

Cambridge Road over the years.

by Patricia Maziane, (nee Bennett 1946-1965).

It is hard to imagine what Cambridge Road would have looked like when my great grandfather, James Bennett, had a detached house built there in 1909. He purchased a double plot on the site that would become number 63 but he named the house Bury Bushes. This was an appropriate name as the bushes it was buried in were not removed until my father dug them up to put a garage up in the 1950s (a Batley concrete one). The house remained in my family's possession until 1975 when my mother sold it to move to Firbank Road.

When James and Marion Bennett moved in it must have been like living in a field. According to the Kelly's Directory for that year the only other properties in the road were No's 1 to 7 on the North side and numbers 40 to 60 on the south side which were built in 1908. James' house did not appear in the directory until 1910 and it was accompanied by number 6 on the south side, the shop on the corner Maxwell Road and a property called Glencote between that and Bury Bushes. There was one property above it called Belmont.

There is a gap in Kelly's Directories from 1915 until 1922. There were 43 houses on the road in the former edition but only two more in the latter. By 1930 there were 70 properties in the road which were all numbered. The road would seem to have been completed just before the second world war as it contained 95 properties, including the shops at the bottom of the road and the Co-op which was number two. I always thought of that as being in Camp View Road.

The three houses below number 63 were built in the 1930s. There was a field behind them until the 1960s. I know the terrace numbered 77 to 83 was not built until the 1920s as I owned one of those in the 1980s. Hill End Hospital owned a large L shaped piece of land from the corner of Beresford Road to the top of Wellington Road where they built houses for some of their staff over a period of 20 to 30 years. A terrace of three cottages was built early in the 20th century but most of the others are of 1920s to 1930s construction.

I lived at number 63 from 1948 until 1965 and have some peculiar memories of the house. Whenever dad stripped the wall paper to decorate they were all a really dark maroon colour. Mum and Dad had modern (1950s) fireplaces put in the two living rooms to replace the range in the back one and a 6ft high surround in the front room. They also had one of the two back bedrooms converted to a bathroom and toilet with a hot water system and an airing cupboard. This was a vast improvement on having to use the outside toilet which was connected to a septic tank at the bottom of the garden. This was when the house was put on the main drainage system and the septic tank was opened up occasionally to dispose of

items that were too large to go in the dustbin. In those days food waste went into a pig bin on the corner of Wellington Road for the hospital's farm. Our kitchen was quite small, just long enough to take a double drainer sink unit and a cooker. The fridge and dry goods were kept in a cupboard under the stairs. The nearest thing we had to central heating was a couple of night storage heaters, one in the dining room and one in the hall, but the upstairs was always freezing during the winters.

I have racked my brain to try to remember who lived where during my childhood. I have taken these in a circle from number 61 downwards, up the opposite side, then down from the top of the road to number 65.

There were two generations of the Haddon family at No 61, the senior couple lived downstairs and Fred and Mary Haddon lived on the first floor. Mr & Mrs Thomas and their son Barry lived at No 59, the Johnson family at No 57, the Peppers at No 55 and the Mould family at No. 53.

The Rudkin family lived at No. 47 and the photographer Juliet Haddon lived at No. 45. The only people I remember further down the road were the Mason family, one house down from Maxwell Road, because the twins Shirley and Ann were in my class at Camp School.

People in the shops are mentioned later on so I will cross the road to number eight where the Grimes family lived until the 1960s when the Smith family moved in. Further up the road the Westons lived at No 60 and there was a shop at No. 64 which sold crisps. My sister's friend Eileen Walters lived with her parents at number 68 while Mr Pugh and Mrs White lived in the top two cottages before Wellington Road. I can only remember the name of one family who lived between Wellington and Beresford Road, the Baldrys and only Grays the coal merchant between Beresford Road and Ashley Road.

Vivien Osmond and her parents lived near the top on our side of the road and another house was occupied by Bill, the butcher from Warwicks, in one of the 1930s houses. Mr & Mrs Sanders and their daughter Pat resided at number 83 with the Weatt family were at 77.

Number 73 was occupied by John Harris, his wife and their daughter Pauline. Joyce and Bill Chandler and their son Andrew lived at 71. When they moved to Beresford Road the Cooper family moved in. Mrs Buxton lived next door to them and Mr and Mrs Chapman lived at 65.

Charlie Street and his son Dave lived just above the shop on the corner of Maxwell Road, and ran a sand and gravel merchants from a yard in Hedley Road for many years. There was also a branch of the Hall family a bit lower down which were related to the owners of Fleetville Saloon's two shops. There was also a family of Simms and Lloyds on both sides of that section of the road.

The 'in thing' nowadays seems to be to have groceries delivered whereas to me, although I partake in the system, it seems more like putting the clock back sixty odd years.

In Cambridge Road in the 1950s my mother had her groceries delivered from the Co-op on the corner of Cambridge Road on a Monday afternoon. These were made up from a list in a book which she handed in to the shop on a Friday. The Co-op also delivered fresh bread two or three times a week. Was Co-op Dividend a fore-runner to shops putting points on a loyalty card, I wonder?

Greengrocery was delivered by horse and trailer from Johnson's in Camp Road, by their son in law George Tolman, twice a week. Before long this was upgraded to a large van.

Milk was an essential item and was delivered daily, seven days a week. There was a choice of three suppliers for this: the Co-op, the Express Dairy and Oakleys who had a dairy on the corner of Cell Barnes Lane. We didn't have meat delivered though this was possible, by a teenager on a bicycle. However Mum preferred to select her own joints etc. from Warwick's on the corner of Ely Road. Again there were three choices, besides this shop, the Co-op had its own butcher's and there was another privately owned one on the opposite corner of Camp View Road.

Fish and chips were a regular item on the menu which would be collected from Gray's shop at No 1 on a Friday. I often had 3d worth of chips on my way home from country dancing classes at Fleetville School on a Tuesday evening too.

Other grocery items could be purchased from Collins's on the higher corner of Ely Road. This was run by two sisters who didn't seem to have Christian names but were both referred to and addressed as Miss Collins. There were three other shops below them: Fleetville Saloons had a single storey ladies hairdresser between Warwick's and the Co-op and there was a bootmakers at number 12. If Dad needed a haircut he used to go to Donald Saban's on corner of Camp and Royston Roads.

Cambridge Road has had a thriving Residents Association for many years and I am sure people who belonged to that could provide some really interesting stories about the area.

My thanks go to St Albans City Library for the use of their Kelly's Directories.

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