

Hello,

I have only just discovered your website and have been going through the "Postbag" – it's all very interesting and I'd like to thank all the contributors.

I was born in St Margaret's Hospital Epping in 1943 as we lived in Chingford at that time, but from 1948-1951 our family lived with my grandmother **Bertha Agnes Lisher** (always known as Agnes or Aggie) in **21 Jewel Road** where my mum was born and had lived until she married. I'd always thought that my grandma was a Londoner, but in actual fact she was from Sittingbourne in Kent, and my grandfather from Lancing in Sussex. He'd served with the Scots Guards in the Boer War and on his return married Agnes and they moved to Walthamstow in 1907. I suppose that all those houses had just been built... Our house was on the corner of Jewel Rd and Pearl Rd and I can't remember whether it was a Coalman or a Rag and Bone Man who used to leave his horse and cart outside in the road. There were plenty of Amateurs to collect the manure! The wall was quite high and broken glass was cemented onto the top of it to prevent burglars from climbing over. I can't imagine that being allowed today by "Health and Safety" regulations. On the right hand side of Jewel Rd as you went towards Hoe St, was the Baptist Sunday School (behind the Church in Greenleaf Rd) and although I was a catholic, I used to go there on Sundays and thoroughly enjoyed it!



At the top of the road was a Domestic stores (I've just recently acquired a 1950s photo from someone in the US) and the shops along Hoe Street went all the way down to **Bell Corner**. There was a marvellous fish shop there, and I can remember one day coming home from school on the bus and not paying my fare in order to buy **fried sprats** which were delicious. On the other side of the road, opposite the Bell was the Empire cinema, I think it was called. In the summer holidays they'd show "**The Eight Cartoons**" and I can also remember falling in love with Bing Crosby when I was about six years old after having seen a film there. Among the neighbours, I remember **Mrs Muir** who was a lovely lady and she would come to clean at grandma's and while she was on all fours cleaning, I'd ride on her back as though she was a horse! Poor lady! There was also **Mrs Cornish** whom, I think, lived in Pearl Rd

opposite. I believe that she'd assisted my grandma when she gave birth to one of her four children. I also saw that someone in the "Postbag" enquired after **Mrs Freeman**... That name rings a bell too.

I never knew my grandfather as he died in 1942, but my grandma was quite a character! She had very bad legs and walked with difficulty. Every Monday afternoon she would trudge along to the **Granada** to see a film and take me with her. It's only a short distance from Jewel Rd to the Granada in Hoe Street, but my grandma, I'm sure, knew *everyone* in Walthamstow and I'd be tugging at her coat to get a move on instead of talking unendingly for what seemed to me to be for hours on end. When we did finally reach the Granada she would fall asleep during the film, then wake up and say "That was a lousy film!" Sometimes we even left before seeing everything... Another of her favourite pastimes which I very much enjoyed, was to take the 38 Bus to Victoria, especially in the winter, to see the Lights in London. We never got off the bus, but just sat there in front of Victoria Station until it took off again on the return journey to Walthamstow.

Do any of you remember **Saturday morning Pictures at the Granada**? This was in the days before television and there'd be hundreds of children from 5 years upwards attending while their parents went shopping down the High Street or cleaned up the house. We'd spend about 3 hours there and would see several films, mostly Westerns, then at one point the Organ would rise up from under the ground and play and we'd all sing. One such song was "**The Walthamstow Granadiers**"! Among the audience were also quite a few "Yobbos" firing peas with their pea-shooters and I can remember going home once with a black eye... Just a few yards away from the Granada, going towards the High Street was a shop in Hoe St called **Henry Taylors** who obviously had the monopoly in selling school uniforms. It was there that my mum bought my first school uniform – royal blue, for **St Mary's primary school in Shernhall St**. At the time several of the teachers, including the headmistress were nuns. There was a Sister Peter, a Sister Mary Peter and a Sister Rita. Part of the school was a "modern" building – from the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year upwards where multiplication tables would be chimed in unison by the whole class every day before lessons. My best friend there was **Christina Cooper**. She was a polio victim and she lived not far from Bell Corner, either at the top of **Bromley Rd** or **Bedford Rd**. There was another girl too, whose name I think was **Bernadine Hewitson**... In those days nobody was driven to school, and from 5 years onwards, once you knew the way to school, you either walked or went on the bus. When I was about seven years old, I can remember going home via **the Drive** and scrumping apples in someone's garden with some of the boys from school. This was the "posh" part of Walthamstow which in the autumn was absolutely fantastic for collecting conkers. Our GP **Dr MacIntoch** also lived around there – either in **Prospect Hill** or **Church Hill** where he had a huge house.

By 1951, I had acquired three younger brothers, all born in **Thorpe Coombe** Maternity hospital. We all lived upstairs in Grandma's house – mum and dad and the 2 boys and the baby in the front bedroom, myself in another room and a Lodger in the back room. On Sundays, to get out of the house, we'd all go to Lloyd Park just down the road. During the week, when I was at school, Mum would also go down there with the pram and the toddlers. **Lloyd Park** was absolutely wonderful – so much space, and so much going on, from elderly bowlers in impeccable white pullovers and trousers (such a boring game, I used to think), to swings and playground, ducks to be fed, beautiful flowerbeds to behold... Every now and again we'd also take the 38 in the other direction to Epping Forest or Larkswood swimming pool in Chingford. One memory I also have of that period is that turning left at the bottom of Jewel Road on to Forest Road, before arriving at the Police station, was a shop that, amongst

other things, sold collectable postage stamps. In exchange for a few pennies you could get fantastic stamps from all over the world.

It was a memorable day for mum and dad when they were given priority for a council house in **Palmerston Road**. A block of three houses built undoubtedly on a bombed site. Our brand new home was number **150**. Our neighbours were on the one side the **Stubbs family** and on the other **Mr & Mrs Miller** who had two boys called **Roy and Brian Miller**. I've since discovered that there was a murder in this same house where we used to live...

By this time I was eight years old and we lived there until I was thirteen. I now went to St Patrick's school in Longfield Avenue and on the way there my brothers and I would stop in at a little shop in Walpole Rd just before the railway bridge which sold enormous gobstoppers and sherbert lemons... That is, once there was no more rationing... Until 1953 we still had **ration books** and just a few yards further along Palmerston Rd was a sweetshop. We'd get all our ration books together to see how many coupons we had left to go and buy sweets. Not just sweets... because we were a big family, we had "**priority eggs**". During the rationing period Mum also used to go down to the Town Hall to get **Orange juice and Cod Liver oil** – ugh! I thought that grandma was very rich because she ate butter! Only lately did I find out that it was her sister in Canada and one of her daughters in South Africa who sent the butter to her. At that time one of our favourite dishes was **bread and dripping**! 1953 was also Coronation Year. We saw it on a 9" television screen at a friend's house in Luton Road, and for the Coronation party we went back to Jewel Road where long trestle tables were laid out and I think we all got a coronation cup or something like that. This wasn't my first street party, as I had also participated in the **1945 V-day party in Jewel Road** with three of my cousins :



In 1956, very sadly, we moved from Walthamstow to Watford where I lived before moving to Belgium in 1963. It wasn't easy adapting to another school where class mates of a higher social class weren't used to my cockney accent... To this day I'm proud of my Walthamstow roots, "Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner..."

**Mary Connaughton**