

Once Upon A Time

Most children's tales begin with once upon a time. Joe Tweddle's life could almost have started like that. He was born in the early twenties, into a working class household, the eldest of three boys. His father the sole breadwinner, was a shipwright employed in the local shipbuilding yard. The yard was coming to the end of a shipbuilding boom generated by the 1914 – 1918 war. Dark clouds were gathering in the business empires of the world. The word was Depression and very soon Joe's dad would feel the pinch along with millions of others.

Joe of course knew nothing of the struggle that his parents faced in this troublesome time. Words like means test, dole money, pawnshops, would soon become known to him as he grew older. So Joe and his brothers along with his mother and father survived the Depression and the general strike and by 1938 things were looking up for the family. Joe had left school and was working as an errand boy, while his dad had got started again in the shipbuilding trade. Then those dark clouds appeared again and before you could say, 'Once upon a time' we had another war.

Much to Joe's relief he was not called upon to take a decisive part in it, but he did the usual things, Fire Watching and Air Raid Warden. Like all good things the war ended and people started to look over their shoulders, would there be another Depression? Little did they know? The country drifted from crisis to crisis. More wars in far off places and things began to look black.

Of course like all once upon a time stories there had to be beautiful princess, her name was Margaret and she vowed to change things. This lovely princess had to have dragons to slay, three of them to be precise, they were called, Miners, Shipbuilders and Engineers. The dragons put on their armour and vowed to fight this fair princess. But to no avail, wielding the sword of service industries she soon slew them.

Joe's family suffered like everyone else, his two brothers went to Australia on a ten-pound ticket, mam and dad lived in a sheltered bungalow on state handouts and Joe? You'll find him propping the bar up at his local, regaling anyone that wants to listen with, Once Upon a Time.

Bob Mather.