

## **John Newell**

### **My Walthamstow 1946 to 1967**

I was born on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1944 in Beaconsfield Bucks.



Early in our married life my wife Margaret often used to say that I was born in Beaconsfield which is a model village nearby. This used to amuse me as I am not one of the little people!

My grandparents had been sent to High Wycombe during the war, my grandfather moved his job away from Walthamstow where they had always lived and eighteen months later I was moved again with my parents and grandparents to Reigate, Surrey as my grandfather Frank Smith was a master baker and travelled around with his job at Rosins the bakers.

My first memories were of buses with eyes on!

I would have been about two then when I lived above the bakers in the High Street in Reigate. The double decker buses, which must have constantly passed close by through my line of vision when I looked out of the window had some sort of advert with an eye on each side of their destination boards.

I suppose it must have been 1946 when we moved to live with my father's parents at 6, St. Mary Road, Walthamstow, E.17. telephone number Coppermill 6954 originally Larkwood 6954.

Nan and Granddad we called them so as not to confuse them with Mum's parents' Grandma and Granddad baker. I always thought that Baker was their surname until I was quite a lot older when actually I discovered it was Smith.

My sister Valerie was born in August 1947 in a private nursing home, now an old people's home, in Range Road Chingford, looking over Chingford plains.

My grandfather Louis (Lou) was working for a firm of builders called Barton's who had an office just off Hoe Street near The Bakers Arms and Boundary Road.

Dad worked in the City for Clifford turner & Sons a firm of solicitors and always wore a black hat and long black coat and carried a rolled umbrella.

Our grandparents lived in the lower section of the house and we occupied the top half. It was not a case of upstairs and downstairs as the terraced houses were built on several levels and some of the rooms would finish with the ceiling halfway in line with the floor of the room above, altogether I can remember five levels plus a coal cellar which was, at that time, still functional.

There were two main front rooms overlooking the street at the front of the house and a small front garden with what seemed a compulsory privet hedge, access to the cellar for the 'coalie' to deliver his sacks the dust of which I can smell whilst typing this was via. a large round metal coalhole. After a coal delivery the first available male in the family would then have the task of shovelling the coal in a neater pile towards the far side of the cellar ready for collecting in scuttles to sustain the coal fires in the main rooms. The cellar had a very low ceiling and later in life I can remember going down there to collect coal and feeling as though my back would split through bending over in such a low space.



**Collecting orange juice cod liver oil and MOF milk. I believe at the top of the High Street. Does someone recognise the chimney?  
Nan is holding baby Val by the window to the right and I am the blonde boy standing at her feet**

St. Mary Rd was a cul-de-sac (notice I am using St.Mary Rd and not St.Mary's Rd.) any incorrect reference to which in our address would annoy my father who insisted on getting it right!

At the end of the road, three doors up was Hitchman's Dairy, a hive of activity with even in those days lots of other items being sold other than milk. I clearly remember the narrow tapered top sterilised milk bottles with the wire swivel top and rubber bung that you had to get the hang of opening.

Opposite was the Threekay Knitwear factory with women carrying out work in shifts, sometimes through the night. From our top front window the machines could clearly be seen with shuttles of coloured twine flying backwards and forwards, breaks would be indicated by a loud klaxon and in the summer when the windows were open we were treated to the radio providing 'Music While You Work' and 'Workers Playtime'

Behind the factory was the main railway line running between Liverpool Street and Chingford and steam trains emitting a mixture of foul sulphur laden smoke and steam were endlessly plying backwards and forwards. When the wind was in a certain direction smuts used to appear on the washing, much to Mum's dismay as the locomotives negotiated the slope towards Wood Street.

Further behind the factory and on the other side of the railway lines was a tarmac playground where many happy hours were spent, but more of that later.



At the back of the house was a small garden which was Dad's pride and joy with a chicken run and a neat lawn trimmed down both sides and with borders full of annuals. At the end of the garden was a wooden shed and to the right of it a buddleia tree that I used to climb to talk to my friend David who lived in the house backing onto our garden.

One day whilst sitting in the lower part of the tree I slipped and impaled the back of my leg badly on a stump sticking out of one of the thicker branches which formed my perch. A visit to Connaught hospital was required and I still have the small round scar of the offending branch as a reminder of that incident.

**Nan with me outside 6, St. Mary Rd. 1948**

My first bedroom was on the top floor at the back and overlooked the backs of the houses in opposite in Woodbury Rd and the Walthamstow Girls High School grounds. There was a small balcony which I was always very wary of with no protection save a small brick wall and access to the flat roof at the back of the house was via. this balcony. Looking to the left I could see Alexander Palace radio mast and the reservoirs in the Lea Valley and beyond. When I was older I occasionally plucked up courage and went up onto the flat roof with Dad and the London Docks and the City were clearly visible.

The neighbours at No. 8 were from Nottingham. There was Doug and Joan Gordon and their two daughters Elaine and Carol and Joan's brother Dick. On the other side at No. 4 lived an older couple, Chris and Jim. Chris was German, her

husband Jim kept himself to himself but she would make a point of always talking to all of us over the wire fence. No 10 had been split into flats as the nature of the design of the houses suited that arrangement, before that Lynne Groom lived at No 10 (with her sister Stephanie) but her mother died and they moved away. Then at 12 was Ian Chisholm, at 14 Miss Morgan and Mrs. Harvey who used to walk as far as Liverpool Street and give any children she saw on the way a penny! She used to be a nanny and had travelled all over India.

Several doors away there was a large family of children by the name of Craig. The oldest was Bobby, who was about two years older than me, Anne (adopted), Stuart, David, Joyce, Ian and baby Catherine, who died soon after birth. Mr. Craig had a hook for a hand (ex Merchant Navy) and use to regularly get drunk at the Queens Head and had to be transported home in a wheelbarrow.

In the morning after Dad had gone to work I was escorted to infants' school by Mum or by John Knowles's Mum, I think they took it in turns but Mum did not go out to work in those days. A woman's place was still in the home and the chores would fill the day.

I attended St.Mary's Church Infants School and was in Miss Davies's class and occasionally went to the Church too, probably at Christmas, Easter and certainly at Harvest Festival. The Vicar's was Canon Druitt and he lived in the vicarage at the end of the footpath by the Church before reaching Church Hill.



I have vague memories of infants school and was fairly soon allowed to make the short journey myself as I could virtually see our house when I came out of the school entrance in what is now Walthamstow Village by Vestry Road Museum.

#### **St.Mary's Almshouses**

I vaguely recall going on holiday with Nan and Granddad to Southend and having a day trip on the steamer to Cape Gris Nez stopping at Ramsgate on the way.



**St. Mary's Infants School 1952. Me back row 4<sup>th</sup> from left. John Knowles 1<sup>st</sup> left 2<sup>nd</sup> row down.**

Very few people had cars and we all used to make an occasional visit to Woking where my other grandparents had moved to. Each week I looked forward to receiving Grandma's treat of a Mars bar in the post and she never disappointed me. Sometimes Dad would take us on a trip on a number 38 bus to Chingford Plains and it was like being in the country with the grassy flat plains and the green expanse of Epping Forest. There were several deep ditches which Dad explained had been put there to stop the enemy landing in the war.

Mum would sometimes take me to the Town Hall to sail my model yacht. This for me at that age was a long walk especially during the return journey via Church Hill and involved climbing one of the steep roads leading up from Forest Road.

We went by train to Higham's Park and walked to the lake with our picnic and our empty jam jars with string for handles and our fishing nets. At the Rising Sun in Upper Wathamstow we used to catch baby frogs and take them home.

We may have actually walked back from there I think. I also used to spend time and sometimes whole days at Whipps Cross ponds, especially during the summer holidays.

Later autumn trips were also required to throw sticks up into the chestnut trees in order to try and obtain what could be a winning conker. Conkers were sometimes pickled in vinegar or baked hard in the oven to achieve greater success for the owner. A skewer was used to pierce a hole through the tough skin and a shoelace, preferably an expensive leather one, made a perfect string.

When I came home from school we didn't have a television so I often used to settle down with Mum and listen to the radio. One of my favourite programmes was Journey into Space and also Mrs.Dale's Diary. The Archers hadn't even started then.

Often I used to wait for Dad to come up the road after work which was a straight walk from the station and sometimes walked down to Hoe Street to meet him once he had crossed from the station. There was a policeman on point duty directing the traffic across Hoe Street and eventually traffic lights were installed at this busy junction.

If I had done something wrong Mum used to say that Dad would have seen me through his special tube and I always believed that and could be sure that if I had transgressed, I broke a window with a ball once; I would be suitably punished with a spanking. Fortunately for me this was a rare occurrence. In those days Dad used to buy Mum a box of Black Magic every Friday on his way home from work and sometimes if I had gone to meet him he would go into the sweet shop in St.Mary Road. I too might get a sherbert dip or some blackjacks, fruit salads or perhaps flying saucers.

Other afternoons were spent with the local Craig boys and Jimmy Foster from Number 14 kicking a tin can around or playing 'he'.

Older boys would also indulge in 'knock down ginger' something which was frowned upon in our house and involved knocking on some ones door and running away. I never got involved for fear of being caught and punished.

Visits to Selborne Park could take up a many hours on a fine day and I used to wonder at the purpose of the game of chess or draughts that took place on huge boards by elderly men using poles with hooks on to move the pieces into position. Although Granddad had taught me to play draughts at an early age I found this pastime in the park totally boring, I had the same opinion of bowls.

You had to be on the lookout for older boys in the autumn at Selborne Park as there were a row of plain trees either side of the park from which hung the containers of seeds, the dreaded 'itchy balls' which if stuffed down the back of your shirt would cause a dreadful irritating sensation.

One of my duties was to keep a watchful eye out for any horses that had done their business in the road on the way back to the dairy or when coal was being delivered by horse and cart and then we could collect the valuable, often still steaming deposits to use on the garden! Counting in the coal was a big responsibility and I used to watch every sack being emptied down the coalhole by men with leather aprons, some with hoods, they looked like people from outer space.

I was not blessed with a strong set of teeth and the dentist was based at the Town Hall. Mum used to have to drag me virtually to the appointments, which often meant extractions carried out under the influence of gas. Even later things

didn't improve; the local dentist was an Austrian Mr. Landes who's surgery in an upstairs room of a shop on the corner of St. Mary Rd. and Hoe Street. He was not the most organised person and often kept patients waiting an hour or more and when, like me, you were apprehensive of treatment, including the slow grinding drill which he used it created extra fear and trepidation, it was a time best forgotten.

At Easter time Val and I could never work out how our resident chickens had managed to lay eggs with silver paper on them in amongst the straw as that was where we were sent to find them.

Dad decided when Val was growing up and I was about five that he would dig up part of his treasured garden and build us a sand pit. We both spent many hours playing in the sand and Val used to invite the two girls next door Elaine and Carol in to join her. One day I must have trodden on a much valued sand structure and Val hit me over the head with a metal spade. Mum arrived on the scene and wrapped a towel around my head which was pouring with blood and proceeded to walk me with Val, as she could not be left on her own, to nearby Connaught Hospital for suitable emergency treatment. I could never work out how Val got an ice lolly for being good after she had just inflicted a nasty wound on me! We used to have water fights over the fence (with water bombs made from paper) and also snow fights - all very unfair, 3 against one!

Memories of this part of growing up include regular trips every week to The Granada in Hoe Street for Saturday morning pictures with packed houses of young children cheering the heroes and booing the villains. At birthday times if you were lucky you would get your name read out (how did they know?) and go on stage to collect your present and everyone would sing Happy Birthday to You. I even have to admit to being in the last few left and appearing on stage in the final of the yo yo competition! You were either a 'Walthamstow Grenadier' who's song was 'Anchors Away' or a member of the enemy from The Dominion Cinema towards the bottom of The High Street the 'Dominoes'. There was also the Bell Cinema nicknamed 'the fleapit' and The Carlton and a small cinema near The Bakers Arms the name of which escapes me but situated on Hoe Street near Boundary Rd.

At the age of five in 1949 I was selected to go to Maynard Road School in Shernhall Street now renamed Henry Maynard School.

I was fortunate that I could reach the school by a network of alleyways going via what is now Walthamstow Village and along towards Connaught Hospital via another alleyway into Addison Rd and then to the school. The whole journey was negotiated with only one road needing to be crossed. The Headmaster was a rather rotund man, whose name was Leslie Birmingham. My form teacher was Ernest 'Nobby' Clarke and another name that comes to mind was Ken Asprey.

After school some of us used to go to 'Clarkie's' house in Shernhall Street to learn the more advanced skills of the game of chess after which we represented the school in chess matches against other local schools.



**Maynard Road trip to London Zoo 1953**  
**Teachers Mr. Clarke centre at back and Mr. Asprey back right I am the one with the big white collar centre at back.**

We were provided with a daily warm third of a pint of milk and at break times we used to flick cigarette cards against a wall, play gobs (five stones), indulge in numerous games of conkers when they were in season, a 'fiver' which beat a 'twoer' would become a 'sevener', or roll a penny nearest the wall. Some boys used to play football with a tennis ball, one of which, Alan Stephenson, went on to play professional first team football for West Ham. He was a tall boy and very good at all sports activities but not so good at Maths and English.

It is strange to think that this was my little bit of E17 territory but I never ventured much out of an area bounded by Hoe Street, Wood Street, Forest Road and Lea Bridge Road. Sometimes I would use the short cuts through The Drive which was an unmade Road or Howard Road to get to The Bell Corner and perhaps venture as far as Lloyds Park which was the stamping ground of Mum and her two brothers when they were children living in Winn's Avenue. I never felt comfortable outside my area boundaries though.

Nearby in Orford Road there was a bakers, a fish and chip shop where we would sometimes trade our newspapers for fish and chips, an off licence, a newsagents a barbers a pub and a sweet shop, at the top end of Orford Rd near Connaught Hospital there was an ironmongers run by the Ison family who were Sunday school teachers in Folkestone Road. A strong smell of paraffin was evident when you entered the shop which was full of strange bottles of all kinds of mixtures and oil cans and sandpaper and tools of all shapes and sizes. I expect they sold fork handles too!

I used to have to deliver the mix of empty beer bottles to the off licence and collect the new supply every weekend for my Nan. I can see the milk stout label now. On the way there and back I passed the playground in East Avenue where I was to spend many an hour.

In St. Mary Road there was a convenient small choice of shops, a sweet shop and greengrocers, further on an electrical shop and an ironmongers where I used to have to go and collect the Esso Blue or pink paraffin unless it was being delivered. Dad spent hours trimming the wicks of those smelly heaters! One was installed freestanding on each landing! The fire hazard must have had a very high factor! Icicles often hung from the gutters, winters seemed a lot colder in those days. On bonfire night you had to wrap up in three layers of clothes and a woolly hat and scarf and gloves.

One year the man next door, Doug Gordon, set fire to his box of fireworks and they all went off in an instant, what a show that was! Rockets, flying saucers, golden rains and Roman candles flying in all directions. Fortunately no one was hurt. We never knew if that was an accident or not! We used to buy bangers, put them in cocoa tins and lob them onto the railway line

The following morning after Nov 5<sup>th</sup> you could collect spent rocket cases everywhere and the smell of smoke from the previous evenings fireworks hung in the air. Anyone including children could and did buy fireworks; especially popular were penny bangers and sparklers which were never reserved for use specifically on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

After the fireworks celebrations it was the time of year to make the Christmas puddings. It was our job to grate the suet, peel the almonds and make the breadcrumbs. We would all have a stir for luck and put in some old silver three penny pieces which were no longer legal tender or sixpenny coins.

A special treat was on Saturday lunchtime to go to Lyons in Hoe Street and have lunch or even better to be taken to the ABC restaurant on the bridge above the railway at Hoe Street station. We used to try to get a table in the window to see the trains go under the bridge The sausages had knots tied in the ends which used to crisp up and the HP sauce was scrummy.

Sometimes Saturday evening was also the time for an exciting outing for all the family to Walthamstow Stadium to enjoy the thrill of high powered motorbikes with no brakes at a speedway meeting under floodlights. The smell of high octane fuel and exhaust fumes and Coca Cola like I have never tasted again are regenerated at the thought of those events. 'Come on Splitty' was the cry from the Walthamstow Wolves supporters as the local hero went by the name of Split Waterman. Soon afterwards Stock Car racing became popular and I went to meetings at Walthamstow and West Ham.

Dad used to go on a Sunday morning with his Dad to the Nags Head pub nearby and eventually I was allowed to join him but by the time I was old enough to drink in a pub Granddad had already died.

In 1951 we went to the Festival of Britain on the South Embankment and saw such sights as the Dome of Discovery and the Skylon. There was also a huge steam engine named 'Britannia'.

This steam engine must have made a big impression on me as I think it started my interest in collecting train numbers. My train spotting went on for a few years and was popular amongst boys of my age as well as grown men. I used to make regular trips to Liverpool Street and spend all day ticking off the numbers as I saw them and sometimes it used to be an exciting outing if you only needed a couple more to complete a series of a particular type of locomotive.



**Royal Sovereign on the turntable at Liverpool Street**

In addition to Liverpool Street I enjoyed visits to all London main line stations and have fond memories of Kings Cross where trains departed for Scotland and the North. Visits to Grandmas' in Woking were interrupted to

indulge in my hobby at Woking station which was a busy main line serving the West Country and South to Portsmouth and Southampton which was the principal station for connecting to steamers for all over the World

When Dad worked on Saturdays he would sometimes take me to work with him to the City and I used to cut or tear off and save the stamps from the morning post. I can still recall the smell of sealing wax as Dad worked in a solicitor's where it was in general use. When Val went with Dad, she like me used to "help" the telephonist at the switchboard with the plugs on woven braid covered wires that retracted automatically and levers for putting calls through and rows of small circular openings with numbers for the extensions that fluttered like eyelids when calls were being dealt with. One day Val got an electric shock from the switchboard!

The Bank, Mansion House and other similar City of London monuments such as St. Paul's and the Monument became familiar landmarks and Dad used to show me these and other buildings on our way from Liverpool Street to Cheapside.

When I refer to the smell of sealing wax I can also as I write this think of several smells which I can still remember associated with my days in E17.

The Xylonite factory in Forest Rd used to emit fumes with a distinctive smell and this would clearly be apparent in our area when the wind was in a certain direction, they made Bakelite and also I believe produced table tennis balls.

At the top of High Street outside the library there was a Sarsaparilla stall and that is another smell I can easily recall. There was a hot dog stall and the revolting smell from Manzies' eel stall where live eels were on offer and continued to wriggle even when they had their heads removed. The eels were kept fresh with the use of dry ice, something which was difficult to understand as it would steam when it came into contact with anything and could give you a nasty burn if it came in contact with your skin.

Later on the way to the City every day on the Chingford to Liverpool Street line on passing London Fields there was a strong sweet smell of perfume from a factory near the railway line that I can again easily recall. Then there was the smell of syrup of figs – generated by Allen and Hanbury's factory near Bethnal Green/Hackney Downs



The smell of sulphur in the smoke from the steam trains when mixed with the steam was strangely attractive. I have already mentioned the speedway mix of high octane fuel and coca cola.

Back in E17 during school holidays I would spend time out and about at venues I have already mentioned and also watch as huge trolleybus poles were used to change the points at the busy Bakers Arms and Bell junctions. The trolley buses ran along Hoe Street to the City and West End and the only motor bus was the 38 which still runs today and terminates at Victoria and on the return journey is able to climb to North Chingford via Chingford Mount where the trolleybuses had to terminate as they could not climb the incline, 699,697,557 are numbers etched in my memory.

**Back garden 1953**

Sunday afternoons were taken up with visits to the local Methodist Church Hall in Folkestone Road for Sunday school. Not something that appealed to me and that did not last too long.

About this time which was before smokeless fuel and restrictions on coal fires there was a deadly green smog which enveloped the whole of London for about a week. Everybody was warned to wear smog masks and many hundreds of

people died through respiratory problems. As in ordinary foggy situations I didn't miss the opportunity to make a few extra shillings pocket money and used to walk to the nearest junction armed with my torch and offer help to motorists who were moving at less than walking pace so thick was the fog. On one occasion I was asked to direct a driver to nearby Orford Rd and explained that first it would be a good idea if he drove on the left hand side of the road!

In 1953 excitement was high amongst the children as there was to be a Coronation and the build up was full of excitement.

At about the same time, in fact I think the week before the Coronation, Edmund Hillary a New Zealander had climbed Everest and I went to see a documentary film called The Conquest of Everest at the Granada about that achievement.

Coronation parties took place in Church Hill and tables were lined up down the middle of the road and bunting and flags hung from every possible point entwined in the plane trees that lined the roads, jelly and sweets seemed to appear by magic and we were all presented with a half pint glass tankard which I still have and an official Coronation Book all about the history of Essex and sadly which I have misplaced. Part of the celebrations was a fancy dress competition and without exception all the children took part. I was dressed as a jockey as Gordon Richards was a hero at the time and Val was kitted out a fairy.

Like a lot of other families up to then we had never possessed a television but Dad bought one so that we could see the Coronation and half the street came to join us to watch the ceremony on our 8" screen.



**St. Mary Road Coronation party 1953 . I am in bottom left corner in blazer and Val is to left with ribbons, Bobby Craig is behind Val and Jimmy Foster is open mouthed laughing in the centre**

About this time I started my what were to become regular trips to Woking to stay with my Grandparents which involved catching a train to Liverpool Street then getting on the Central Line to The Bank where I had to change onto 'the drain' the deepest of all underground routes between Bank and Waterloo, the Waterloo and City Line, the trains were like toys and silver in colour and much smaller than the normal tube trains. When I arrived at Waterloo I would have to scan the departure boards and ensure I got a service that stopped at Woking. I could choose a fast or stopping train and the excitement of a fast train, first stop Woking, was something to look forward too and it was best to avoid the boring stopping train stopping at Surbiton and all stations to Woking. At Woking station initially I would be met by Grandma and finish my journey by No 44 bus but soon I managed this myself as well. I could have been no older than nine when I first crossed London on my own to visit Grandma and Granddad who was still working for another branch of Rosins the bakers. Granddad said that they added birdseed to the beer at the Queens Head opposite (making them sing). We would feed the cows over the back fence, and watch the big white horse ploughing the farmers field next door, Grandma did the washing in the copper with soda. We went blackberrying and used a walking stick to pull down the brambles and Grandma made wonderful jam every year. I've still got Granddad's walking stick and use it whenever we go blackberrying too. Grandma used to make treacle toffee as another treat.

**22<sup>nd</sup> Walthamstow Sea scouts**  
**I am fifth from the left in the centre row**



For some reason I decided I wanted to be a boy scout and could find no local ordinary scout or cub troop. I joined up to a troop near Connaught Hospital the

22<sup>nd</sup> Sea Scouts. I think the nearest sea was Southend! Of course I had to get a uniform, green cub sweater, scarf and woggle and a cap with yellow beading and a silver star pinned over one eye. I learned dib, dib, dib, names such as Arkela, Brown Owl and all the things cubs are put through. Badges for almost anything adorned boys arms, collecting was one of mine as I had a large stamp collection due to Dad's interest in stamps. Outings to London Zoo were arranged amongst others and we went 'camping' at Billericay I got a 'special' present as a result of my short time at my 'back to nature' experience I contracted 'scarlet fever'!



The next six weeks were spent in my bedroom at home in solitary confinement.

I think this may have helped me in my decision not to progress to becoming a fully fledged Sea Scout! My Uncle Cyril, bless him, sent me an amazing amount of comics and cartoon books with a note saying I should have been sick during school days and not in the summer holidays. I was strictly confined to my small bedroom with the balcony and had a red rash for ages and initially had trouble sleeping. Mum and Dad used to come in wearing masks and everything had to be sanitised and sterilised. I had no other visitors, not even my sister

was allowed to come in to the room. A lot of children had to go into hospital for the same illness at the time and I was fortunate that this did not apply to me.

At the end of my six weeks isolation I was most upset that my uncle's comic collection he sent me had to be taken away and burned. Nan tried to make me welcome back into company of others and I clearly remember bursting into tears and locking myself back in my bedroom as I had been isolated for so long.

At about this time I found my first way of supplementing my pocket money, somehow I got the task of pulling and pushing the barrows up and down the High Street on a Saturday evening when the market closed to their allotted storage areas and earned half a crown (12.5p) for about an hours work.

The local newsagents in Orford Rd was Desborough's and I took on the job of paper boy as did many boys at that age My round was Church Hill, Church Hill Rd. and the Drive area and included a lot of flats involving climbing several flights of stairs. I must have done the round for about three years and got to know the customers and papers they had very well I used to get to the paper shop about 5.45 every morning and finish at 7.30 If I was early I would help to mark up the rounds putting the numbers of the houses on the papers Thursdays was heavy work and I used to have to go back to the shop half way through the rounds because there were so many extra papers, both the TV times the Radio Times and the local Guardian newspaper were due to be delivered on that day.

One day after delivering about twenty houses papers I suddenly realised that the man at No 42 didn't normally have the Daily Mail but the Daily Express and

thought the papers had been put in the bag in the wrong order, because I was an experienced boy my round was not marked up. It transpired that I must have been in a rush that morning and put my bag on the wrong way round. Although it was still very early and most people hadn't woken from their slumbers I had to go back and take all the papers out of the letterboxes and start again, fortunately I was not in the habit of pushing them through all the way. I don't think customers would be very pleased with a request such as 'please can I have my paper back, it is not your one' at that time in the morning! Sunday's too were another double round because of the excess weight in the Sunday papers. We all used to have to be made aware of people cancelling due to holidays so that the rounds were not out of sequence and sometimes were even charged with collecting the money if people hadn't paid for a while.

An instance that also comes to mind is when I used to have to deliver to a large house in The Drive who owned a 'yappy' dog that, at the sound of my approach, used to scuttle down the corridor and slam itself against the door and tear the paper from my grasp as I put it through the front door. Although after a while I was prepared for this it still used to make me apprehensive. One day I decided to get even with the yappy hound and hung on to the paper whilst it was half way through the box until it was no doubt shredded beyond recognition. Sometimes when I returned to the shop the owner would say 'so and so hasn't turned up this morning John, I want you to do his round as well.' No please or thank you and I didn't get paid any extra either. My remuneration was fifteen shillings (75p) for a seven day week.

At Christmas a box was traditionally put on the counter marked 'for the paper boys' but the share out was very meagre and unfair as some boys did a lot more than others, me included, as mine was probably the longest and largest round, so one particular year I decided to put my own note in with the papers saying 'your paper boy wishes you a Happy Christmas'. I did quite well in tips out of that but the miserable owner of the shop admonished me for doing so and soon after that I left.

In 1956 I sat my eleven plus exams. Mum wanted me to follow in the footsteps of both my Uncles who had gone to George Monoux Grammar School which seemed to be the favourite school of many at the time. I failed but was given an oral which meant I would need to sit another exam. Mum was clearly disappointed but I still think that this was one of the best things that happened to me in my formative years.

I had up until then never heard of William Morris County Technical School but had been selected for attendance at the school annexe in a road parallel the bottom of the High Street.

I passed the test and started my secondary education in September 1956 by which time I was already 12. For some reason being the oldest in the class was a drawback because for each month you were older than eleven you had points deducted which seemed very unfair as you all went to the same lessons and because you were older did not learn any quicker. I was put into Ling house and

had to make a trip to Henry Taylor's the school outfitters in the row of shops on the bend opposite the Granada in Hoe Street.

The houses were Ling (red) Lister (green) Curie (yellow) and Howard (blue) Membership of these houses was applied at sports events to encourage competition but had otherwise no real meaning during the normal course of lessons. I still have the list of clothing required for boys and girls comprising everything for a complete school uniform. Henry Taylors seemed to have the local monopoly for all schools (The Girls High school was nearby) and must have done very well out of it.

I went straight into the second stream. The streams were indicated by the letters of the school name WMTS so I was in 'M'. It was a mixed school, boys wore short or long grey trousers and a white shirt and maroon and blue striped tie, blue blazer and cap (which were never worn, except in the case of a few softies!) the girls wore check blue and white skirts, white blouses, some wore ties and blue jumpers or blazers. The school badge was two of the Essex type scimitar crossed swords and underneath was the Latin motto 'Respice Finem'. Look to the end.

The main school building was three floors high with the sports hall on the second floor and classrooms at either end. The girls were given the playground and facilities to the right and the boys to the left. At the rear were the bike shed and woodwork workshop and chemistry labs and to either side of the playground art rooms at the boys end and domestic science and music at the girls end, behind the music rooms were the engineering workshop and the popular tuck shop.

I was to make many friends at school some of whom I am still in touch with now but in the first year each of us seemed to have a special set of close friends. I wondered if there was something wrong about me as I made some special friends only for them to move away although I was always sociable and never slow in coming forward and certainly never 'quiet' like some people could be described.

Tony Landau was a good friend in the first year and moved to New Zealand.

Bob Dranse moved to Brighton but he was to play a big part in my life and we are still in touch some 50 years later.

Mick Hammerton was also someone I spent lots of time with and we still meet up and swap stories when he attends our school reunions.

Now I'll put school on one side for a moment to describe a Saturday job I used to do outside school days at that time. I would now be about twelve.

I used to work at a government and army surplus shop in St. Mary Rd. on the junction with West Avenue called Jobstocks. One member of staff called Bert always had a fancy American car. He got us some fairly lights for the Xmas tree

(about 4 sets) for nothing and hid them in our front garden! I bought mum home some army surplus snow goggles so she could peel onions without crying!

People used to come from far and wide to scabble amongst the gems of equipment and clothing and electrical paraphernalia which were on offer. Bomb switches from aircraft, rucksacks and lanterns of all sorts were good sellers and radio valves were a big seller with strange codes and numbers which I soon began to recognise and knew where to go exactly in the hundreds of items to find them. I often had to clamber up piles of equipment which had been stacked haphazardly just to reach treasured items which a customer had spotted.

Naturally being the boy I had to run errands and make the tea. The tea making facilities were in a tiny backroom of the greengrocers shop next door and were reached by a room full of huge steaming pans used for boiling beetroot, another smell which I can associate with that particular time. I think I worked there for two years.

About this time Dad bought our first vehicle, a van, it was a green and black Austin A40 Devon, very heavy and very reliable. Complete with starting handle and subject to lots of polishing and injections of shots of Redex into the engine via the fuel tank which was supposed to assist the performance. Dad's pride and joy was not allowed to stand outside in the road but for some reason he hired a garage in The Drive which was a fifteen minute walk and at night unlit and an unmade road!

#### **Mum, Carol, Val and me with A40 van**



I would often escort Dad to the garage to get the car out and help with making sure all was well and hold the torch if it was dark whilst Dad used the starting handle to start the engine and thus avoid excessive strain on the engine. So when we went off on, or got home from a long journey we actually still had about half an hour's performance to get the car to and from its home.

Although we made many trips including those to Woking and often Southend and one year completed a camping trip to Norfolk eventually Dad decided it was time for a change and he bought a brand new car, a gleaming green Austin A40 Farina, a novelty at the time as this was the first hatchback produced.

Trips to Southend involved getting up very early and leaving at about 6 o'clock

We then travelled to Southend before the Sunday day trippers traffic from all over our part of London built up on the A127 Arterial Road. Arriving at Chalkwell at about 8 o'clock we would enjoy a hearty breakfast in one of the sea front cafes and draw in the ozone laden fresh air which were told by Dad would be good for us.

#### **On a stuffed tiger in Peter Pan's playground**



Some days we would then go off for a walk to the pier which was about a mile away and walk down the pier for another one and a quarter miles and return by train back to the pier entrance where there were a selection of various amusement rides available together with the normal array of stalls and shops selling 'kiss me quick' hats, toffee apples, ice creams, candy floss, jellied eels, cockles, winkles and other such seaside delicacies.

Our visits generally ended by eleven o'clock at the latest. Dad made a great issue of the endless nose to tail traffic which had by then built up in the other direction and we arrived home at about lunchtime and spent the rest of the day at home.

I think that was quite a wise thing to do actually although at the time it seemed a bit out of the ordinary.

Another traditional visit to Southend was to enjoy the delights of the annual and popular illuminations on the seafront and in particular in Peter Pan's playground. Indeed, this to a younger person was like a true fairyland with twinkling lights of all colours formed into seemingly animated shapes such as stars and butterflies and endless other colourful items, strings of many coloured bulbs hung from every lamppost and pole along miles of seafront.

Summer holidays were sometimes at Ryde on the Isle of Wight, lots of sand castles and Knickerbocker glories come to mind. Horlicks in a coffee bar at night was a special treat.

On other occasions we went to Mundesley a very pleasant unspoilt village on the North Norfolk coast and had various trips out to places like Sheringham and Cromer.

Dad liked Norfolk and we also spent a week in a caravan in California near Great Yarmouth.

Mum was now working on Saturdays for Dolcis shoe shop towards the bottom of the High Street. Once she told us about occasions when customers used to come in saying the shoes they had purchased did not fit properly and explained that she always offered to adjust the fit by using the special Dolcis stretching machine which was all part of the service. This involved taking the shoes out of the clients' sight and into a back room where they were suitably and vigorously

given the stretch treatment applied by putting them over a broom handle and furiously rubbing their insides backward and forwards in order to stretch them. No complaints were ever forthcoming as far as we knew.

After my first year at school in the 'M' stream having to suffer a form mistress called Miss. Frearson (Fearsome Frearson who tried to teach French and was new to the school and utterly useless in all our opinions) I was demoted to 'T' having been suitably admonished by Dad for remarks on my report (which I still have) such as several 'could do better' and worse still 'is easily distracted'. The second of which really meant that I was influenced by my good friend Bob Dranse who always managed to keep a straight innocent face whenever we had been up to mischief and when the teacher turned round I was probably still smirking!

A milestone in my life took place on the first day in the new second year class! There must have been several boys with the name of John in our class and to avoid confusion Diane Stephens and Christine Parker her close friend decided that we should all be allocated suitable nicknames. They discovered that my middle name was Carrington, changed it to Charrington and then to Toby after the Charrington ale. If you had asked Diane, even up until the time before she sadly died recently who 'John' was when referring to me she would not know, as I was always Toby from that moment on. Even some of the teachers used that for easier recognition.

Like several of the others I used in those days to rush home from the afternoon lessons in time to watch cartoons such as 'Yogi Bear' and 'Huckleberry Hound' and better still 'The Flintstones' with Fred and Wilma Flintstone and Barney and Betty Rubble.

Soon after starting in the second year at school I noticed one night from our front living room looking out over St. Mary Road was Diane Stephens walking her dog past the house and on through the alleyway. This happened a few more nights in succession and when I questioned her about this in class she just said that she had 'always walked her dog and simply changed her route.' Mum took me on one side and gave me a gentle reminder of the finer details of the 'birds and the bees'. Nothing ever developed and girls mostly didn't give boys in the same year a second glance although there were a few exceptions and at reunions we have a few couples who met at school and have remained together all this time.

Diane was one of the only other pupils in my class that actually lived in Walthamstow and we remained close friends through school as we were always in the same form for the next four years and it was nice to meet up with her again at the WMTS reunions.

Bob Dranse and I used to spend weekends at each others houses and when he was staying with us all our time was spent playing football with a tennis ball in the playground at the back of the knitwear factory which bordered on the railway line in East Avenue. Often the ball would go over the chain link fence and run

down the steep embankment and we would risk going down to retrieve the ball even when trains were fast approaching. It was often almost dark before we terminated our kick around sessions and Bob became part of my family and me part of his.

I was at this time strangely one of the few pupils attending WMTS who actually lived in Walthamstow, most children had to be bussed in from Chingford Woodford, Wanstead and outlying areas as far away as Ilford. Bob lived in Chadwell Heath, just outside Ilford on the Southend Rd. I even got roped into helping him with his paper round when I stayed over at his house.

During the summer holidays we teamed up and the pair of us used to cut the privet hedges which were evident in nearly every front garden of houses in our part of East London at that time. We actually made quite a lot of money at it too. One day we went to a man and he insisted that if we saw a woman coming up the road looking as though she lived there we were to bang on the door and leave the shears and hide so that he could say to his wife that he had cut the hedge himself.

Bob used to play football for the school in goal in the second year and I went one morning to Ainslie Wood Road in Chingford to watch him in action. That morning he hurt his wrist carrying out a save but nothing more came of it and as arranged off we went that afternoon to Highbury to watch Arsenal versus Manchester United. This must have been just prior to when we first stayed at each others houses.

After about half an hour having stood behind the goal in a tightly packed crowd Bob could stand the pain in his arm no more and nearly fainted although he had not complained on the journey there. First aiders lifted him over the wall and took him away for treatment; about ten minutes later in the hearing of sixty thousand football fans a booming announcement was made over the tannoy asking for 'John Newell to make himself known to the nearest policeman. I was escorted around the touchline in touching distance of all the players I had admired at the time and felt quite a celebrity.

Bob was taken to Harold Wood Hospital and X-rayed and found to have a green stick fracture which had been done carrying out the save in the school match in the morning. His Dad was telephoned and duly collected Bob and took me back to Walthamstow and thanked me profusely for helping Bob and said he had heard a lot about me!

Whilst on the subject of football I should mention that I must have been about eleven when I first started to go to professional football matches. The nearest league team in those days was Leyton Orient who played at Brisbane Rd off the High Road in Leyton and I used to walk the three odd miles or so to see the games. Nan knitted me an extra long blue and white striped scarf and a blue jumper with a horizontal white stripe across the middle and I bought a painted wooden rattle and once I had been I was hooked.

I used to look forward to my Saturday afternoon trip to watch the 'O's as they were known and then one day I was watching a new player who was a teacher at a nearby school, his name was Phil Woosnam and he made a big impact on me as a player and I was very upset when he was sold to nearby first division team West Ham United. After a few games I decided to make the trip to Upton Park after Dad explained how to get there by 58 bus after changing at Leyton. Once I had been to Upton Park that was it I was hooked and attended nearly every home game for the next ten years or so.

During this period of my life I spent a lot of time with our neighbours next door but one at number ten St.Mary Rd a couple by the name of Ruth and Ron Tovee. Ron had a Ford Zephyr followed by a red Triumph Herald with a bonnet that lifted up forwards and had two large metal catches at each side to lock it. He spent endless hours tinkering with his cars.

I went on holiday with Ruth and Ron to a pub called The Blue Ball in Watchet in deepest Somerset one year and we played endless games of skittles in the alley attached to the pub and it was also about this time that I bought my first record called 'Rock Island Line' by Lonnie Donegan.

We formed a skiffle group and had loads of fun with a broom on a tea chest as a bass and a washboard rubbed with a thimble as another sound effect.

Early in the third year at school Bob too deserted me as his Dad started a government surplus shop in Brighton. That same year a school trip to Switzerland was arranged by Mr.Goddard and several of us went off on our first foreign trip, but that is another story.

Mr.Goddard was a scripture teacher suitably described by John Knowles in his story and is mostly remembered for his cross country visits to Ainslie Woods where if you were clever you could disappear as some of us did and sneak in a fag before rejoining the course but making your arrival at the finish rather late.

Other teachers were remembered for other reasons and again they have been mentioned in other stories for various reasons.

Les Stockdale was a huge man with the physique of an all in wrestler which he used to squeeze somehow into a bright red frog eyed Austin Healey Sprite which he parked directly outside the school in Gainsford Rd. Near the end of term one year a boy was expelled when he was found guilty of daubing the car with nail varnish remover. Les taught us technical drawing in a long classroom which ran parallel with the girls' playground. He had a trolleybus pole to reach any offenders at the end of the room and his favoured weapon apart from the common wood backed board eraser with which he was a good shot was a billiard cue with a bicycle handlebar grip on the end which whilst admonishing you for what you thought was a minor transgression on your drawing such as a small almost unnoticeable smudge he would proceed to screw into you shoe until the pain became unbearable. Nearly every pupil that passed through his hands attained top marks and achieved excellent exam results.

Another stickler for attention to detail and equally good at dishing out punishment was Mr. Margetts the geography master. I can still see his perfect blackboard chalk coloured drawing of the North Yorkshire and Nottingham coalfields to this day.

I can see why I passed both geography and technical drawing.

Jim Minchin was the engineering master and this formed part of my chosen course. We were blessed as a school with a very well kitted out engineering workshop with three lathes, woe betide any boy who changed gear without applying the clutch as the noise would bring Jim scurrying out of his room to discover the culprit and have all the class stopped to explain the correct procedure.

At one end of the workshop was an open coal furnace with bellows and above a metal extractor hood and fan. We would produce such implements as fire rakes and learnt all about root bends and how to form a circular handle on a piece of iron rod which we heated to cherry red before hammering over an anvil and dousing in water.

Although we all wore aprons sometimes a boy would throw some coal into the bath of sulphuric acid we were using for the process of 'pickling' and that would splash up and it was not strange to see a pupil with a jumper littered with small holes where the acid had eaten away the wool. We could have got blinded but that never occurred to anyone at that age, coal was also thrown up in to the fan simply to draw Jim's attention as it rattled around the extraction hood, another antic that bought Jim swiftly from his room was even more dangerous.

In the chuck (revolving section) of the lathes there was a hole which took the key which tightened the chuck on to the material being turned (spun round at high speed). To keep the material being turned from getting hot a coolant was applied by the operator which was a light oily creamy mixture that smelt foul. When you were in the know it was a sensible precaution to check the chuck key holes before setting the lathe into motion as sometimes some prankster from the previous lesson would have filled the chuck key hole with coolant and when the lathe was started it would send a huge stream of coolant all over the operator and far into the workshop. Second only to changing gear without using the clutch was to start the lathe with the chuck key in place. Thinking about this now, although it did happen it frightens me to think that in these circumstances a serious accident could have occurred but fortunately never did.

Jim became quite a friend to some of us and in the fourth and fifth year a chosen few, me included, were selected to staff the adjacent tuck shop which was Jim's responsibility. It was no doubt a good example of how to run a business and we were given responsibility for stock levels and dealing with the cash. At the time the favourite items were Wagon Wheels and Oxo flavoured crisps closely followed by half frozen Jubblies an orange drink in a tent shaped carton which we had to put in the freezer and take out the morning before

selling as the half frozen state was the critical bit! Manning the tuck shop also gave us the chance to get to know the girls who we would not normally come into contact with but it was clear that it was not done outside the confines of the classroom to talk to boys of the same age and they had usually to be three years older than the girls to expect any interest.

A perk of later years was to be given the job of counting in the pupils for meals at the nearby canteen and at that stage in school life you were usually older than most of the people you were counting in. Including of course the girls! Additionally this privilege was only given to prefects and again this gave you a certain sense of power over the younger pupils!

Mealtimes were good and the food, apart from the solid bits in the potatoes and the pearl barley in the stew was excellent. Favourites of mine were treacle tart, corn flake tart, bread and butter pudding, semolina pudding and always the wonderful aluminium jugs full of that amazing creamy custard which had been mixed in a machine so that it became light and full of air, there was even a rare offering of a pink variety too, seconds were normally the order of the day.

Other left over time at lunchtime was taken up sneaking off with others to a nearby alleyway for a crafty fag, naturally this was christened 'faggers alley' by those indulging in this dreadful habit. My friends at this time were mainly Colin Honeyball, Roger Johnson and Tony Collins.



Colin and I were the ones that mostly used to run the tuck shop.

His nickname 'Bun' came about when a teacher addressed him as Colin Bunnyhall instead of Colin Honeyball and it had stuck ever since, the girls saw to that.

Saturday mornings were sometimes spent in the shop front of Al's records in the High Street in the company of several pupils from school listening to such tracks as 'Butterfly' by Tommy Steele and 'Cathy's Clown' by the Everley Brothers which seemed to be at the top of the hit parade for ever.

In the fifth year 'Bun' had a BSA 750cc motor bike that he used to use to get to and from school. It was funny to watch Bun depart from home after school. He was only of short stature and climbed aboard his high powered machine and took off at high speed, however due to his lack of height and weight he used to have to jump high in the air in order to apply the clutch to change gear! One day he took me on the back of his bike to Chingford and asked me to look after his precious vehicle while he went into a shop to buy some 'fags'. I took hold of the monstrously heavy machine and proceeded to immediately drop it on its side.

Bun was used to the delicate balance of his powerful bike. Fortunately no damage was done to me or the bike!

Football was played out every opportunity in the boy's playground and taken very seriously however we all lived in fear of the sound of a ball hitting the downstairs window of the art room block, where resided a certain Mr Mac (MacAntionaigh).

Break time and lunch time would see a full complement of boys indulging in their favourite pastime kicking a small ball around and the normal hubbub of so many boys enjoying themselves was immediately silenced if an unfortunate soul misguided a ball into the offending out of bounds area of the art room windows! Always and without fail the offender would own up or risk the wrath of all those playing at the time as otherwise all ball games would be suspended until the guilty party was discovered by Mr. Mac. The poor boy would then be dragged off by the collar and suitably punished.

The art block was a flat building outside the main part of the school at the opposite side of the playground and was on two levels.

Above Mr. Mac's classroom was Mr. Harrison's class and I was a pupil of his for art lessons. In addition we were taught the basics of printing; don't forget here the association with William Morris. Our print room in the loft area was somewhere to hide away on rainy days if you were privileged like me to be chosen to be a member of the Kelmscott Press which produced various broadsheets amongst which was the school newsletter. Many a lunch hour was spent printing and sorting the individual letters into huge tray type divided wooden boxes, masses of lead text was required running into what must have been many hundreds as there had to be several amounts of letters for each letter of the alphabet and many size and variations of typeface. We often spent the time setting up printing projects whilst enjoying the opportunity of listening to a cricket test match. When it came to stripping down a publication we were supposed to return each individual letter to its correct division in the array of drawers of type and sometimes this became such a chore that some boys threw an occasional letter that they could not immediately find the correct slot for into the water tank directly above us in the loft area. Goodness know what water supply this fed but we could easily have poisoned someone with the amount of lead being added to the water in the tank in addition to which I often wondered that if this habit was handed down to pupils year after year, which it probably was, the tank would eventually overflow or the additional weight of the lead type would cause it to fall through the ceiling!!!

Another prank I recall later in school years was that you could arrive home with your army surplus rucksack or maybe a fashionable duffle bag and settle down to Maths or English homework, which was due in the following morning, only to open the bag and discover the contents you had faithfully carried home were a brick or some similar heavy object to disguise the fact that the appropriate books were not in place! Bags were kept in lockers (wonder why they were called that?)

I don't think you could lock them) and this was where the swap had taken place without knowledge of the unfortunate victim.

End of term was an excuse for more expected nonsense and the year above us locked all the teachers in the music room news quickly spread around the school and a packed girl's playground looked on in amusement until a younger teacher (Mr Jeremiah I think) escaped and rescued them by climbing out of the window. That playground emptied in an instant!

I stayed on at school for two extra sixth years mainly because I did not pass the GCE subjects I wanted at the first attempt. It was sad to say goodbye to most of my schoolmates but we were told we would be treated as adults in the sixth form and that if we wanted to learn that was up to us. I actually really enjoyed those two extra years at school and never regret that decision to stay. I completed my two years extra education and achieved what I wanted in the way of GCE passes and left in July 1962 at the age of seventeen.

Soon after leaving school I went to the employment bureau in the High Street by the library to search for my first job.

I entered the hall and was directed to a large pin board on the wall totally covered with postcard size adverts of jobs. I selected a job looking for an estimator for commercial kitchens and went back to reception and the man behind the desk explained the job and phoned up for an appointment for an interview.

About a week later I took the train to Liverpool Street and tube to Tottenham Court Road and walked to my destination a business called William Page and Company who were based on the corner of Shaftesbury Avenue and Frith Street in Soho. I was interviewed by the Company Secretary and Director called Tom Shearman. The job was explained to me and I was offered the post and started soon afterwards and so became a daily commuter.

Social life outside work became more valued and I kept in touch with a few friends from school notably 'bun' Colin Honeyball.

I took my first driving test in 1962 and failed but passed the second time and was lucky enough to be given the use of the car. By now a few of the others from school had the use of family cars too and we all used to clean and polish our vehicles religiously.

On Friday nights there were trips to Tottenham Royal where the resident band was The Dave Clarke Five of 'Bits and pieces' and 'Glad all over' fame. They were then on tour and replaced by Johnny Howard and Laura Lee. Visits to Leyton Baths were also a regular weekly event on a Friday and pass out tickets or an ink stamp applied to your wrist were the order of the day so that you could nip across the road to the pub for a drink and then back into the dance again.

The fashion for girls was grey skirts and mustard tops and the Beatles were top of the charts with one hit after another. I particularly recall at this time the song 'I saw her standing there'. Screaming Lord Sutch was the fill in act and used to appear on stage with a toilet seat around his neck. You were either a mod or a rocker and I considered myself a mod having gone through the drainpipe trousers, suede shoes and fluorescent sock styles I was wearing nearly all corduroy including shirt and tie. At this time I was drinking rum and cloves! A rather revolting sounding mix but I used to get fairly merry most times and enjoyed the fresh air on the walk home down Hoe Street.

One evening after a visit to Leyton Baths which will always stick in my mind was when John F Kennedy was assassinated on Friday 22nd November 1963. I think most people at that time can remember where they were when that news was broken.

Sometimes we would go further a field to Ilford Palais or The Royal Forest Hotel to see Jazz with Chris Barber and Ottolie Patterson. Then there was the 'Bamboo Club' and sometimes we even ventured to the West End.

I went through a period of liking Traditional Jazz and then Modern Jazz with the MJQ and Dave Brubeck and tracks such as 'Take Five'

Some Saturdays we would drive to the 'Crazy Pub' at Much Hadham near Ware. This establishment was full of surprises as the name infers and the landlord was an ex RAF man with a silly sense of humour and things used to go off and bells ring and it was fun for a while but the novelty soon wore off.

On Sunday lunchtimes there was a regular visit with Bun and others to The Welsh Harp in the Square at Waltham Abbey. Sometimes we would also drop in here on our way to Tottenham Royal.

How lucky I was to be a teenager working in Soho in the swinging sixties with the early days of Carnaby Street and the Beatles in full swing.

One of the subsidiary companies of William Page was a company based in Fulham called IWD which stood for Iced Water Dispensers which amongst other things they manufactured. I used to make regular visits to deliver wages or drawings of equipment which had to be produced in the factory, at that time we had the contract to provide the service counters for restaurants in Littlewoods stores all over the country.

From Pages we dealt with IWD on a daily basis on the telephone and after about two years or so I began a friendship with the girl who was the voice at the Fulham end of the phone. Her name was Margaret. Our friendship blossomed into love and courtship followed, during which time I had to regularly negotiate the difficult journey between South West and North East London.

Margaret and I got married in Holy Trinity Church Kensington in September 1966 on a wonderfully sunny day and honeymooned in Jersey leaving from Southend

Airport. We set up home in a flat on the first floor of a mid terraced house in Folkestone Road which was just round the corner from where I was living in St. Mary Rd. Our landlord was an Irish drinking friend of Dads from The Nag's Head called Eddie; he had bright ginger hair and a very pronounced Irish accent.

At the time there was an uprising which led to war between India and Pakistan.

When we were hunting for accommodation we visited several places which were unsuitable and one that stands out in my mind was in Highams Park. When the door to the property was opened there was an overpowering smell of curry and the whole of this large imposing detached house had been broken down into several flats the walls of which were seemingly of hardboard as the noise and smells were filtering from all directions during our very brief inspection for suitability.

Back in Folkestone Road it was strange to see the milkman early in the morning delivering a whole crate of milk every day to a house nearly opposite. From time to time during the morning especially at weekends it was clear to see that all this milk was not for one family as one after another women in colourful saris appeared at the doorstep at various intervals to claim their supply of milk.

I can't imagine how many families were living there but I guess maybe five or six in a mid terrace house built for one family to inhabit.

Since I joined work at William Page I had been friendly with an office colleague John Lacroix who lived in Welling, Kent. Whilst still single I had enjoyed staying with John and his wife Eileen on a couple of occasions for weekends and we used to return to work together on the Monday following. Margaret and I were eventually invited to Welling and we were persuaded by John that it might be a good place to find ourselves a house. This we did and soon found a suitable property in Falconwood near Welling and moved away from our Walthamstow flat. It may as well have been the other side of the World let alone the other side of London. Soon after our departure to Welling Mum and Dad moved from Walthamstow to North Chingford.

That was the end of my time living in Walthamstow E17, a place which formed part of a major and very enjoyable part of my life.

Since then I have kept in touch with Bob Dranse and our eventual move to Hove was a result of our friendship at school.

I get great enjoyment from helping to arrange school reunions and this year will be our seventh such event. We all share similar memories of Walthamstow and surrounding districts of East London in those times.

Margaret and I now live in Canterbury with Jenny our daughter. Ray our son and his wife Charmain have presented us with our wonderful grandson Thomas.