

1920s: Peace and Prosperity?

There was a shortage of food after WW1 and Mr Wakefield, in an attempt to support his family, held down three jobs: as a pattern maker at Foden's; teaching at the reformatory school at Bradwall; and giving music lessons. Alongside this he found time to study for a correspondence course in engineering at Bennett College in Sheffield.

In 1919 he records in his diary that there were national changes to the working week and his was reduced from 54 to 47 hours per week which meant that he no longer had to start work at 6.00 a.m. The entry for 11th November 1919 refers to the celebrations to mark the Armistice including a (rare) one day holiday given by Foden's and a United Thanksgiving Service at St Mary's.

The diaries are very comprehensive but particularly interesting in that they not only record personal information – family events and interests and details about what he was doing at work each day but also contain a commentary on national and international matters. There were some very significant social and political events which took place in the 1920s – civil war in Ireland; the first Labour Prime Minister; the General Strike; the Wall Street crash – and they are all analysed and noted.

The 1920s saw the development of radio and in February 1924 he records the purchase of a wireless set with headphones. In June 1924 he bought a piano for £56. At the time his wage was £4 per week.

The Sunday School Anniversary was a notable event for any year. On May 22nd 1925 he says that many people had to be turned away from the anniversary services at Hope Street Congregational Church (where he was organist) due to lack of space.

The entry for 2nd September 1925, when the family were living at Eva Street, Elworth, records that the family are thinking of purchasing a house in The Avenue. The asking price of £575 is thought to be outrageous and even £550 is too high. Eventually, they obtain a mortgage for £520. The wireless, with all its equipment including a large aerial device, has to be moved, as well as the piano.

Electric lighting comes to Sandbach in 1926 but the entry for 9th December 1926 records that the Council can't afford to supply Elworth with electricity. In the same entry it is noted that Agatha Christie has mysteriously disappeared.

Family holidays tended to be taken in New Brighton but there were other venues in the twenties including Aberystwyth and Scarborough.