

# My Memories of Walthamstow

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Hello there!

A few days ago I came across your web, quite unexpectedly, but very gladly when I realised what it was about... One can still get so called "Homesick", for a place, no matter how long ago one moved from it, even though the relatives, are no longer on this earth, well happens to anyone, as your web. has shown....I am so glad you are writing a book about it... anyway, You asked if people would write in with memories, so here goes...

When I was nine or about, mum, dad and I moved , from Ilford, because dad had been very ill with Shingles, for about three months.[In his eyes and mouth] and could no longer do his office job in the West end...

So at the age of nine years old, I found myself in Walthamstow... it took me quite a time to settle in.... but when I did, I felt like I had lived there all my life..I loved the people, they were so friendly, and very much like my relatives were,, so in the end in my small way, I did I suppose sigh a huge sigh of relief, that we had found such a place...

My mum and dad and I had stayed at Dads sisters, for about six months, while they looked round for something that could provide us with money to live... when we first went to the shop, that was going to become our new home... it was a bit daunting... as it was a rather old fashioned shop, I think the owner had been there some time... it had huge beams across the shop, which was rather darkly lit.

Somehow there were all sorts of things hanging, from these beams, things hanging from coat hangers... I looked up at them, rather in my very shy way, somewhat embarrassed, at what I saw, for instance there was a huge pair of ladies bloomers (I didn't even know such things existed), with long bellowing legs, pulled together with elastic... making a rather strange shape... to one so small, an only child at that... other things hung all around, things I have long forgotten...

As I was born in 1944, and it was then 1953... about 36 years ago... lots of water having passed under the bridge since... Anyway, I found Walthamstow rather a nice place to live after a while.. and after a while found myself at

Maynard Rd, school. Then after that at Joseph Barret, both schools I really enjoyed....My Maiden name then was HAIR... first name Barbara... followed by the middle name of Helen.... So if there happens to be someone, who has a brilliant long term memory, who happens to remember me, a rather thin shy child then with a mass of bright red hair..I really do hope that they will get in touch...

Our shop which was called 'Doreen', and was situated in Lea- Bridge Road... with a bus-stop, outside, our shop was number 797..and sold a lot of things from haberdashery, stockings, then later dad brought in ladies outer clothes too, blouses and skirts, jumpers cardigan's sold very well too, as well as under garments, and nighties, plus men's pyjamas... when the 3/4 suade jackets came in fashion, we also sold them too...

Next door to us was a cleaners shop, called X cleaners. They had a daughter called Carole, their surname was Manis, a lovely little family, we soon all became close friends. The X in the cleaners name was because we were only a few minutes walk, from Whipps Cross, I remember before the bus rounded the corner to come down the road to us, near the bus stop there, was a horse trough, looked like it was made of iron or some such like thing..it looked very old..and I took a liking to it, and took into my heart..[ strange girl?] It also had a real life saver attached to it, which was a fountain of fresh water, it had a large cup, very heavy metal, and I often filled this up, from the fountain, for a much needed, drink. In those days, Summers were summers, very long, hot and sticky , right until late in the evening.Even with just a sheet on the bed, it was sometimes unbearable..In those days Seasons seemed to really be Seasons. Winter was freezing, and you could usually count on at least a few foot of white crispy snow... Snowmen were the order of the day then!!

Back to the shop, my mums name was Doris and she was a true cockney from Bethnal Green, and had lived in a two room flat with five in her family. the sisters three of them, Doris, Win, and Edie, shared one room which was their bedroom, containing, among other things, a double and a single bed... their mum& dads bedroom, was also the living room. They had to share a toilet on the landing outside, with about 5 other families!

Anyway the shop, mum also sold knitting wool, saving the whole amount wanted, in the pattern. The wool was saved in about three huge drawers, each with small - but very deep – holes, with names stuck on each, then on depending the fastness of the knitter, they would pay for the wool as they wanted it. A good combination of ideas, which worked, extremely well, for in those days, knitting was almost everyone's hobby, and clothes were a bit cheaper made in that way...

We also nearly always, had some "ASSITANTS", to help with the shop...They also got paid..my Auntie Win,[mums sister.] came to help, sometimes two or three times a week.{sometimes more, sometimes less.} My mums friend, whom she met, whilst living in Stradbroke Grove, Ilford Essex. May, as her name was , met mum, while walking in a local park, with her daughter, Marion, and have been friends, ever since (we were three, at the time).

Where we lived, in Walthamstow, was in a small block of six or seven shops. They all had very friendly people in them, and so knew each other. I remember one summer evening, our friends, Renee and Sam, and Carole, were in their garden, we happened to be in ours, and the family but one, next to the cleaners[ The boot menders.] were out in theirs . At the time I am talking about, most people had "FRIENDLY" fences,[ Not these ever so high, "lets shut the world out types".] Which hardly came up to ones waist! So the evening in the garden I spoke about... we were all relaxed and happy, everyone could see everyone...

Everyone was so friendly in those days, I suppose everyone had to start over again, a new life started for all, after the second world war. It is such a shame, that families do not seem so close now, it really is! I remember almost every Sunday, we used to go and see one lot of relatives, or another. Or they used to come and see us, we used to sit round the table [No tele switched on!] and talk and talk, what a shame , seemingly the art of conversation has gone!] I remember us going to Auntie Wins.[my favourite family, out of about 12 or so families of relatives!]

Auntie Win was married to Uncle Harry, they had a daughter, ten years older than I, called Joyce. I loved going round to their snug, little house in Forest Gate, in Wanstead, in Odessa Road. We really always had a lovely time, plenty of laughter and humour, (I have , always had a wonderful platform of humour, to fall back on, especially when dark tunnels arose, and there's been quite a few of those. I think it was just something of that generation, we had plenty of laughter, and when things went wrong, we laughed at it, and afterwards settled down to trying to put it right again. Also there was a thing, a no-no , about crying , I remember my mum saying, oh please don't cry, I don't like to see you get upset! So we were good on plenty of laughter and good humour, but rather lacking on letting it all out, type of thing...).

Anyway, back to Sunday, and tea at Auntie Wins, I remember the food was quite plain good English stuff, very wholesome...There was celery , cheese, plenty of bread and butter, jam, sometimes , winkles and shrimps, too! Plus plenty of cups of tea, and cake to follow. I used to love to try and get the winkles out with a pin, my cousin Joyce and I, put the round black tops of the

winkles, as beauty spots , on our faces, & I used to love to make a pretty pattern, round the edge of my plate too...quite a good game that was.....

It was always a lovely time, laughter, good humour, and that very close special bond, of great love among us, there was nearly always an atmosphere , of wonderful love , among us! (It was somewhat like the T.V. Waltons, some people say that , it wasn't true to life, I do not believe that, I think lots of families, around that time, were like that. Ours really was, anyway...I am really proud to have belonged to such a family, I have very precious memories!). The Block of six or seven shops, of which one was ours, I can remember quite clearly. On the corner to the right as you came out of our shop, was a wonderful shop, one used to get some many lovely smells, coming out of every inch, I should think, and together it smelt just great. Mr. Polly, was grocer..

I remember the machine for cutting ham and bacon, it had a round very sharp blade, and as you turned the handle, appering from almost no-where, was a slice of whatever you had chosen, then they used to put them into paper bags, and swirl them around in the air , so both corners were tightly closed, [I loved watching that bit!] I have also just remembered, that across the side road, from Mr. Polly's was a Bakery, cannot rememer what it was called, but I think the people were scottish, have just thought, the ladies name, was Nettee, (or something like that) and if you happened to have a door or window opened, in the summer evenings, there always was a sort of explosion of SMELL, not just ANY smell, but the smell of newly baked bread, one thing was, every time, one smelt it, you felt like you were starving... of course by that time, the bakery was shut, so you just had to eat something at home...but I'll never forget that smell - MMMMMmmmmmmmm!

Next to Mr. Polly I think, was the boot menders, then a sweet-shop, run by a Mrs. Peacock.. (plenty of Gob stopers, and sherbert -dabs!) then came the cleaners, and then us, next door to us, was a green-grocer, Mr.& Mrs. Whitehorn, they had a daughter Sylvia, and a son called Bertie, the dads name was Bert, can't remember Mrs Whitehorn's name I am afraid.. I cannot say who was next door to them, but somewhere there was also a laundry...I think that was all the shops..and a very happy little block we were too!!!

Reading your web, I was reminded of Rossi's Ice cream parlour (am I dreaming but could you get a dinner there also?). Have just thought of another shop in our block...it was a sort of , transport place, where men could get a really nice hot dinner. I remember mum and I used to go in there sometimes, mum had ordered two dinners, which were always waiting for us, we used to take them back home, eating them, to the sounds of "Workers playtime" on

the wireless, it was lovely ,something special, about having mum, all to myself!

I too used to watch at Bakers arms, (The bus ride from home cost one old penny). The lady chopping up the eel's, outside that shop, and with very great, but rather morbid fascination, I used to watch all the bits dancing about the table-top, just before she pushed them into a tin bucket.....and yes, I do love jellied eel's! (Even after seeing that!)

At Sainsbury's where you had to line up to be served , there was watching the butter being prepared, patted and prepared before wrapping up! Life really seemed much slower pace during those days, time hasn't stretched, but then, people seemed to have much more of it, funny that!

Well I think that is at least a lot of my time in Walthamstow. When I was twenty one, we moved to Bournemouth where my dad bought another shop in Boscombe, but that, as they say, is quite another story.....

My love to you all, everyone connected to the website, one way or another. I really hope you have enjoyed reading my true life story, almost as much as I have loved recalling it, be nice to hear from anyone, whether you know me or not, and I'll write back! my email is [helen.watson2003@ntlworld.com](mailto:helen.watson2003@ntlworld.com)

Thanks for being there! God bless from Barbara Helen [nee Hair.] now I like to be called Helen....God Bless!