

## Peter Barlow

Peter Barlow was born at Daisy Street, Heywood, the home of his maternal grandmother, Mary Ann Boyle (nee Fern), on 5th July 1934.

The first school that Peter attended was Ainsworth Church of England, Primary and Junior School, the same school that all his children would eventually attend in later years. Peter remained at Ainsworth C of E School until the age of 13 in 1947.



Christ Church Ainsworth C of E School Built 1838

One story that Peter remembers whilst he was growing up in Ainsworth was about his Sunday best suit, which had arrived in a parcel from Canada, from a friend of his mothers' Margaret Barlow (nee Boyle) when he was about 9 years old. In the stables where the family horses, Duel, the big cart horse and Prince were kept, he was messing around with his brother Jack and mates Jeffrey Haworth, Jack Haworth, whose parents ran the Old White Horse and Frank Pilling, his future Best Man, when one of the gang threw a used match into a jar containing petrol which flared up, one of them grabbed the jar and through it to the ground, where upon it ignited the whole of the floor and wooden wall of the stables. Peter, thinking on his feet, took off his jacket and threw it over the flames, where upon everyone jumped on it to put out the flames. Peter managed to hide the burned lining of his best suit from his mother for several Sundays, whilst attending Church in the mornings and Sunday School in the afternoons, until one Sunday she beckoned him and gave him the biggest wallop of his life, he did say it was usually Jack that got the hidings because he was usually too quick.

When Peter was very young, the family used to rent a field from the Brooks family at the back of 44 Church Street, where they kept around 100 hens, reduced from 400 in previous years, and grazed their horses. His brother Billy, his mother and father used to feed the chickens and sell the eggs. His brother Jack managed to earn himself a good hiding when he was caught rolling the eggs down Rabbit holes with his mate Derek.

His father William used to hitch up the horse and cart and take it to Bolton market 3 to 4 days a week. He would set off at around 4:00 am and not return until around 8:00 pm, Peter said they used to eat more than he sold. On the Fruit and Veg cart was a variety of stock, along with the eggs he also sold Rabbits, which William had caught, cockles and mussels and a range of vegetables, including sacks of potatoes.

Their father also had a two-wheel cart, which he used to take to Ladyshore Colliery, Little Lever, on the days he wasn't at the market, load it up with big blocks of coal to sell to the villagers. On Saturdays, Peter and his mate, Jeffrey Haworth used to help his dad, William, to take a four-wheel wagon loaded with sacks of potatoes to sell around the village.

When he was only around 9 or 10 years old, Peter had one of the biggest frights of his life. He and some of his friends, Barbara Tyson, Ann and Stella Siddall, Betty Ashley, Frank Pilling, Bill Jones, Audrey Price and Jeffrey Haworth, were all playing around the Top Lodge at Whiteheads Lodges when Peter spotted, what he thought was an old sack floating in the water. He grabbed an old railing and poked at the sack and lifted to his horror the face of a missing man. Mr Shaw had been missing several weeks and was the Uncle of the local Sunday School Teacher, Alice Shaw. Peter ran faster than he had ever done in his whole life and spent a good ten minutes on the back steps of 44 Church Street before he could tell his brother Billy and mate Tom Mills, what he had found, they went over to check and then informed the police. Peter remembers Alice Shaw giving him 10 Shillings for discovering her uncles' body, who had been diagnosed with cancer a few months earlier. The poor man decided to end his life and had probably jumped from the bridge into the shallow water at the top end of the lodge and had remained submerged for several weeks prior to the discovery by Peter.

After leaving Ainsworth C of E, Peter attended Radcliffe High, Abden Street, until he left in 1949, aged 15. Again the same school that all his children would also eventually attend in later years, but known as Radcliffe Secondary Modern, now Radcliffe High again.



During his teenage years Peter spent some of his spare time going to dance halls, such as the Bury Palais de Dance, St Georges Hall and the Aspinall of Bolton. Another hobby was cycling, being one of his great passions. When he was just seventeen, Peter went on a tour of Scotland with friends Frank Pilling and Brian Preston. Prior to their trip, his brother Jack thought it might be a good idea to hoist his bike, a Hercules Kestrel, up onto the pulley that their father had set up whilst they were rebuilding the chimney at 44 Church Street. This unfortunately damaged the bike and Peter had to purchase a new seat, much to his discomfort. The last few days of the trip were spent standing up whilst peddling and when they got to Lancaster, Peter put the bike onto the train and walked home from Bolton Train station with the bike, feeling a little sore.

When Peter left Radcliffe High he had hoped to become a Joiner, as this had been one of his favourite subjects at school and one that he was good at. Unfortunately, apprenticeships for joiners were not easy to come by and after being out of work for over two months he obtained an interview for a 3 year Apprenticeship as a Motor Mechanic at H & J Quicks, The Rock, Bury, through the local Job Centre. He was successful with the interview and remained at Quicks until he turned 18, when he was called up for National Service in 1952. During his apprenticeship, he attended Radcliffe Technical College two evenings per week for 12 months.

His initial 6 week basic training was at Honiton, Devon then transferred to Barton Stacey Army Camp, Winchester, Hampshire, for his Mechanics and Driving course, he passed his driving test in Andover, Hantfordshire.

Peter was again transferred from here to Mill Hill Army Camp for Mechanics in London. It was here that he spent most of his army life repairing Landrovers, Tanks and other military vehicles. The Coronation took place in 1953 whilst Peter was stationed here and he remembers Parading through the streets of London with an Austin Gantry Trailer and a BrenGun Carrier, a sort of open top tank.

Shortly after the Coronation Peter was transferred to Shandur in Egypt and stationed at Kabrit Point, by the Small Bitter Lake. He was promoted to Lance Corporal and his duties were to guard the Suez Canal with his army mates and he remained here for about 12 months, until he was demobbed in 1954.

On returning to England, Peter managed to get re-employed at H & J Quicks as a semi-skilled motor mechanic, his duties included repairing various types of motor vehicles, assisting in the Auto Spares department, preparing orders for customers and garages, teaching apprentices and returning warranty parts to manufacturers.



During this time he also spent two years as a member of the local T.A. in Bolton, which involved training one night per week, weekend camps and a fortnight away during a 12 month period. He did not complete the two years due to the Bolton T.A. breaking up and the unit being transferred to the Army Emergency Reserve (A.E.R.) at Widnes, which he never managed to attend due to being called up for duty for the Suez in 1956. He spent only 10 days on the Suez, before being again transferred to Benghazi, Libya, where he remained for 9 months in the mechanics workshops.

Returning to England in 1957, he once again returned to H & J Quicks, Bury, where he remained until 1971 doing the same duties as previously but spending the last two years as acting Foreman, working with his mate, George Semander, who now runs a club in Jericho, Bury.

Peter married Sheila Gore on the 10th March, 1956 at St. Thomas's Parish Church, the ceremony was performed by the late Rev. Reg Smith, later to become Canon Smith, Frank Pilling, whom Peter grew up with, was his bestman. Their first house was 55, Coomassie Street, Radcliffe where they lived until around December 1961. The wedding reception was held at Little Lever Conservative Club, where the reception cost £11.18.0, which was for 31 Adult Teas @ 7/- and 6 Children @ 3/6 from Fulfords High Class Bakers & Confectioners, 85 High Street, Little Lever.

Peter and Sheila moved from Radcliffe to 21, Church Street, Ainsworth around December 1962 and it was here that the whole family was brought up. Stephen, Andrew, Mark and Diane were all born at Bealeys Maternity Hospital in Radcliffe and John was born at Fairfield General in Bury.

Becoming disillusioned with his position at H & J Quicks, Peter left in December 1971 to set up his own business, which he ran in partnership with Don Whowell at a garage on Mill Lane, Tottington, based near the Swan Pub. This partnership lasted for about 18 months, when Peter left to take up a position in July 1973 at W & R Roberts Ltd., where he again repaired motor vehicles and instructed apprentices up to City & Guilds standards, he was also in charge of the Service Bay.

Between September 1976 and September 1978, Peter went to work for Car Repair Services Ltd, again repairing motor vehicles and teaching Apprentices.

In October 1978, Peter leased a workshop at Back Barlow Street, Radcliffe and set up his own Garage, called P. B. Motors, repairing motor vehicles and preparing them for their M.O.T.'s. He later moved the business to new premises at Stonepits, Off Bridgefield Street, Radcliffe where he continued until February 1985. In between running his own garage, Peter also spent 12 months, between February 1985 and January 1986, working for Swinton Tyre & Auto Co. Ltd., again repairing motor vehicles and tyre fitting, being in charge of the service bay and other areas within the garage.

The motor mechanic trade had slowed right down for Peter and he decided a change of career was called for and was subsequently offered the job, in August 1990, of Driver/Deliveryman for a local furniture company, Henderson and Jones of Radcliffe. His duties here included routine maintenance checks and valeting of Sherpa van, assisting stocks Manager with receipt and warehousing of incoming goods, loading and delivering orders. He remained here until his semi-retirement in 2000.

Peter now spends most of his time living in Saltash, Cornwall with his partner Kath, with the occasional visit to the old family home, 44 Church Street. They enjoy Fell Walking and touring in their caravan during the summer months. Peter used to play darts and dominoes for a local team in Ainsworth and still supports his local football club, Bolton Wanderers.

His partner, Kath, subsequently retired herself in 2004 and they both moved back to Ainsworth, where they are both enjoying a well earned retirement.