

Author looks back on his Low Moor childhood



Author Richard Poole as a child in Low Moor, dressing up as a cowboy



Richard, as he appears on the cover of his book of childhood memories Low Moor Lad

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'I HAD the impression that my parents didn't approve of Brenda Parker.' This puzzled the young Richard Poole, 'and in any case it didn't stop me playing out with her.'

Now novelist, poet, literary critic and author Richard recalls the friendship in his childhood memoir Low Moor Lad, in which he writes of his experiences growing up in the area.

'She was older than me - six or seven to my four...Brenda's foremost characteristic was her auburn hair done in pigtails. These hung down to her shoulders and were tied with pink ribbons.'

A chapter of the paperback is devoted to Brenda and the time they spent together exploring the beck close to Richard's home. He lived with his parents in Mineral Cottage, next door to Mineral House, the home of his Uncle Cliff and his housekeeper Minnie Pickles.

Brenda is among local children and adults whose presence in Richard's childhood had an impact. Another is his best friend Michael Briggs. Michael lived up Abb Scott Lane in School Fold, in a house with no inside lavatory. 'If your luck happened to be out, bog paper was copies of the Telegraph & Argus, a medium, which, stiff and unwieldy, also left print stains on your bum.'

Together the boys would head out on various escapades. They once 'made a raid on Green Pond', capturing 20-or-so frogs to deliver to Mr Wiseman the biology master at Bradford Grammar School. He had told class 4C that he needed frogs to dissect and was prepared to pay threepence per live specimen.

Richard, who penned the fantasy trilogy The Book of Lowmoor, was born on New Year's Day in 1945 in St Luke's Hospital. 'He arrived just before midnight, with the result that photographers waiting for a shot of a New Year baby had decamped shortly before he emerged,' says the potted biography on the back of the paperback. 'He likes to claim that he has been a late developer ever since.'

Part one of the book revisits Richard's childhood memories up to the age of 11. The shorter part two is made up of poems under the title Childhood Sonnets.

Richard writes of a visit to Judy Woods with his parents, where he saw his first lizard and queued for ice cream at a wooden



Mineral House, next door to Mineral Cottage, in Abb Scott Lane, Low Moor. Richard's family lived in the cottage and Uncle Cliff in the house



Richard as a page boy

kiosk at Judy Bridge.

In Harold Park, where 'sophisticated kids looked down on the sandpit', he once lost a model boat made from metal, which sank in the middle of the lake. 'Take my advice: stick to wooden boats with sails,' he writes.

The book includes a selection of pictures of the young Richard and his family. One shows his Uncle Cliff, a bachelor and keen golfer who was 'in love with motorbikes.'

In his own chapter we learn that he owned a Panther 100, a machine manufactured locally in Cleckheaton.

'You never really knew what Uncle Cliff thought of children,' writes Richard. 'Perhaps to his way of thinking they were alien creatures.'

Although, as Richard writes, Cliff did later become a father. A chapter is devoted to Hill Top School and its teaching methods. 'Whereas reading was no problem for me, learning to write required some effort - handwrite, that is,' he recalls, going on to describe the letters inscribed on the blackboard by the teacher,

and the effort involved in reproducing them within and without different coloured ruled lines. Learning maths by rote was the norm. 'Lessons would kick off' with the class chanting its way through the multiplication table from 2 to 12. '...we performed this riddle often, that the entire thing became branded on my brain - where it remains to this day.'

Richard, who now lives in Wales, later attended Low Moor Church School, also known locally as Scott's School 'because members of the Scott family had been headmasters there for more than 60 years up to the turn of the nineteenth century.'

It was then on to Bradford Grammar School, where Richard was clearly proud to be a pupil. There's a picture of him, his sister Marie and parents in Skegness, with Richard sporting his school blazer. Richard's father worked as manager at Calverley Worsted Mills. Having left school aged 14, he had worked his way up from an

office boy. 'I recall clearly the first time he took me there. Even before we entered the building you could hear the noise of the looms,' writes Richard, who describes the sights and sounds of the weaving shed. 'I stood beside two of the looms and studied the movement of the shuttles - polished wooden torpedoes that darted to and fro like fish, running the coloured yarn from bobbins mounted on upright prongs.'

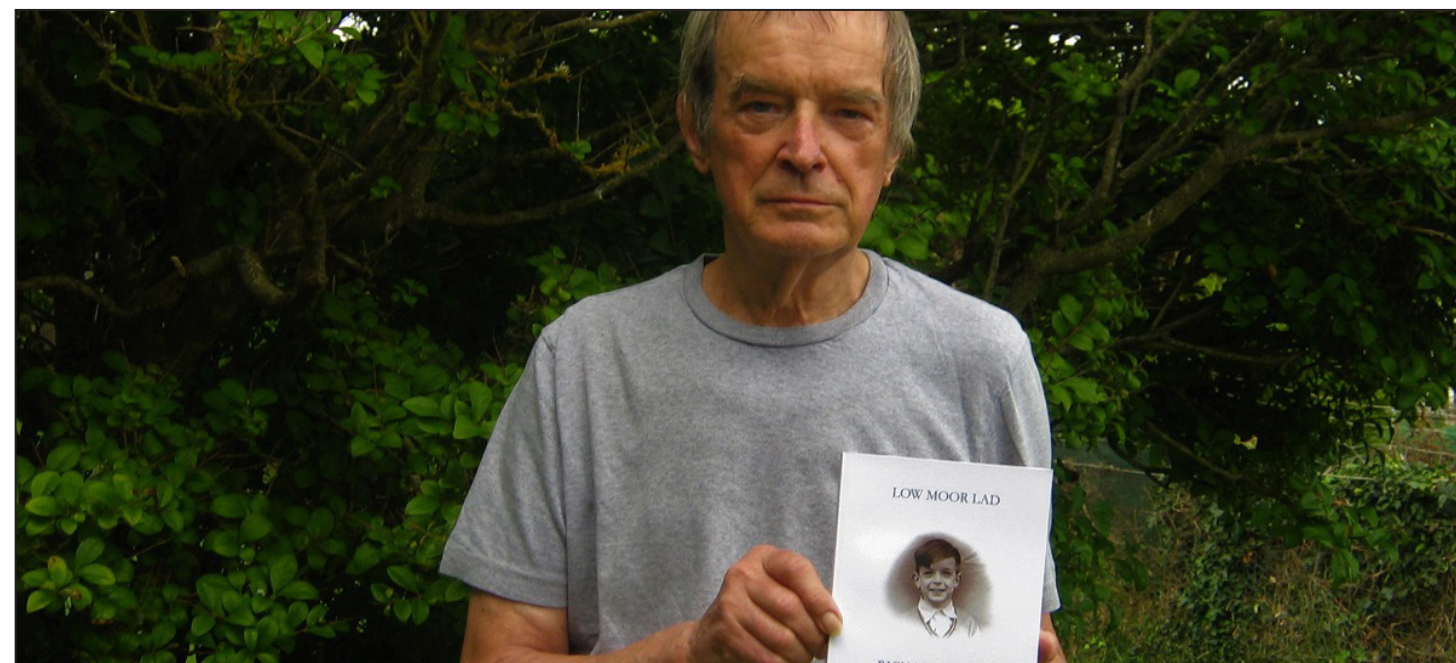
The mill produced high-quality Yorkshire worsted that would be made into suits and trousers by firms such as Burtons, writes Richard. He concludes: 'Fascinating as the process was, I was glad to get out of that tearing din and give my ears a chance to recover.'

Visit richardpoolewriter.uk *For copies email info.lmlhg@gmail.com or send a cheque made out to Low Moor Local History Group for £13.00 (includes postage and packing of £3) and send to Low Moor Local History Group, c/o 13 St Abbs Fold, Odsal, Bradford BD6 1EL.

Readings from the book form part of the Low Moor Local History Group Map Day at Aldersgate Methodist Church, Common Road, Low Moor, on Saturday November 4. Richard will be reading at 11am, 1pm and 2pm. The group's collection of historical maps of the old North Bierley Township area are on display from 10am to 3pm.



Judy Woods where Richard spotted his first lizard



Richard with his book of childhood recollections



Harold Park, where 'sophisticated kids looked down on the sandpit'