The miners once broke through into some old workings and flooded themselves out. They had to walk out waist deep in water.

On one occasion two men were on the surface, drawing large buckets of barytes up the shaft, when an argument started. The bucket was at the top, when they started to fight and both let go of the bucket handle. Fortunately the men at the bottom heard the bucket clattering down, and all managed to jump clear.

The barytes that we were working was badly discoloured with iron, so the firm that we sent it to had to bleach it, in large baths.

Whilst walking from Cononley to Greenhow one weekend, I met an old lady begging for coppers. She said that she was on the road, so I told her that I was also, but she said that I was too well dressed for that. I was on the road, but not in the same way that she was. After the First World War there were a lot of men and women tramping about and begging for food, but after the Second World War they had mostly disappeared.

The mine at Cononley closed down after 8 months and so we moved back to Greenhow.

We moved into a house on the far side of Greenhow, on the edge of the moor. It was about a quarter of a mile from the main road. During the winter of 1933 it started snowing one Friday night, and snowed continuously until the Sunday night. If we opened an outside door during this time, I had to go round the joints with a knife, before it would close again. My wife's family lived near

Plate IV. Gillfield Level portal, circa 1933. *The rails to the right of the picture ran to the dressing mill.*

the road side, so rather than carry coal and food continually through the deep snow, we moved in with them. I put my 3 year old son into a sack, with just his head peeping out, and set off for the road. There were no walls or roads visible, due to the depth of the snow, so we had to find our way by instinct. It was quite a few weeks before we were able to move back again. During this time I was employed in snow cutting for the council. When this was finished I was unemployed for a further few months.

After a while I got a couple of months work screening sand, in a field next to the recreation ground at Pateley Bridge, for 9d a ton. At this rate I could just manage to earn £2 a week.

After this, I started work at Gillfield mine, down at Cockhill, working fluorspar for Mr Clay again. We put a large shed up to house the dressing plant. We used two Robson engines, one of 18hp and the other of 24hp to drive the plant. We worked two shifts again. In another building, there was a Blackstone engine driving an eight inch single compressor for the mine, We sent three or four truck loads a week, from Gillfield and Craven Moor, to the steelworks, and one truck load per week of 90% fluorspar to the glassworks. Every now and then we sent a truck load of barytes.

Plate V. Waterhole Vein, Gillfield Level, March, 1935. [Bottom: Henry Newbould; Middle: Eddie Clarke; Top: Frank Wilkinson].

Plate VI. The dressing mill, circa 1933. *This was built on the site of the old Cockhill Mill.*

Once, when we were looking around in the mine for some more spar, we spotted a hole in the level roof. There was a stone blocking it, so the foreman suggested that we give it a poke. This caused stones to run out, until there was three or four tons of rock blocking the level up to the roof. The foreman was on the wrong side of the heap, and couldn't get out. As it was knocking off time, the man with me suggested we leave him there. Then a voice from the other side said, "I heard that Jack", so we had to glut the hole up again, and dig him out.

One man used to bring his alarm clock to work with him, to ensure that he wasn't left in the mine at knocking off time.

When it came to the half year end, and time to change our insurance cards for new ones, it was found that the clerk, money and cards were all missing. Mr Clay had men searching the surrounding tips for days, but the cards never turned up.

Whilst I was working for Mr Clay, he wanted a steam engine bringing from Colne, in Lancashire, to Greenhow. He told the driver of the 30 hundred weight waggon to be at his house in Thornton-in-Craven by 9 a.m. When the truck arrived at No 2 Shaft that morning to pick up myself and another man, we found that the radiator was leaking. We all set to and repaired the leak, but by the time we were finished it was past nine o'clock. We travelled at about 40 mph down the road towards Stump Cross. The man on the back must have

been a bit frightened as he banged on the cab roof, with an empty petrol can, to tell the driver to slow down. When we arrived at Thornton-in-Craven, Mr Clay wanted to know why we were so late. The driver explained about the radiator, and added that it had taken him 25 minutes to drive here. To this he got the reply, “Far too fast, even I can’t do it in that time”. As I had to travel with Mr Clay in the Rolls Royce, I told the waggon driver to follow behind. Mr Clay kept asking me to check that the waggon was still following, but I knew, that traffic permitting, we wouldn’t leave him far behind. When we finally arrived at Colne, we found that the engine that we had come to collect was only 2 feet long, and it would have fitted easily into the car boot.

One day when I was in charge of a shift at the dressing plant, Mr Clay came into the shed doorway and started clapping his hands. I didn’t take any notice and carried on with my work. Then as I looked up, he beckoned me to go to him. He told me that the next time he clapped his hands in that way, I had better come running. I can imagine the answers that he would get today. Once he saw a lad smoking in the yard and asked him for a match. The lad passed the matches to him and because they were a foreign make, he threw them to the ground and stamped on them, and demanded that the lad only buy British in future. Mr Clay told me once, that he was driving home from the mine, he was overtaken by another driver. He in turn overtook this man and told him never to dare do that again, as he had once driven at Brooklands and didn’t like being ‘beaten’ by an *ordinary* driver. Such was the attitude of owners and bosses in those days.

Mr Clay once had a brand new, bright yellow, Hudson Terraplane car. One day when he was down the No 2 Shaft, someone blew the boiler tubes out and his pride and joy was covered in soot. He actually threatened to sack the boiler man.

I stayed at the Gillfield mine until once again, the Company closed down in 1936.

After this, I worked for Nidderdale Quarries as an engine man for a year or so, and then started fluorspar mining on my own. I had a wide range of ground to work on, stretching from Gillheads in the west, to Coldstones in the east. The price at this time was 10 shillings a ton for 60% fluorspar for the steel works, and £3 a ton for 95% fluorspar for the glass and chemical industries. It had to be screened through half inch screens for the steel works, and hand picked for the higher grade. I could manage a truck load per week, depending on the weather, and this was about 10 tons. The best of the dumps had gone, some with 1000 tons in them. They used to just take the sod off the top, then back a cart up and load up. I eventually employed a couple of men to help out. In winter we went into Cockhill mine to work. The fluorspar from this mine went to the aluminium works, and had to be 90% fluorspar.

I bought an Austin Twelve car at Skipton for £35, took the back off, and put a waggon body on. This was for carrying the fluorspar over the soft ground on the moor, to reach the hard road. Here a heavy lorry would pick it up and take it to Pateley Bridge railway station, and then, by train, on to the steel works. I once brought a piano from Cowling, near Colne, to Greenhow with my Austin Twelve ‘truck’. Before we got out of the town we had a puncture. When

Plate VII. Screening fluorspar on the Blackhill Road, 1945. *Left to right: Peter Boddy, John Busfield, Leonard Marshall, George Boddy.*

the garage man found out how far we were going, he swore we would never make it. The piano weighed about two hundred weights, plus my son, two friends and myself, each weighing about ten to twelve stones. When we got to Skyreholme Bank, which is a 1 in 4 hill, I told them all to jump off if it looked like we were coming to a stop. However, we made it right to the top without any mishap. I sold the 'truck' four years later for the same price that I paid for it.

The winter of 1946-47 was extremely hard and every man available had to go snow clearing, to try and keep the roads open. We were working on the road running from Greenhow to Stonehouse, a distance of 5 miles. The snow kept filling the road up as fast as we were clearing it. This lasted three months, and it would have been longer and harder, if it hadn't been for the bulldozers helping out.

After the war, the steel works wouldn't accept fluorspar gravel at 60% also there was a shortage of gravel dumps. As I hadn't enough capital to purchase specialised crushing equipment, I gave up in 1948-49. I then started working for Mr Hinchcliff, on Coldstones. He was one of the men that I used to sell the fluorspar gravel to. There we erected a ball grinding mill for crushing the fluorspar. This mill consisted of a crusher, elevator, revolving heated drier and four ball mills, each holding one and a half to two hundred weight of one to two inch steel balls. This reduced the fluorspar to a fine powder, like flour.

Plate VIII. George Boddy at Cockhill Mill, date unknown.

This was the finished product and was sold for glazing pottery. Our biggest problem was keeping the powder dry until collection, as the rain used to blow under the zinc sheets, which covered it. This mill had to close down after two years as we ran short of good fluorspar.

The last house that I lived in at Greenhow was just across the common from the cemetery, and open to the four winds. Anyone who knows anything about Greenhow will appreciate what this means. There was no piped water, gas or electricity. I used to carry drinking water, in large buckets, about a quarter of a mile. We cooked on a paraffin stove, and lighting was provided by a paraffin pressure lamp. The rent was only 1/9d a week, so I guess we couldn't expect much. One night when I was carrying coals from the outside coal shed, I turned the corner of the house and the wind caught the shovel, and away went the coal. Inside the house my sister was trying to fry eggs over the fire, but as she cracked them into the pan the draught caught them, and away they went, up the chimney! The wind also used to carry the snow under the slates, and one day I got 14 buckets of snow from the underdrawing.

There were some local customs to be observed at Greenhow. If someone died, people were requested to attend the funeral. I think this custom has died out now. There were great festivities at weddings, when all the village was invited.

I was fifty three years of age and, apart from the short time at Cononley, I had never lived in a house with gas or electricity. I then moved from Greenhow to Bridgehouse Gate, Pateley Bridge, just a stones throw from where I was born.

I drove a lorry for a few months for Mr Jack Longster. Then I worked at Duck Street Quarry, until it closed down. After this I went to Melmerby to work for a contractor, who was erecting some sheds for the Ministry of Defence.

In 1955 Mr Percy Atkinson, the manager of Glasshouses Mill, asked me if I would work for him again. This was in the same trade as I had first started in 1914, as an engine and maintenance man. This time I was employed at Foster Beck Mill. On starting this job I moved into a house near the hump back bridge, and lived there until the mill closed down twelve years later. I then went to work at the lead rolling mill on Foster Beck, until this also closed.

This time I retired and moved into my present home, which is a council bungalow, on Nidd Walk, Pateley Bridge.

Postscript
George Boddy died on 7th April 1987 aged 87. From this account it shows that he had a varied and interesting life, and he was sufficiently interested and motivated to put it all down on paper, when requested. Had he not been so, then all this information would have died with him. I therefore urge everyone, to put down on paper, their stories of life in the mines, collieries etc., so that this, and future generations can see what life was like ‘in fathers day’.

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