

Sylvie Baigent (nee Bass)

Hello there, I was sent your page by a friend who still lives in the U.K. I have lived in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada since 1974 but remember well my childhood days in Walthamstow as it was known then. My parents had a greengrocers shop in Grove Road and I went to school at Sir Henry Maynard Primary and Junior Schools. I was at "Warwick" School {Joseph Barret School was renamed when I started there in 1955} for just a few months before transferring to George Gascoigne Secondary Modern School in Queens Road.

After retiring from business in 1960 my parents moved to Leamington Avenue and stayed with family until buying a terraced house in Borwick Avenue which attaches itself to The High Street via Erskine Road. When I attended G.G.SMS, a house at the top end of Grove Road name Athens House, almost at the corner of Beulah Road at Grove Road, was used as an activity centre for the boys from GGSMS after school. I can remember there were very large horsechestnut trees in the front yard. I used to walk past the house when I attended Sir HMP and J S's.

I understand that West Street and St. Stephens Road have been demolished and another housing development put there. We had our Coronation Day party and sports events at West Street in 1953. I was 9 years old and was dressed as a Hawaiian Girl with a grass skirt and a lei around my neck. Some friends were the Bisto Kids. The hall in West Street was where we used to meet for our Girl Guides each week and our Captain of our group was Mrs French, the shoe repairer's wife. I believe we were known as the 9th Walthamstow and I was in Poppy Patrol.

When my husband and I began making our wedding plans to marry in 1965 we went to St Stephens Church, corner of Copeland Rd. and Grove Road, but to our dismay it was closed down and about to be demolished. We went on to St. Mary's and did well in our preliminary interview until I had to give my address of Borwick Avenue and was told that we could not marry there as I was out of the diocese. After this we decided to marry at the South Essex Registry Office in Lea Bridge Road, across from the Territorial Army Hall, almost at Whipps Cross. I remember the park at the back of the library in the High Street and I used to walk from Borwick Avenue, along the High Street and through it to get to Walthamstow Station for a train to take me to Liverpool Street Station.

My parents used to go to the Buxton Working Mens Club in Buxton Road regularly and I believe at one time my Dad was on their Committee. I remember the Palace and going to see pantomimes while sitting in the "ashtrays" upstairs. You got a really good view from up there. Manzies Pie and Mash Shop was the place to be after Saturday morning pictures, which cost us a whole sixpence, and if it was busy you could watch the man cut up the live eels for people to take home and cook themselves. It wasn't until I was in my teens that I tried jellied eels and found them to taste really good. My mouth waters !!!!!

The Bakers Arms Corner was also a hot spot as it was very close to Leyton Baths which not only had swimming and hot baths facilities but also you could go on a Saturday night and see wrestling, boxing or even go to dances held there. Across from it were two cinemas one of which was Granada and I think the other one was called the Ritz. On the other side of Hoe Street, Bakers Arms, Walthamstow side, there was another cinema called the Plaza and there was the Como Cafe almost next door to it. There were a few stalls there too for fruit and vegetables. Travelling towards the Bell you would pass Walthamstow Technical College, across from Grove Rd. and further along on the opposite side was Clarks College, opposite Queens Rd. The memories keep flooding back. I really must close now but I shall e-mail again when I have had a good think about some other points of interest and stories to tell. Thankyou for giving people like myself the chance to talk about the old days and for giving us a Website that is very informative. I thoroughly enjoy browsing through it.

Yours very truly, Sylvie Baigent nee Bass.
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