

Catton Grove Memories

Growing up in Catton Grove 1935 – 1965



Children celebrating VE Day outside 27 Jewson Road Tuesday 8th May 1945

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1. Woodcock Road where it meets Catton Grove Road, April 1934

2. Woodcock Road where it meets Aylsham Road, April 1934

These photographs and others shown within the book are courtesy of
George Plunkett Photographs of Old Norwich

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered about the lives of the people who have lived in your house before you? Unless you live in one of the few new-build houses, if you live on Catton Grove estate, chances are, over the years, a number of families have lived in the house where you live now.

The main parts of the Catton Grove estate, north and south of Woodcock Road, were built over 85 years ago as part of Norwich Housing Corporation's work to rehouse families away from over-crowded, derelict properties in the area of the City where Anglia Square sits today.

For the families moving into the spacious new houses on the Catton Grove estate, life was very different from what we take for granted today. The majority of new tenants moved into houses without electricity; not that this mattered as electrical items such as washing machines, cookers and refrigerators were, at this time, luxury items that were out of reach for most ordinary, working-class families. For the new tenants who found themselves in the 'posher' houses on Woodcock Road, they appreciated the convenience of an indoor toilet for the first time, but for everyone else, the wait would be a bit longer as the majority of new tenants moved into houses with an outdoor toilet and no bathroom or shower.

Whilst we now have a multitude of electrical items and outdoor toilets are a thing of the past, sadly, some aspects of life in Catton Grove have not moved on as much as we would hope. Many families today continue to struggle with the costs of feeding their families and heating their homes, as families did back in the 1930's; although today we do have services such as the welfare state and the NHS to support us in times of need.

Catton Grove Local History Group was launched back in 2014, when volunteers from the Community Centre held an open Afternoon Tea for anyone who grew up on the Catton Grove estate between 1935 and 1965. We didn't really know if anyone would turn up and were astounded when we found ourselves with a room crammed full of people keen to share their memories and catch up with childhood friends. Further sessions were quickly arranged, during which someone said, '*we should write a book about what life on the estate was really like*'. And why not! A year later, with funding from the Health Lottery, Catton Grove Memories was published. The book was very well received with over 750 copies being printed. Copies of the book went all over the World to ex-Catton Grovers who had settled in countries such as America, Australia and Canada.

After our book was published, we received many more memories and photographs which have been included in this updated edition. We have also been doing more research, including the history of the development of Waterloo Park which has been included in this updated edition.

We would like to thank everyone who has shared their memories with us over the last six years. We would also like to thank Catton Grove Big Local for funding from their Community Chest small grants programme which has enabled this updated edition of Catton Grove Memories to be published.

Linda Blakeway and Maggie Wheeler Catton Grove Local History Group

CONTRIBUTORS

Catton Grove Memories is based on the memories of those who came forward to talk about growing up as members of some of the first families who moved onto the Catton Grove estate. Sadly, some members of our original group have passed away over the past few years; we would like to thank them for their excellent contributions and send our best wishes to their families.

John Bridge John was born in 1935 and moved to 94 George Pope Road as a baby. In 1941 his house was one of four that were destroyed in a bombing raid. John's family were placed in temporary accommodation and moved back to the same house when it was rebuilt by the Council six years later. John moved away in 1958 when he got married.

Brian Colman Brian was born in 1933 and moved to Middleton Close as a baby when his parents moved from Aylsham Road. Brian lived there until 1953 when he got married. Brian's sister Vera was also a member of the group.

Heather Didwell (nee Goodall) Heather was born in 1933 and lived at 8 Jewson Road, where she moved with her family from St Georges Street. Heather later moved to Mile Cross but has never lost her passion for Catton Grove where she has been a volunteer at the Community Centre for over 40 years, Heather's activities include running the Friendship Club, calling the numbers at Bingo and Chairing the Management Committee. In 2012 Heather was awarded the British Empire Medal for her services to the local community.

Janet Gallant (nee Ward) Janet was born in 1934 and moved to 73 Woodcock Road in 1938 when she was 4 years old. Janet moved away 1948 when her parents divorced.

June Gidney (nee Platten) June was born in 1939 and lived at 157 Catton Grove Road until 1960, apart from two years when she trained to be a teacher at Alnwick Training College. June moved in 1960 when she married. Over the years, June has been a pupil, a parent and a teacher at Catton Grove School.

Arthur and Paul 'Jumma' Hunt two brothers from a family of nine children who have fond memories of growing up as 'Klondike Kids'.

Brenda Hurn (nee Martins) Born in 1930, Brenda moved to 99 Catton Grove Road in 1932 when her parents were offered a new Council House. Brenda moved to Drayton Road in 1955 as her mother moved there. Brenda's family lived with her mother until she and her husband were offered their own home off Catton Grove Road in June 1962, where she still lives today.

David and Maurice Kemp Born in 1934 and 1935 David and Maurice moved to 114 George Pope Road in 1938. The family moved from Queens Road as they needed a larger house for their 12 children. Maurice lived in George Pope Road until he married in 1959.

Brian Lee Brian was born in 1938 at 52 Woodcock Road where he lived until he moved in 1962 to get married. Brian was the youngest of seven children.

Percy Larter also known as Ron Larter Born on Christmas Eve 1924, Percy moved to a new house at 87 Bullard Road in 1934 at the age of 10 from a one room tenement block on Ber Street. Percy was at Catton Grove School from 1934 – 1935, then Angel Road Senior School which he left at the age of 14 in 1938. He joined the Royal Navy in 1942 and was a seaman gunner on minesweepers. He was demobbed in 1946 then joined the RAF. He subsequently worked in ambulance control before finally retiring in 1986.

Pat Leggett (nee Copeman, then Lack) Born in 1934, Pat moved to 89 Woodcock Road when she was 3 to live with her grandparents. Pat moved away in 1949.

Sylvia Matthews Sylvia was born in 1936 and lived at 9 Middleton Close.

Roy and Margaret Murton (nee Bygrave) Roy was the youngest of 5 children, whose family moved to Foster Road from Barn Road. Margaret was born at 116 Woodcock Road in 1936. They met whilst volunteering at Oak Grove Chapel as teenagers.

Mary Rose Owen (nee Turrell) Mary Rose was born at 24 Hunter Road in 1948. She lived there until 1966 when she and her mum moved to Winchester Tower and were among the first tenants to move in as it was being finished.

Vera Page (nee Colman) Vera was born in 1927 and is the older sister of Brian Colman. Vera moved to 19 Middleton Close when she was 5 as the family need more space. She lived there until she married in 1951.

Ken Roe Ken was born in 1937 at 2 Jewson Road. He lived there until he was 17 when he joined the RAF. He left the RAF in 1985 and worked in Saudi Arabia.

Pam Ryan (nee Hurn) Pam was born in 1937 in Woodcock Close and moved to 89 Harmer Road when she was 4 months old. Pam moved away in 1957 when she married. Her husband lived at 45 Bullard Road.

Grace and Brian Seager Grace and Brian were born in 1930 and 1933.

Janice Smith (nee Seagar) Janice was born in 1945 and lived on Harmer Road.

Ray Taylor Ray was born in 1947 and lived at 28 Woodcock Road. Ray's grandfather Ernie Taylor owned Rita's on Woodcock Road, the shop opened on the day Ray was born.

Leslie Thacker Les was born at 3 Cursons Opening in Philadelphia Lane in 1936 and moved to 18 Brightwell Road in 1944. The family moved due to bomb damage and the size of the family. Leslie moved away in 1958 when he married, but his family remained in the area until the early 1970's.

Alan Thompson Alan was born in 1938 and lived at 48 Hunter Road until he moved to get married in March 1962.

John and Margaret Tilney Born in 1937 and 1939, John and Margaret have lived in Hillmead since 1960's when they moved into a brand new house. Before this they lived in Bullard Road. Sadly, Margaret passed away in 2020, we send our best wishes to John.

John Ward John lived at 75 Woodcock Road from 1936 – 1946 where he moved after his parents split up.

Malcolm Watt Born in 1932 Malcolm lived at 27 Jewson Road until 1970.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CATTON GROVE ESTATE

On 15th July 1930 a report went to Norwich City Council from its Housing Committee. The report was entitled “*A programme for the erection of further houses*” and referred to slum clearance and reminded the Council of its obligations under new housing laws.

Councils were obliged “*to furnish a general statement of the methods which they propose to take during the 5 succeeding years for dealing with housing conditions in their area and the provision of further housing accommodation*”.

The Council were reminded that there were currently 2300 eligible people on the waiting list for housing. Norwich had already built good and sturdy Council Houses in Mile Cross and other areas. It was time to continue the development – and that included Catton Grove.

In 1932 The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Citizens of Norwich borrowed from the Ministry of Health a total of £83,803 “*for the provision of working class dwellings on the Catton Grove Estate and purposes connected therewith*”. These were to be publicly owned houses for the people.

The Council set about acquiring land including the compulsory purchase of land that had been let as allotments to the local asylum since 1905 on the provision that no work was done on a Sunday.

A new access road was also planned, which was to be known as Woodcock Road and would run from Catton Grove Road towards Aylsham Road. A total of £4182.00 was paid to three landowners for the land on the north side of the new road. This would provide land for a number of roads including Harmer Road, Hunter Road, Foster Road and Brightwell Road. Consent was also given in 1932 for the Council to ‘appropriate’ two acres of land to provide a public elementary school, which was to become Catton Grove Infants and Junior School.

Not everyone was happy. One landowner, Desmond Buxton of Catton Hall, having sold some of his land for the development of the estate, had regrets and wished it were possible that “*only a certain class of council house should be built*”.

Residents in Catton Grove Road were also concerned that the value of their property might diminish if the Council build “non-parlour houses” near them. A petition to the Council stated “*We consider that our property on which in some instances the rateable value has recently been increased by as much as 40 percent has been already seriously depreciated by the fact that the existing housing estate is so near to us..... if non-parlour houses are a necessity in this district they should be erected on the estate at a distance from and where they will not further depreciate private property*” a fine example of 1934 nimbyism!

Despite the objections by 1935 many of the houses had been built and families started to move on to the estate – and this is where our story begins...



Catton Grove estate as it was in 1938

HOUSING

Moving In

Before we moved to Catton Grove, I can remember living in a house in Oak Street with mice and rats, a shared kitchen, an outside toilet and snow coming inside.

My family moved to Foster Road from a house on Barn Road, I don't know whether this was just before I was born or just after. I was the youngest of 5 children.

We came from St Georges Street, from a little house one up one down with a shared toilet down the garden. There were no electric lights in St Georges Street. You could watch the mice run along the tops of the curtains and the curtains would drop because they had eaten through them!

My parents were the first tenants in a newly built house on Catton Grove Rd, we moved there from Millers Lane.



Brenda Hurn (nee Martins) as a young girl outside her new home in Catton Grove Road

We moved to Jewson Road when I was 5 years old, we arrived with our furniture on the back of the coal lorry. I was annoyed because I wanted to ride on the truck and had to walk to our new house.

My parents lived in Hunter Road. They moved there as a young married couple in December 1933 when the house was brand new. At that time Norwich Corporation were allowing engaged couples to have their names on the housing list so my parents married in April 1933 knowing that they would soon reach the top of the list and have a house of their own. Our house was a three bedroom end-house with living-room, kitchen and bathroom downstairs and two double bedrooms and one single upstairs.

I remember the smell of the new houses, they were so spacious with big gardens. There were no hedges separating the gardens yet as they were only just planted.

I think 28 Woodcock Road had just been newly built when my parents bought it. At the back was a waste dump and I have clear memories of rats coming up to the French doors of our back room.

We moved into a 4 bed house, there was one sink which was in the kitchen and we had a bathroom with a bath and an indoor toilet which was unusual in those days.

When setting up home you started with bare minimum furniture, usually donated from family or friends. Stuff was very flammable!

From our house I remember I could smell the pigs from Pointer's slaughterhouse at the end of our road.

There were children everywhere as the whole estate was made up of young families moving into the area. Every house on my street had children and families were much larger then, there were only three children in my family so were considered to be a small family, my next door neighbour had ten children!

Council Houses were like gold dust. There were 'cheap' council houses and better ones. You could apply to move 'upwards'. The rent collector used to come round every week on his bike to collect the rent, he wrote the amounts on your rent card.

Heating

Although our houses were newly built, they were not easy to heat.

These new houses had black lead ranges built in the front room that were all taken out in the 1950's and replaced with electric fires.

A triplex fireplace with an oven built in was the only heating, there was a damper which you pulled out to draw the flames up the chimney in order to heat the boiler. It took ages to heat enough water for a bath, but it was good for baking conkers!

There was a big open fire downstairs in the lounge, behind this there was a back boiler that heated water.

Houses had one coal fire going during the day in winter. Upstairs it was not heated and was so cold it caused the windows freeze up with ice in winter. In summer the fire was replaced with electric immersion heaters, these were expensive to run so often families could not afford to run them.

We had a coal fire in our bedroom, but we only lit this if you were really ill.

Setting the fire in the mornings – often it was an older child's job to get the fire going in the morning. Fires burned all day.

Coal was delivered once a week by the coalman on a horse and cart. There were a number of different coal merchants – I remember Lewis Buckenham and Mr Betts.

All the family gathered in the main room where the fire was. My dad worked on the railway so we burnt railway sleepers instead of coal. Tom the Woodman delivered wood which some families used instead of coal.

If you ran out in between deliveries you would be sent to the coal yard with an old pram to collect coal, there was a coal yard in Philadelphia Lane.

You could take a barrow to the gas works for coke – a by-product of producing gas from coal.

1946-47 saw a very severe winter, hardened snow was here from December to March, coal supplies ran out because the lorries could not get around to deliver, people took sacks to the coal yards to collect what little they could carry.

Later, some houses had electric fires installed in the bedrooms by the Council, most families did not use them and many did not work! When the new fires were put in the rent went up.

Toilets and Bathrooms

In most of the houses the toilets were outside, in the flats on Bullard Road the toilets were outside on the landing.

Our toilet was outside, we called it 'the privy', at night we used chamber pots which were emptied in the morning.

Most of the houses had outdoor toilets, some of the houses on Woodcock Road were built a bit later and had indoor toilets, these were known as the posh houses, I was lucky enough to live in one of these houses!

We had an indoor bathroom but this only had a bath in it, we had a sink in the kitchen and the toilet was outside.

A copper in the kitchen was used to heat water for baths, sometimes water was heated on the fire.

At home families shared bathwater starting with the little ones and up. Baths were taken in tubs by the fire, often near a door so there was no privacy.

If you didn't bathe at home there were public bathhouses for people so they could have individual baths. The bathhouses had open sections for men and curtained areas for women so they could have privacy.

Having a bath in the cold weather was awful and I dreaded it.

When I was small, I remember using a green enamel bath in front of the fire and being sorry when I was considered too big to use it anymore.

Friday night was bath and hair wash night, then we were given a spoonful of syrup of figs to make you go to the toilet. We put water into a tin bath in winter – even though we had a bathroom. Hot running water was only when you had a fire.

Electricity

The gas and electric were on a meter which took 1d / 1 penny.

There were no electric plugs in the house when first moved in. The Corporation put the electric in later on.

We had only one electric socket in the whole house which was in the kitchen, it was a 15amp round pin socket. We never used it - we didn't have any electrical appliances!

I remember we got a gramophone, my dad drilled a hole in the wall through to the kitchen to plug it in.

Kitchens

All of the houses had triplex ovens in the kitchens but no-one ever used them as they were too expensive to run, we kept the coal in ours!

There was a triplex oven in the kitchen – which was never used apart from Christmas Dinner.

The oven was used to air washing. We also used it for keeping baby chicks warm and cooking chestnuts.

My mother did the ironing by taking the bulb out of the light socket and plugging in her iron. Sometimes she used metal flat irons which were heated up in the grate, several were used at once, one for ironing and others were heating up. My mother ironed through brown paper to protect clothes from burning.

My first memories are of the kitchen where my mother spent most of her time. It had a pantry in one corner, the coal house was in another corner under the stairs. We had a copper for heating water in. The only sink in the house was under the window with a wooden draining-board with a shelf underneath. We had an electric kettle which was considered to be quite modern, my mother was also up to date in having an electric washing machine and Hoover vacuum cleaner.

Also in the kitchen was my mother's sewing machine. This was a heavy boot and shoe machine which she used to do 'outdoor work' for one of the shoe factories. She also used this machine to make clothes, the only new clothes I remember having were made on this old machine.

We didn't have an electric kettle, water was heated in a pan on the stove. There was a copper for the washing and in the summer we used kettles to heat water.

Living Rooms

The living-room was comfortable for its time. We had a good three piece suite, a dining table and chairs and a carpet on the floor. On Sunday afternoons in the winter we would sit round the fire listening to the radio, cooking chestnuts on the hearth and toast on a toasting fork.

The fireplace in the living room was small so everyone had to huddle close to the fire, I remember scorching my legs when I got too close.

There was a big stove in the living room, the stove was kept clean with blacking, it was the kids' job to black the stove weekly.

There were no carpets – even when I got married in 1955 you couldn't afford a carpet.

Bedrooms

More than one child per bed was common, you slept top to tail with your siblings, three or four children would share a double bed.

Bedrooms were always cold, there was no heating upstairs, there would be ice on the insides of windows in winter.

The bedrooms were very damp in the winter. I woke up one morning to find that the wallpaper had peeled off the wall next to my bed in the night and was laying in strips across me. I used to try and get dressed underneath the covers and then run down to the living-room knowing that Mum or Dad would already have the fire going.

Stone hot water bottles were put in beds, children went to sleep with coats on the bed for blankets.

Army blankets, eiderdowns and coats were used to keep warm in bed.

When people started to come home after the War, houses became even more overcrowded, especially bedrooms, children began sleeping in bunk beds in the old redundant air raid shelters.

Gardens

The house had a long back garden, two thirds of which was given over to fruit and vegetables.

In our garden there were two sheds, the one for bikes was the old Anderson shelter that had been dug up after the War and reused. The other one was a workshop with shoe repair tools and several lasts which Dad used to keep our shoes going as long as possible.

Homes were built with large gardens so you could feed the family from the produce you grew.

Steward And Paterson used to bring their horse and dray along Catton Grove Road, as soon as they had passed my father used to make my brother Sidney go out with a bucket and spade to collect the horse droppings to be used as manure for our garden. Sidney always protested but you didn't argue with my father!

People kept rabbits and chickens in their garden. Some people kept pigs and an occasional horse!

Many people grew flowers and vegetables, they used to have best kept garden competitions.

Gardens and houses were inspected once a year by the Corporation. You weren't allowed to have a car in your garden.



Alan Thompson as a young boy
with his neighbours in their garden
at 50 Hunter Road 1942

Extracts from Regulations for the Conduct of the Housing Estate 1933

The weekly rent of 9 shillings 4 pence is to be paid in advance either on a Monday or Tuesday or on the preceding Saturday.

The Corporation's duly authorised Collector calls for the rent weekly and gives receipts for it in the Rent Book.

The Corporation shall install, free of charge, during the tenancy, a complete electric light installation, an electric cooker with self-contained electric kettle and a wash boiler.

All electric current consumed must be paid through the Prepayment Meter, at a rate of 3/4d per unit.

An occupier who causes or permits his dwelling to be overcrowded is liable to prosecution, and if convicted, to a fine not exceeding five pounds.

The permitted number for the dwelling to which this Rent Book relates is 6 persons. In counting the number of persons each child under ten years of age counts as half a person and a child less than one year is not counted at all.

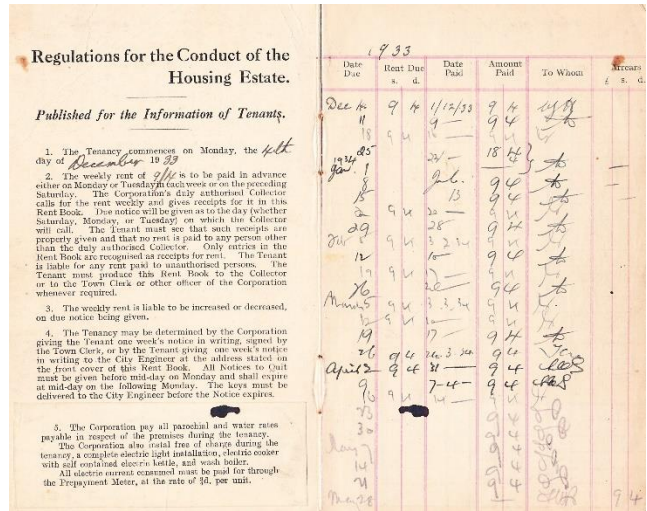
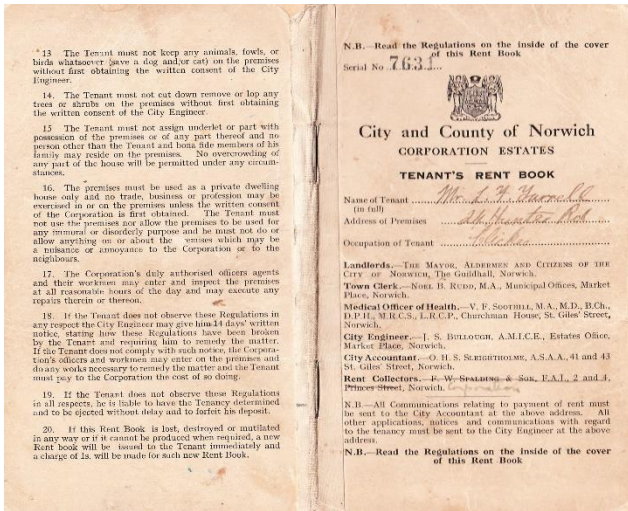
The Tenant must not put in the water closet, sink or drains any matter likely to choke them or the expense of clearing will be charged to the Tenant.

All ashes and dry refuse must be placed in the dust bin. All wet or perishable refuse must be burnt and not placed in the dust bin.

All chimneys in use must be swept at least once a year and the dwelling must be kept in a clean and wholesome condition.

The Tenant must not use the premises for any immoral or disorderly purpose and he must not do or allow anything on or about the premises which may be a nuisance or annoyance to the Corporation or to the neighbours.

If the tenant does not observe these regulations in all respects, he is liable to have the Tenancy determined and to be ejected without delay and to forfeit his deposit.



SCHOOL DAYS

Starting School

When I moved to the estate Catton Grove School was still being built, I was one of the first children to go to the school when it was finished.

I remember starting at the Infants School, my mother took me once and then after that you would go on your own or you walked with your friends.

My older sister took me to school on my first day. This was common as mothers had to stay at home and look after the younger children.

Catton Grove Nursery School

You didn't have to start school until 5 years old if your parents didn't want you to, but most parents were glad to see their children start school earlier and sent them to the Nursery School.

I started school aged three when I went to Catton Grove Nursery School. This was attached to the Infant School and was just at the top of Hunter Road. This was a purpose built nursery and I remember there being a big bath which was used sometimes. Not all children were toilet trained or very clean.

In the afternoons we were all supposed to have a sleep. We had little camp beds and our own blankets – they were green. Each one had a picture on it, so we knew which one was ours. Mine was a swan. I hated sleep time and couldn't wait to play afterwards. My best friend at the time always used to go to sleep and I would go and kick his bed to wake him up so that we could play.

Our teacher at Nursery School was called Mrs Mack she was lovely, very kind and caring to all the children.



Catton Grove Nursery School in the early 1950's. Mrs Mack is on the left.

Catton Grove Infants and Junior School

The Infants School was for children aged 5-7 years old. The Junior School was for 8-11 year olds. Classes were mixed boys and girls and there were often 40-45 per class.

Classes were grouped by ability, with two classes in each year group Class A and Class B.

Children were taught the three r's - reading, writing and arithmetic.

Children learned to read by phonics, most learnt to read at an early age.

I could hardly wait to learn to read. My father read a lot and I wanted to know what was so fascinating about books. At around this time I was allowed to join the library on Aylsham Road and would pester to be taken there.

Mental arithmetic was another priority, times tables were learnt by rote.

We also had scripture lessons, all children knew their bible stories.

I remember lots of reading, writing, maths and RE, also I remember craft lessons but can't recall any science lessons.

There were also PE classes and dancing – the boys played football and the girls played rounders on the playing field. The boys spied on the girls at gym.

We also did maypole dancing, practising for mayday events at school, one year we had a visit from the Lord Mayor who came to watch our maypole dancing.

We also had acting lessons and school plays. At the Infant School I was in the school play 'Little Miss Muffet', I was the spider, my mother made me a costume, she missed the play as I had told her the wrong time! In the Junior School we also had school plays including Cinderella and the Pied Piper.

I loved the Junior School buildings. Built around a quadrangle with a lawn and a fish pond in the middle, as I remember, it was meant to represent a Roman villa. There was a big playground and playing field. The only bit none of us girls liked were the outside toilets which had the old style cistern high up above your head. They backed onto the boys toilets and the boys would climb up, lean over and flush the toilet just as you went to sit down!





Catton Grove Infant School



Catton Grove Junior School



Catton Grove Junior School late 1940's, left to right starting from the top left...

Beryl Smith, Rosemary Thompson, Pamela Raynor, Margaret, Roberta Colk, Nadia, Jean Roc, Olive Norman, Margaret Kemp, Valerie Mann, Sheila Buxton, Joyce Woods, Jean Cooper, Shirley Kett, Janet Johnson, Thelma Lincoln and Jeanette Stone

Teachers

In the Infants School we used to bring flowers for the teacher every Monday.

I remember Mr King the headmaster of Catton Grove School. He lived on Catton Grove Road opposite Oak Grove Chapel.

Mr King passed the corner of Foster Road and Brightwell Road at 8.40 each morning, he wore a dark suit and doffed his cap to the ladies.

Mr Brown taught Class 4A, he later became headmaster, he used to clip you across the ear, throw chalk or put a ruler across your knuckles if you were naughty.

Mr Grimstick taught Class 4B and also taught music, he always wore a gown.

My teacher was Mr Roe and he had also taught my older brother. He was a very good teacher and despite having so many pupils to teach he managed to get about 20 of us to grammar school.

Miss 'May' Poulson taught class 1A, and she taught country dancing and also sword dancing, behind her back she was known as bottle-legs because of her very big calves!

The Nursery headmistress was Miss Aylett, other teachers I remember were Miss Bartlett, Miss Cole, Mr Thurston, he was the Junior School Headmaster, Miss Jealous, Mr Neal, Miss Rose, who taught class 2A, Miss Yallop, Mrs Mann and Mrs Lawn.

I remember Mr Fawkes the School Attendance Officer, he used to go around on an upright bike and chase the children who weren't in school, he scared us to death! He never caught me as my mother would never let me miss school. He lived on Suckling Avenue and had a tiny wife! He would come round if you didn't go to school even if you were sick.

School Milk

Free school milk was provided for all children, it came in 1/3 pint bottles with paper caps. The milk always had cream on top. In winter it would be frozen and in summer it would be warm by the time we got to drink it.

Special 'fortified' milk was provided for the sickly / poorly children to build them up.

I was Milk Monitor at school, I remember sitting in the Headmaster's office sorting out the milk each day and taking it around the classes.



Free School Milk

Free school milk was introduced as part of the 1944 Education Act. Children up to age 18 in all schools received 1/3 pint of milk every day. In 1968 free milk for children in Secondary Schools was withdrawn. In 1971 this was further reduced to benefit only children up to the age of 7 years.

School Dinners

Some children would have their meals at school, others would go home for lunch.

I remember school dinners – actually they were very nice but we were expected to eat everything, you couldn't leave anything on your plate.

If you didn't like something on your plate you would try and pass it on to someone else, children would swap food or try and hide it in their pockets.

Chocolate crunch and white sauce was a favourite, others liked the semolina with jam in the middle.

I didn't like finding gristle and windpipes in the stew and the smell of over-cooked cabbage.

Tapioca, or frogspawn as it was called, was an unpopular pudding.

Secondary school dinners tended to be better.

In the school holidays schools would continue to produce meals for means tested families.

The meals were cooked at Angel Rd School and delivered to Catton Grove.

Health

A Community Health Clinic was built on the school grounds and still stands today.

Children were given spoonfuls of cod liver oil and malt to keep them healthy.

There were regular visits from the school nurse and school dentist

The nit nurse used to visit, we were terrified of her, she used to shave the hair off children who had persistent nits.

The school dentist also came, rotten teeth were drilled at school with no pain relief.

Playground Games

In the playground we played with whipping tops, hopscotch, skipping, marbles, 'release'/'it', 5 stones / 5 jacks, marbles, conkers, climbing trees, creating your own treasure hunt. There was a veranda where you could sit and talk with friends and a water fountain, there was a jungle gym for climbing.

We swapped cigarette cards and did 'tattooing' otherwise known as French knitting.

The playground games were the same as street games except we also played British Bulldog. It was banned really, not because of the danger, but because it often damaged our clothes and our parents complained.

I remember the jungle gym that they had in the Playground of the Junior School, it was made of wood and was quite tall with a big tower at one end. One day we were playing 'it' and I fell from the top of the tower onto the playground below. I couldn't move and all of the children in the Playground crowded around me until a teacher arrived.

Discipline

Discipline in schools was strict, everyone was frightened of their teachers. Boys were caned from age 7, girls didn't have the cane but were hit with rulers or were slapped on the legs, other teachers would clip you on the ear.

The cane was used regularly by the Headmaster, corporal punishment was also delivered by your teachers. They all had different methods of discipline, one teacher had 3 or 4 canes and he made you take your pick, another used a rubber tube.

The cane was used regularly, I got it on the last day of school across the hand. Once I got it twice in one day.

I remember board rubbers being thrown in the classroom and children standing in the corner with a dunces cap on.

Some teachers were bit kinder and just kept children in at playtime if they misbehaved.

In assembly everyone had to sing hymns and you got thwacked on the head if you didn't sing. I sang very loud so that I was heard.

We had a healthy respect / fear for our teachers at school, I can't remember anyone playing up or answering back.

The 11+ Exam

The last year at Junior School was when you had to sit the 11+. You knew how important it was, getting a place at Grammar School had the potential to change your life. It was seen as the way to a better paid, non-manual job.

Everyone sat the 11+ whatever their ability in order to go the Grammar School.

I remember taking my 11+ exam, I was the only boy in my road to pass the exam.

I took the 11+ exam and somehow came out of it OK, I'm still not sure how I did it!

Passing your 11+ separated you from your friends who went on to local Secondary Schools.

I passed the first part of my 11+ exam but didn't pass the second part, this was one of the biggest disappointments in my life. The 11+ exam was a big thing and I think the nerves got to me on the day. I was in the top set at school and all of my friends passed so it was a big shock to me when I didn't make it. It really knocked my confidence.

The 11+ really mapped out your whole future and what you would get to do in life.

The 11+ Exam

The 11+ exam was designed to be a 'general test of a child's intelligence'. The exam included arithmetic, writing and problem solving. Children who did well would be offered a place at a Grammar School where they would continue to receive an all-round academic education. Children who were less able were offered a place at a Secondary School where the focus was upon learning practical skills and preparing for work.

Grammar School / Secondary Modern School

At the senior level girls and boys were taught in separate schools. Locally pupils went to:

CNS Boys School in Eaton - Boys Grammar School, now City of Norwich School

Alderman Jex School - Boys Secondary Modern, now closed

The Blyth School - Girls Grammar School, now Sewell Park Academy

Angel Road Secondary Modern - Girls Secondary Modern, now Angel Rd Junior School

If you went to a 'good school' after the 11+ some families were given grants towards cost of uniform, only a few places sold uniforms, boys always wore ties and girls wore hats. There were strict rules even outside the school grounds, you had to keep your uniform on.

My mother and father couldn't really afford for me to go to Grammar School. The uniforms were not cheap and there was a lot more of it with different uniforms for different seasons and sports kits and books as well. My parents really struggled with the costs. My gran pawned her wedding ring to help my parents out, they were really upset by this.

I passed my 11+ and went to the CNS school, cycling there each day from George Pope Road. I found that I didn't fit in at Grammar School as I was someone who was different – I came from what was seen as a rough estate, the area had a bad reputation even then, everyone had heard about the Klondike!

I went to Angel Road because the year I took the exams there were too many to go to the Blyth School, then after a year, they wanted me to take an exam to go to the Blyth School but I said no, I was settled.

I went to the CNS School and stayed there until I was 14 years old. I left as soon as I could!

At Secondary Modern we did different lessons. We did cooking and needlecraft, we also had a baby class where we would bathe baby dolls. I remember the baby class teacher, a lady who had never married and had no children, telling us that for the first year the baby will sleep. I remember thinking how boring it must be to have a baby!

As a child I was very poorly and had a lot of time in hospital. After Junior School I went to the special open-air school which is where the Clare School is now. It was a good school in that they cared for you, I had breakfast at school, hot chocolate at break times, dinner and tea to help build your strength.



Girls in their first year at
The Blyth School 1955

WAR-TIME MEMORIES

Preparing for War

When War was declared each household was issued with an Anderson Shelter. A hole about 3 feet deep was dug out in the middle of the garden and the shelter was inserted into the hole, the excavated earth was thrown on top of the shelter.

People had a choice of shelters; an Anderson Shelter which was made of corrugated metal panels which were put up in your garden or a Morrison shelter which was like a wire cage that was constructed under your kitchen table.

Anderson shelters were built in the back gardens by the homeowners using tin they were given by the council.

You were expected to install your own Anderson Shelter, neighbours worked together to dig the holes. After the shelter was installed people covered them over with soil and grew flowers to help brighten them up.

The Anderson Shelters didn't come with doors, you had to make you own door from any scrap wood you could find.

I remember the Anderson Shelter, the smell was really unpleasant and it was always full of earwigs.

I remember people putting their Anderson Shelters in, lots had to be dug out again as they weren't put in properly and kept filling with water.

Smaller families shared shelters between them, bigger families had one each. We shared our shelter with our neighbours as there too many of them to fit into one shelter.

We had little camp beds in the shelters with wooden slats on them, after the War we turned these beds into sledges.

We went to the pub on the corner of Rackham Road / Philadelphia Lane to collect our gas masks.

There was a big tank of water in front of flats in Bullard Road opposite the end of Jewson Road in case the water supply was hit.

There were no lights in the War, for the blackout we had big wooden shutters that you had to go out and latch on from the outside.

Before the War started they dug up the fields on Weston Road and built underground aid raid shelters for the School.

My dad, Mr Goodall, and his friend Mr Watt, went round the houses on Jewson Road and Palmer Road and collected, I think, 3d from every house and bought a stirrup pump and two pails for every two houses. One pail for sand and one for water for the stirrup pump in case of any fires.



In the back garden of 2 Jewson Road in 1939, a newly installed Anderson Shelter can be seen in the background. Heather Didwell (nee Goodall) is standing on the left, Ken Roe is sitting in front.

The Anderson Shelter

The Anderson Shelter was designed as a small air-raid shelter to accommodate up to 6 people. The shelter consisted of 6 galvanized corrugated steel panels, curved at the top with straight sides.

Families installed Anderson Shelters in their gardens, the shelter had to be buried 4ft deep in the soil and covered with a minimum of 15 inches of soil on the roof. You could choose what to put inside your shelter, many families installed bunk beds in the hope that they would be able to sleep in the shelter.

Over one and half million Anderson Shelters were distributed to families leading up to the outbreak of War in 1939. Anderson Shelters were free of charge to all householders who earned less than £5 per week. At the end of the War people were expected to remove their shelters and return them to their local Council but many people chose to pay a nominal fee to keep their shelters, digging them up and turning them into garden sheds.



Air Raids

When the siren would go off we would wrap up in blankets and rush down to the Anderson Shelter as fast as we could.

My father found being in the shelter during air raids very difficult, he was shell-shocked from the First World War and the sirens and sound of explosions would bring all the bad memories back.

When an air raid was imminent the siren would start to drone, it seemed to go every-day, mainly at night. The sirens would give you about 10 minutes to get out of bed, change and into the shelter. Inside was a wooden soap box used as a step and two old car seats, there were no lights so we sat in the dark with one torch. It was cold, dark and condensation would be dripping from the steel roof.

We used to sleep in our clothes so we would be ready for going to the shelter. We had to go out in the dark, no lights were allowed, one night my brother fell in the chicken run on the way down to the shelter.

My grandmother lived with us then and it would take about 15 minutes to get her out of bed, down the stairs and into the shelter.

Some families slept in their shelters every night so they didn't have to get the children up when the sirens went off.

I didn't have any problems sleeping in the shelter at nights, at that age you can sleep through anything.

I remember seeing planes going overhead, lit up by the tracer lights, on my way to the Anderson Shelter one night.

During the middle of an air raid I remember my father getting on his bike and cycling over to Northumberland Street to check on my older sister who lived over there.

My father worked full-time and in the evenings was an Air Raid Warden, you didn't volunteer you were expected to do it. Saffron Square was the location for the Air Raid Wardens hut.

We seemed to spend most of our nights in the shelter. Every time the sirens went off we would grab the suitcase with our insurance papers in it and head down the garden to the shelter, the dog always beat me to it!

My older brother was a Fire Service Messenger Boy, he would ride around the City on his bike during the air raids delivering messages to the crews who were fighting the fires.

One night during the Blitz our garden was covered in burning debris, when we came out of our Anderson shelter we found that some had landed on the rabbit hutch and all the rabbits had been roasted. We weren't upset as rabbits were for food and not pets in those days.

After the Blitz some families started to sleep outdoors as they said it felt safer, they would sleep in the fields beyond Mile Cross Lane where the Fiddlewood estate is now. Some went to sleep in barns in the countryside.

In the summer months we went to sleep in a big barn in the countryside to get away from the air raids. I remember standing in a field and seeing the planes flying over Norwich.

I remember my aunt and my grandmother came to live with us for a while as their house had been damaged by a bomb and they couldn't live there until it was repaired.

One night we didn't have time to get to the shelter before the bombs started coming down so we huddled under the stairs, a bomb landed nearby in Oak Grove Lane, there was a huge blast and I saw shrapnel coming through our front door and the front windows.

A bomb landed in the car park of the Woodcock Public House and left a big crater, I think they turned it into a sunken garden later on.

One night when we didn't have time to get to the shelter we sat under the dining table. A bomb dropped about 500 yards away, the whole house shook and soot fell from the chimney. The whole room was covered with soot and the air was black. No-one dared to move and we stayed there until the all-clear sounded.

My memories of the Blitz are still very vivid. It was a frightening time, so many people were killed.

I shall never forget seeing the devastation all along Angel Road and Millers Lane, the area was razed to the ground, the Pavilion in Waterloo Park was used as a temporary mortuary.

I remember going out one morning after a bomb strike on Elm Grove Lane, there was a huge crater where some houses had been, in one house the only bit left standing was the pantry area, I went 'salvaging' and in the rubble I found half-dozen eggs completely unscathed. I took them home for mum.

I lived in a block of flats at 92-98 George Pope Road which took a direct hit from an incendiary bomb during the War. The flats were completely burnt out with just the foundations left. I was 6 years old, my brother was still a baby. We were sheltering with my mother at the public surface shelter on Woodcock Road when we heard our house had been hit. We walked back to the house, arriving just as the roof collapsed. I remember seeing my toy yacht laying in the rubble with its sails on fire. The lady who lived opposite us took us into her house. Some of our furniture was rescued from the flames and was left outside on the pavement, in the morning we woke to find our furniture had been stolen. My mother took us to City Hall to register as homeless, whilst she was waiting to see someone her handbag was also stolen which left us with absolutely nothing. After losing our house we moved around a lot staying with relatives and friends, it was difficult as everyone was in the same position and found it difficult to take in a mother and two children. I went to 6 different schools during this time, it was really unsettling for families who lost their houses in the bombing. At the end of the War, the Council rebuilt the flats and we moved back eventually. Many years later, I was working as a Housing Officer for the City Council and had to visit the flat where I used to live, I told the lady who was living there then the history of the block, she had no idea it was destroyed in the War.

The Norwich Blitz 1942

During the first few years of World War 2 Norwich received relatively little damage from enemy action in comparison to other cities such as London, Coventry and Liverpool.

All of this changed in April 1942 when Norwich became one of a number of historic cities targeted in what became known as the Baedeker Raids. Over two nights on 27th-29th April nearly 300 high explosive bombs were dropped on Norwich destroying homes, factories, shops, pubs, schools and churches.

During these two air raids over 700 people were seriously injured and over 200 people lost their lives, the youngest being only 3 months old and the oldest aged 89 years.

Thousands of homes across the City were damaged and several hundred families were made homeless.



Photo courtesy of George Plunkett Photographs of Old Norwich

War-Time School Memories

Air Raid Shelters were built in the school grounds. There were practice drills where everyone rushed out of their classrooms. We were not allowed into them till we were all in a nice straight line.

I remember how cold it was in the school shelters.

I remember sitting in the shelters at school and the teachers let us sing 10 green bottles.

The shelters could get damp so children stood on benches to stop their feet getting wet.

I was at school during the War, many lessons were done in the air raid shelters. In between lessons we would sing and act in the shelters. I remember singing a duet with my friend Betty, we were nicknamed the Twiddle Sisters.

I remember a barrage balloon being installed in the Infants School playground, one day it broke free and ended up draped over the houses on Woodcock Road.

Part of Catton Grove School was damaged by a bomb strike and we went to Norman School for a while. While we were there we had lots of run-ins with the Mile Cross boys who didn't like us Catton Grove kids.

The School was bombed during the War, leaving great craters in the yard and there were also craters in the roads surrounding such as Bullard Road.

Although our sleep was often interrupted by hours of air raids I can't remember anyone being late for school.

In the afternoon we were sometimes allowed to have a sleep because of the air raids which kept us awake at night.

Rationing

We were all used to rationing, we grew up with it, we never knew any different.

My mother was very versatile, even though there was rationing I cannot remember ever being hungry.

Archers were the Butchers at the time and often the only thing he had was Corned Beef. Kids were sent sometimes to buy the meat as they were given extras.

Most families kept chickens to have extra egg supplies, there was also dried egg which came from America. If you had chickens you had to give up your egg rations.

We ate more offal – and rabbit and chickens that would be kept at home.

My Uncle kept pigs in his garden, you had to register your pigs, some pigs were not registered and needed to be kept hidden. Pork was sold on the black market, I remember cuts of pork being carried around the estate in a suitcase!

Pigs were fed from dustbins and left over food i.e. pig swill.

The Government allowed a family to keep two pigs so long as they gave half back to the Government. If they were lucky pig owners sold small amounts to their neighbours.

Sweets were rationed, my mother would buy me a bar of blended chocolate, she would break it into squares and I would be given one square each day when I arrived home from school.

At school we were told if we learned to swim we would get a Mars Bar, this was a great incentive as sweets were on ration!

During rationing oranges and bananas were not available, I had never tasted either. One day a friend who lived opposite knocked at the door, he said his older brother who was in the Army had come home from the Middle East and had brought some oranges with him. He invited me into his home, 6 oranges sat in the middle of the table with 4 boys looking excitedly at the fruit, 5 oranges were put away which left one on the table, his father took a knife and cut the orange into quarters and we had a piece each, this was my first taste of an orange.

Even though there was rationing there was plenty available on the black market if you knew the right people, we didn't go short!

Most of time my parents sold their coupons on to get money to buy food.

There was not always enough coupons for clothes so people had to make do and mend or go without.

Clothing coupons were issued based upon the size of your feet, the bigger your feet the more coupons you got, parents encouraged their children to wiggle their toes to make their feet appear bigger when being measured.

Sweets were one of the last things to come off ration.

The end of sweet rationing was announced by radio, I remember working in the City, I was sent out to buy sweets for everyone.

Food Rationing

Food rationing was introduced during World War 2 to ensure that everyone had access to basic food items when supply was limited.

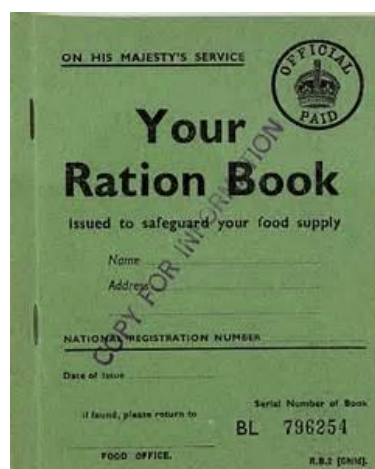
During periods of rationing people were required to register their family with a nominated shop, each family member was then issued a ration book which entitled them to purchase rationed goods from that shop.

Shopkeepers were supplied with enough food for their registered customers only.

Rationing began in January 1940 when supplies of bacon, butter and sugar were regulated. Rationing of other food items such as meat, tea, jam, biscuits, breakfast cereals, cheese, eggs, lard, milk, canned and dried fruit followed shortly afterwards.

Fresh vegetables and fruit were not rationed but supplies were limited, families were encouraged to grow their own produce and keep small livestock to help conserve stocks.

Food rationing continued beyond the War, sweets were one of the last items to come off ration in 1952.



US Service Men

The Americans based at St Faith's airport used to come to the Lido on Aylsham Road.

My mother did washing for the Americans to earn some extra money.

US Servicemen would visit and give sweets to children, I remember the American Servicemen coming to the school and handing out sweets.

My next door neighbour, a young lady of about 22 years of age, was courting an American Serviceman. One day he brought me a small cardboard box containing about 12 sticks of candy, it was the best present I ever had.

Many of the local girls married Americans.

The Americans at St Faiths were heroes. They held big parties at Christmas for kids and gave them sweets and chocolate.

We used to watch them come home in their damaged planes – there was one crash at the Boundary.

War-Time Reflections

I remember always feeling frightened but not really understanding why, we used to go to the cinema and watch Pathe News, that was how I learnt about what was going on.

I think a lot was censored, we weren't told how bad it really was as it would affect morale. My dad was a Fire Warden so he knew what was really happening.

I had friends who lost their parents in the War, I was 3½ when the War started so I didn't really know anything different, I knew nothing but being in a War. For me, the War was normal.

As children we didn't realise the seriousness of the War. We used to go to the airfield and watch the Liberator planes coming back from air raids. Many planes were damaged, one plane didn't quite make it back to the runway and crashed onto a house nearby, as boys we thought this was wonderful, we didn't appreciate the impact that the War was having.

Mothers were left to cope on their own as fathers were called up to fight, we didn't understand how stressful this was for them. We didn't have the fear that our parents had.

Everything revolved around the War, what you could eat, where you could go, where we lived, it was our whole lives. I was so young when War broke out, I didn't know any other life.

During the War nearly every grown-up was either away fighting or involved in war service closer to home. This meant that as children we had unlimited freedom, we really didn't have to answer to hardly anyone. Our mothers were so busy trying to scratch together a living they couldn't be too bothered with us kids.

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

VE Day Celebrations May 1945

Catton Grove Juniors had a parade at School. The Head of the School rang the school bell for the first time since 1939.

My dad, Mr Goodall, and Mr Watt arranged a party in St Luke's, there was a great big church hall behind, for the two streets, Jewson Road and Palmer Road. This was with the money left over from buying the stirrup pumps. My mother scrubbed her copper out that you boiled your linen in and she boiled all the prunes and we had prunes and custard for afters. My dad came from Heigham Street so he knew Peruzzi's the ice cream man. He came and gave all the children an ice cream after tea - you couldn't get ice cream during the War.

I remember a party for VE Day on Foster Road, there was an entertainer and also food on tables in Saffron Square.

We didn't have the money to celebrate VE Day, money was very tight and at the time most of the men were still away, spread all over the world.

The real heroes were the lads who had been Japanese Prisoners of War. Victor Carlton who lived at 40 Jewson Road was one of the first back – there was a big street party in Jewson Road to welcome him home. There were banners across the road.

There were street parties after the War when dads started returning home from their postings. My brother didn't know who my dad was when he returned, he had only been a baby when dad left and had no memories of him.

We listened to the radio then went to the market place. US and British soldiers were climbing the lampposts – there were some friendly fights. There was a conga line in the market place and by City Hall which was still sandbagged.

There were people up lampposts in the City, I was there 'til 2 o'clock in the morning, there were mock battles on the market place between the American troops and British troops – a real friendly battle took place. There was a man doing somersaults from bars on the lamp post.



Children celebrating VE Day
outside 27 Jewson Road
Tuesday 8th May 1945

Coronation Day June 1953

All of the children at school received a Coronation mug as a present.

On Coronation Day everyone had the day off work, schools were closed, it poured with rain all day.

Mr Colby in Hunter Road built his own TV for the Coronation.

For those who didn't watch it on TV the Coronation could be seen on newsreel at the Cinema a few days later.

What I remember about that time was the Coronation and the big party we had at school. We had cakes and all children got a mug and a tin of toffees both of which had a picture of the Queen; I have still got mine.

I remember we had the day off work and it rained all day. I sat at home and listened to the Coronation on the radio. A few days later we saw a newsreel film of the Coronation at the Cinema. I also remember being told about the death of the previous King George VI while I was at work, everyone was shocked.

I recall my Aunt Cherry walking me from Woodcock Road to the Capitol Cinema on Aylsham Road to see a film of King George VI funeral on the Pathe News, I had never seen such a large screen, I think that was the first time I had been to moving pictures, I was 5 years old.



Coronation Day Party at Catton Grove Infants School June 1953



Coronation Day Party Woodcock Road June 1953

Other Celebrations...

On Valentine's Day Jack Valentine would leave presents for children on their doorsteps.

At Easter Mr Pointer the Baker from Philadelphia Lane would come to the door singing "hot cross buns 1 or 2 a penny what a treat", there were also Easter eggs in all shapes and sizes and novelty boxes

Whitsun, this was when if you were lucky you would be taken to Mousehold for a picnic, there was no transport so we had to walk everywhere, only the well to do had a car.

The word holiday wasn't really in our vocabulary. Nobody ever went away on a holiday. We would have one day out a year, usually on the August Bank Holiday when you would go to Yarmouth. There would be queues at the train station that would sometimes stretch all the way up Thorpe Road, you would queue up and get on the first train you could and that was our 'holiday'.

I remember the anticipation and excitement of waking up on Christmas morning to find a stocking at the end of your bed with an orange or sweets inside. We never expected too much so we were delighted when we found presents under the tree. This was always a real Christmas tree and was never decorated until Christmas Eve when the children were in bed. Our parents tried to save a little throughout the year or paid into a Christmas Club to buy a few luxuries for us all.

SHOPS AND SHOPPING

There were two main rows of shops in Catton Grove in the early days – the shops at the top end of Woodcock Road and the end of Catton Grove Road both still exist. There were also shops on the old Philadelphia Lane, which are no longer there.

Woodcock Road

Some of the shops on Woodcock Road were - (from Kelly's Directories 1940s and 50s)

Albert Bishop	Boot Repairs
Fredrick Lynes	Cycle Engineer
Frank Browne	Fried Fish
Arthur Carver	Greengrocer
Bertie Cannell	Butcher
William Bridges	Hairdresser
Ernest Taylor	Draper - later became known as Rita's

The shops on Woodcock Road included Grants the Grocers - he was a tight bugger! There was also a barbers, a fruit shop and a fish and chip shop.

There were no shops in the area apart from on Woodcock Road, there was a barber, ironmongers, a fish shop, greengrocers, butchers and a tobacco shop where you could also get sweets.

Fred Money had a general shop on the corner of Woodcock Road – I remember a dog cocking its leg in the shop!

There was a National store, co-op, and two fish shops one selling wet fish. On Woodcock Road there was a flower shop, hairdressers, butcher grocer and a sweetshop. Rita's was a very popular shop.

My grandparents, Ernest 'Ernie' and Ivy Taylor, opened their shop at 49 Woodcock Road on June 14th 1947, the day I was born. It was named after their daughter, my Aunt Rita, I am not sure why. In the early days it was an average shop but over the years it was added to quite a lot. My nanny and grand-dad were always in the shop with my Aunt Rita helping. My father also worked for my grandfather for a while doing the weekly collection of money. My grandfather ran weekly accounts from his shop, people were on a very tight budget in those post-War days and my dad was like a 'tallyman' collecting payments each week for goods purchased on the 'never-never' or hire purchase. Grand-dad also took Mutual and Provident cheques which was the other way people were able to spread the cost and save for things. I learnt to ride my bike outside on the shop with the help of my Aunt Cherry. There was a barbers shop next door where I think I had my first haircut. My grand-dad would park his car on the forecourt of the shop and would give me sixpence to polish the chrome with Brasso. When I started my school days at Catton Grove School, the playing fields backed onto the back of my grand-dad's shop and at playtime I was able to wave to my grandparents and my aunts.



Ernest 'Ernie' Taylor outside his shop Rita's on Woodcock Road in 1964

Catton Grove Road

Some of the shops you could find on Catton Grove Road were –

Mrs Newman	Post Office and Confectioner
Chas Harris	Grocer
Howard Ganderton	Butcher
Catton Grove Fish Stores	Fried Fish
Mrs Sanders	Draper
DeCarle	Chemist

Newmans had a Post Office and a sweet shop. We used to have a saying which was...Nasty, Eating, Worms, Made, At, Newmans

Almost opposite our house on Catton Grove Rd was a row of shops. Further along was the Park House pub where the number 92 bus used to terminate.

Other Shopping Memories...

You shopped every day, you had no fridge or freezer.

The Co-op had a dividend scheme and everyone knew their numbers so they could shop and some can still remember the number.

My mother mainly used the Co-op for groceries so that she got her 'divi', I knew her number and had to make sure I got it right when sent there on errands.

My mother used to go to a grocer on Magdalen Street, you would leave your order with them and it would be delivered to the house later in the day.

People bought from local shops on tic because they could not afford to pay all at once.

One day I went into the sweet shop hoping to buy some sweets to find my mum hadn't paid the bill so I wasn't allowed any sweets.

FOOD AND COOKING

Grow Your Own / Self-Sufficiency

I lived on Bullard Road and we had a huge garden for growing vegetables. Back then lots of people kept chickens and rabbits.

Boys would go over to the fields where Fiddlewood is now and catch rabbits and pigeons which were put into stews.

Where the Community Centre is now used to be allotments where people could grow extra fruit and vegetables.

Veggies were grown in rows with a row of flowers in between to keep the bugs away from the veggies.

Chicks were bought and fed with potato peelings. Their necks were wrung and then slit to let the blood to drain out.

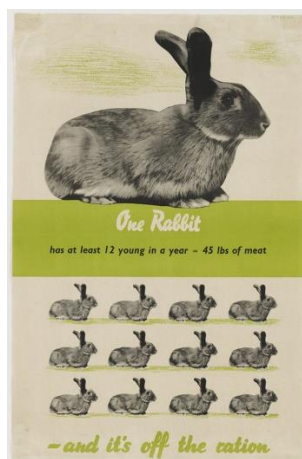
Everyone was expected to grow food and keep chickens for eggs.

Every Christmas my father would slaughter all of our chickens and sell them to our neighbours.

We had chickens and rabbits in our garden, there was also a bad tempered goat, I remember one day it 'butted' me over the washing line!

In our garden, we had three sorts of apples, two of pears, plums and greengages plus red, white and black currants and gooseberries. Mum also kept chickens at the far end. Mostly they were hens kept for the eggs but she also had a few cocks that she fattened up to sell at Christmas. Chicken was a luxury and we all looked forward to any occasion that was special enough for Mum to allow a bird to be killed. Mum got the chicks at one day old and they started life in the space at the bottom of the airing cupboard. Next they moved under the kitchen table, fenced in by the fire-guard until they were big enough or the weather was warm enough to go outside.

I would go down to the allotment with my dad with a simple wheelbarrow, fill it with flowers and veg and sell them on Silver Road.



Households were encouraged to grow their own food and keep livestock to help feed the family

Home Cooking

We cooked with cheap cuts of meat and used to make pies and stews, all with lots of vegetables, potatoes and dumplings to make up for only small amounts of meat. A little went a long way.

Skirts of meat that you had to skin first were used to make gravy to eat with a dumpling pudding and the next day it was gravy without pudding.

I remember going to Pointers the Bakers which was at the top of Philadelphia Lane on Sunday mornings you would queue up to buy dumplings, they were one penny each and you would take them home and cook them in your stew.

There was a baker in Philadelphia Lane where you could take your own cake mix for baking which was cheaper than using your oven.

Potatoes were boiled in a pan on the fire and an oven at the side of the fire cooked the bread or pies. Newer houses had electric kettles and a boiler in the kitchen.

We didn't have a fridge, milk was boiled and allowed to cool and this way it kept longer.

Sometimes it was so cold in the houses that the milk was all icy so we put the milk bottles on the heaters to warm up.

We made toast on an open fire using toasting forks.

Treats

The best meal was from the fish and chip shop where you had a choice of meals from 1 penny, 2 penny or a full shilling.

The fish and chip shop was run by Mr Brown, Justice of the Peace, he knew everyone and kept everyone going by selling cheap fish and chips. You could get a paper of fish crackling for a penny that were the cut off bits of the fish.

I remember going to the chip shop on Philadelphia Lane for 2 penny worth of chips on the way home from school, you had to take your own newspaper!

If you were lucky your mum would give you a penny to buy a paper of chips.

Chicken was a treat that you only had at Christmas time. You'd never hear of anyone having turkey, it was always chicken.

On Friday nights we would have chitterlings from the butchers. These were actually fried pigs intestines!

Roast chestnuts, oranges and nuts were a Christmas treat.

Jugs of beer could be bought from the pub to drink at home. Dads sent their children out to fetch the beer with no worry about children drinking under age.

I remember Peruzzi's the ice cream people who had a factory on Heigham Street, my aunt used to take me to their ice cream parlour for a special treat.

DOMESTIC LIFE

Home Deliveries / Street Traders

There were lots of different things that were delivered to your door, many traders came to you rather than you going to them.

Mr Dean, the fruit and veg man, came round with a horse and cart.

The green grocer had a van, others had horses and carts – how they used to shout!

Mr Drake was the milkman who came round with a horse and cart. He had churns of milk on the back of his cart and he would ladle milk into the milk jugs that you bought from home.

There was a milkman who delivered on a motorbike and sidecar and one day it caught fire, one of the neighbours threw some sand over it and I remember him going mad as all the sand got into the chain.

There were a number of bakers who delivered door to door, there was also a butcher who would come round with meat in a basket.

On Sundays there was a man who sold winkles, cockles, mussels and shrimps from a barrow, he lived on Jewson Road, he had his gate widened so he could get his barrow into his garden.

Ice Cream was bought from a man on a tricycle.

The 'Corona' lorry came on a Saturday and this was a treat as my brother and I were allowed to choose one flavour each.

The rag and bone man bought rags for a few pence, which helped with money, he would also give you money for old jam jars.

Coal was delivered from the Betts the Coal Merchant in Philadelphia Lane.

There were several chimney sweeps in the area. There was a sweep who lived on the corner of Bullard Road. When the sweep called we used to all go outside and watch for the sweeps brush coming out of the top of your chimney!

The window cleaner rode round on a bike as did the man who, a couple of times a year, came to sharpen knives and shears.

There was a man who used to sharpen your knives. He has a bicycle that he had adapted, he would put the bike up on its stand and he had a grinding wheel that was operated by pedalling the bike.

My dad was a dustbin man. You had old fashioned steel dustbins, the dustbin men would call at each house and lift the bins up onto their shoulders and empty the contents into a truck. In those days there was much less waste, lots of things were recycled and you didn't have the types of packaging you have now.

I remember a street singer, he was a disabled serviceman who used to go up and down the roads singing, my mother used to give me sixpence to take out to him.

Clothing

Boys always wore shorts all year round until they went to senior school when they started to wear long trousers. Sometimes they were made from their father's trousers, most boys would have a patch or two on their shorts!

My swimming trunks were knitted from dad's old pullover.

I had to wear an old coat belonging to my brother, Mum reversed the buttons to make it look more like a girl's coat.

Women knitted jumpers, cardigans, scarves and hats etc. I had a knitted wool coat with a lining which was lovely and warm.

Women used wooden 'mushrooms' under holes in clothes to help them darn and keep the shape of the garment.

There was cotton clothing but no new cotton during the War so everything was second hand and had to be darned.

Sheets were cut down the middle, turned and sewn together again until finally they became rags.

In 1930's you would usually only have one pair of shoes which you wore all of the time, in very poor families shoes would be shared between children, with children going to school only on the days they had shoes.

I had a white shirt made from my dad's old Navy shirt.

Home Entertainment

There was no TV, but the radio was popular and families would go to the cinema together.

The first TV's were very small, always rented not bought, often only one family on the street would have a TV, local kids would be invited in to watch.

My sister had a TV that looked like it had a goldfish bowl as a front.

Hardly anyone had a TV, my mum was the first to have a TV in Jewson Road, it was a tiny screen, everyone in the street sat watching our TV.



Pubs

The Parkhouse Pub on Catton Grove Road was very popular, it was packed out every day of the week, it was a lovely building as well.

On Saturday and Sunday nights at the Parkhouse there would be a sing-along with a compere standing on a small stage in the corner. It was so busy you had to arrive early to get a seat, if you were late it was standing room only.

There was the Woodcock Pub on Woodcock Road, on the corner of Weston Road and further up there was the Mile Cross Tavern which is where White House Court is now.

On Philadelphia Lane there were four pubs, there was the Loaf, which is now called The Forge on the corner of Rackham Road, then there was the Crawshay Arms, further up there was the White Cottage and at the end there was the Prospect which is where the doctors' surgery is now.

There were a number of local breweries – Watneys, Steward and Patteson, Bullards and Morgans.

Pubs were like social clubs with football teams, darts and card games like phat and cribbage, pigeon fancying and fishing.

Many men would go to the pub several times a week, but often made one drink last all night.

If you couldn't afford a babysitter you took the children with you to the pub to sit outside with crisps.

Public Houses in Catton Grove – a brief history...

Mile Cross Inn / Tavern – This pub stood on the corner of Aylsham Road and Woodcock Road from 1867. The pub's final licensee Roy Pleasants was landlord of the pub from 1942 until its closure in 1969. After it closed the pub was demolished and the site was used for housing, this is where White House Court now stands.

The Woodcock – The Woodcock at 45 Woodcock Road opened in 1935. The pub was damaged during the Norwich Blitz in 1942. In 1971 the pub was granted an extension to its license to allow Nap, Solo and Phat to be played on the premises. In 1998 the pub was renamed The Highwayman, closing its doors for the last time in 2002. The pub was demolished in 2003 and the site was redeveloped for housing, Harry Watson Court now stands on the site.



The Park House – The Park House pub on Catton Grove Road opened in 1933 to serve the new residents who were moving into the area. The pub served the local community for over 60 years until it closed in 1996. Three years later it re-opened under a new name The Crown and Magpie and traded for a further 6 years until it closed in 2005.

The Loaf – The Loaf on the corner of Rackham Road / Philadelphia Lane was built in 1895 and began life as a bakers shop until it was converted into a pub in 1945. Before it became a pub the building had been used as an Aid Raid Precautions Centre during WW2. In 1982, The Loaf was re-named The Forge and has only just recently closed its doors for the last time.



The Crawshay Arms – The Crawshay Arms opened in 1922. Along with several other pubs in the area it suffered bomb damage during the Norwich Blitz in 1942. The pub closed in 2004 and was demolished shortly after. Crawshay Court a modern development of flats now stands on the site.

The White Cottage – The White Cottage at the other end of Philadelphia Lane, later to become known as Penn Grove, opened in 1842. In 1879 Landlady Elizabeth Atkinson was fined 10 Shillings for allowing alcohol to be consumed out of hours. The pub remained on site for 165 years until it closed in 2007 following retirement of the Licensee. The pub was demolished later the same year. After a number of years as a derelict site, a block of flats now stand where the pub used to be.

Prospect House – Prospect House, on the corner of Philadelphia Lane, later to become Penn Grove, and Aylsham Road opened in 1842, the same year as its near neighbour the White Cottage. Along with the Woodcock and the Crawshay Arms, Prospect House was damaged by enemy action during the Norwich Blitz in 1942. The pub closed in 1992 and was later demolished. Prospect Medical Centre now stands on the site with the original pub sign forming part of the redevelopment.

Information and Photographs courtesy of www.norfolkpubs.co.uk

Health

The doctor would come to the house but you had to pay, this was before the NHS in 1948.

People got TB, diphtheria, measles, scarlet fever – we would be given cod liver oil and Virol.

My mother helped the local Midwife Nurse Lillywhite, who lived on Bullard Road. Everyone had their babies at home in those days and my mother used to go along and assist with the births.

When my mum was pregnant the Midwife came regularly, if you wanted to see the Doctor you had to pay. After giving birth you were meant to lay in bed for 10 days.

I had both of my children at home – that was usual.

The first place you went after giving birth was to church to thank God for having a child and coming through it.

At school we had cod liver oil from the clinic at playtime.

I remember the nit nurse – I never had nits because my father used to sit me on his lap and brush my hair every night before I went to bed.

My dad was very ill – he used to say he wasn't in pain though he was. The doctor said he had to go on a fish diet – some people came round to see about him getting some extra money while he was ill. He was told he could get 6d a week, but Dad said he'd rather go nicking, he wasn't going to degrade himself for 6d.

YOUR NEW NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

On 5th July the new National Health Service starts

Anyone can use it—men, women and children. There are no age limits, and no fees to pay. You can use any part of it, or all of it, as you wish. Your right to use the National Health Service does not depend upon any weekly payments (the National Insurance contributions are mainly for cash benefits such as pensions, unemployment and sick pay).

YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

HOSPITAL & SPECIALIST SERVICES

YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR

DENTAL SERVICES

MATERNITY SERVICES

MEDICINES, DRUGS AND APPLIANCES

EYE SERVICE

CHOOSE YOUR DOCTOR NOW

The first thing is to link up with a doctor. When you have done this, your doctor has been set up in your area (you can get its address from the Post Office).

The National Health Service

The National Health Service (NHS) was launched on 5th July 1948 by Health Minister, Aneurin Bevin. The founding of the NHS was based upon three core principles: it should meet the needs of everyone, it should be free at the point of delivery and access to services should be based upon medical need rather than the ability to pay.

Dying

People died younger, I remember my Mum saying about someone who had just died “he did well, he had two good years after retirement”.

Everyone was afraid of dying and not being able to cover the costs of your funeral. Everyone, including children, would be covered by what was known as a “penny policies” that would cover the basic costs of burial. It was very important that you had enough resources to be able to bury yourself and not end up in a pauper’s grave.

Funerals were a very dignified community event. When somebody died in your street a tin would go around to every house and you would help towards the costs of flowers. On the day of the funeral all of the street would keep their curtains closed and people would stand outside their houses as a mark of respect. The deceased would be kept in the home until the day of the funeral and as children we would be invited in to view the body.

Crime

A boy from Woodcock Road strangled a girl from Eade Road about 1948. He killed her in a cow shed, there was a petition to stop him being hung. My dad told them to clear off. He was hanged.

There was a murderer, he lived on Woodcock Road, he murdered a girl he was going with.

There was a murder by an oak tree that stood where Oak Lane meets Catton Grove Road, the inquest was at the Maids Head.

His family started an unsuccessful petition to reprieve him, my mother signed it, 'what could I do' she said, 'it was a plea from another mother'.

A Local Murder

February 1951 saw a tragedy in the area when a man rang the Police to say he had killed someone on "Piggy's Field" a popular play area, just behind what is now Catton Park. Dennis Moore, who lived with his family in Woodcock Road had killed his pregnant fiancée Eileen Cullen of Buxton Road. A body was found in an old brick building.

No motive has ever been found as the couple had only that day been planning both their forthcoming wedding and the birth of their baby. Attempts were made to prove he was mentally unwell and had a history of violence.

However, Dennis Moore was convicted and sentenced on 6th June after the jury was out for only 50 minutes. He was hanged on 19th July along with another man – he was the last person to be hanged in Norwich. The death penalty was abolished in 1965.

Hard Times

There were some very large families who lived on the estate and for these families money was very tight.

Large families were common, there were the Plumbs who had 16 living in one house and the Jermys on George Pope Road who had 14 in a house.

Life was very hard for our parents, many worked in the shoe factories and quite often only had 2 or 3 days work a week. There would be months in the year when there would be less work. If you had the chance of overtime you had to save this money for times in the year when you were earning less.

Money was always tight, there were Christmas Savings Clubs, paid into weekly, also Provident Cheques if you needed to borrow money.

If I was hungry I would pinch dog biscuits.

Sometimes there was only one pair of shoes between two children so they would go to school on alternate days.

I would say that everyone who lived in the area were poor people. There were a few, like my neighbour who was a foreman with the Corporation, who were a bit better off but generally we were all poor. We were poor because my father had been injured in the First World War Battle of the Somme, he couldn't work because of his injuries and received a very small War pension. To help bring money into the house my mother used to take in washing.

As a boy, sometimes I had to wear my older sister's shoes if we didn't have enough money for a pair of shoes for me.

There was very little in terms of financial help for families in those days, there were no benefits to rely on. If you were really struggling you could apply for some 'public assistance'. Before you could get any public assistance money an assessor would come round to your house to inspect what you had, if they felt you had something that would be considered a 'luxury' such as a piano this would have to be sold before you were given any money. There were also the charities for the poor who might give you a few pennies and there was the man from the Provident who would lend money to be paid back on a weekly basis.

My father died aged 47, leaving my mother with six children under 14 years old, the youngest being only 6 months old. My mother looked after my father until he died, the stress of this made her too ill to go to his funeral. My brother died a year later aged 12. It was a very hard time. My mother received a pension of ten shillings a week and 3 shillings a month for each of us until we were old enough to go out to work. She received this from my father's life insurance policy. To receive this money, a man called Mr Rounce came round the house every month to check we were all still living at home. Every month we had to be rounded up so he could check up on us, I will never forget this. My mother did a great job, making sure that we all grew up respectably, despite our difficulties.

Community Spirit

Everyone was the same, we were all poor so there was a sense of community.

Everyone was more neighbourly back then, we were always lending to our neighbours and if you ran short of something you were told to pop next door to borrow from them.

There was a good sense of community in those days, no-one locked their front doors, your neighbours would be in and out of your house all day long. Everyone knew each other and everyone helped each other. On the day we moved in our neighbour arrived with a teapot and cups so we could have a cup of tea while we put up the curtains!

We were all hard up so we all helped each other through the difficult times. On the whole, women didn't work so they were always about to lend a hand or help take care of the sick.

Everyone kept their houses neat and tidy, women would scrub their steps and sweep the passageways and path outside your house.

The Woodcock was our nearest pub and hence our local. I remember my grandparents would always go there on a Friday night for a pint or two of mild and a glass of sherry. It was what everyone did at the end of a hard week. Sometimes we would tag along and be given a glass of orange squash. We didn't go inside, we would play in the sunken garden with all of the other kids. It was great when we were included in activities such as when the pub ran an annual coach trip to the seaside. I remember the day all of the pub regulars and their families went to Skegness, which in those days was very exotic! Later, when we became teenagers, and for many years after, Friday night was the night we would catch up with our parents and grandparents at the Woodcock. In later years, it was modernised with inside loos and a carpet in the lounge. After the carpet was laid, the beer was a penny a pint more in the lounge than in the bar!



Regulars from the Woodcock Pub gather for their annual Bowls Club outing



Children gathered in the front garden Woodcock Road in the early 1950's

PLAY AND FRIENDS

The Cinema

Saturday morning cinema was 6d to go in, not everyone could afford to go in so one child would pay to go in and then open the fire doors to let others in.

The Capitol Cinema was next to the Lido on Aylsham Road.

Films had only two classifications U and A, to see an A film you needed an adult to accompany you, children would ask strangers to take them in, U films were for under 16's

The Saturday cinema was our excitement of the week. The Capitol on Aylsham Road had the children's show on Saturday's. It cost 6d and if you were lucky your mum gave you a couple of extra pennies for sweets! The main picture seemed to be a Western every week and there was also the serial which always ended on a 'cliff hanger' to get you back next week. We always played cowboys on the way home, 'galloping' along Woodcock Road, hiding behind walls and 'shooting' each other.

I remember the first film I went to see. It was The Dambusters and I sat on a wooden bench.

I can remember going to a mystery film, and I knew the answer from somebody else – I shared it with the audience at the beginning of the film!

The Capitol Cinema

The Capitol Cinema on Aylsham Road opened on 26th December 1932 to serve the growing estates of Mile Cross and Catton Grove.

On the first night the first film to be shown was Tarzan the Ape Man starring Johnny Weismuller and Maureen O'Sullivan.

The cinema was a popular venue with the programme changing several times per week. Ticket prices were from 6d for Saturday morning films right up to 1shilling 7d for the best seats in the house for evening films.

The seating was all on one level, there were plans for balcony seating to be installed but this never happened. The Capitol closed its doors for the final time in 1960 when the building was remodelled to become part of the Lido Dancehall next door.



The Capitol Cinema by night
November 1934

Photo courtesy of George Plunkett
Photographs of Old Norwich

Outdoor Play

Boys would go canoeing on the river Wensum in holidays, Mr Seaman's boatyard hired boats out on the river.

One summer, I learnt to swim in the river at Wensum Park, we had to be careful as there was an unexploded bomb in the river somewhere!

In winter time when it snowed the fields around Oak Lane – Piggies Field would be filled with children with all sorts of makeshift sledges made from tyres and trays, sliding down the hills to the fence at the bottom.

In the summer, after the corn was cut the fields were used for football, anyone could come and play, twenty a side was not unusual. At the far end of the field was a pond where we would collect frogs spawn and tadpoles.

Across the road from our houses on Catton Grove Road were woods and fields, aptly named 1st, 2nd and 3rd woods where we played as children, we spent many happy times playing hide and seek, making dens and rolling down the grassy slopes. The 1st woods backed onto Stewards greenhouses and orchards and many of us went scrumping praying we would not get caught.

The area that is now Catton Park in those days was a private area, with a game-keeper employed to chase you out with a stick if he caught you in there looking for chestnuts.

It was like we were country children playing in woods and fields. We played rounders on The Green – the corner of Mile Cross Lane and Catton Grove Road – there were so few cars that if we were playing the road someone would just call "car" when they saw one coming.

We went down the woods (Fiddlewood) an old fellow slept in there for years. It was our big play area, we also went to Mousehold and to Aylsham Road where there was a tallow factory making candles. It used to smell of all the old fats.

There was a finger post in the middle of the road where men used to sit and gamble. We would go there afterwards looking for money.

There was the Lido swimming pool on Aylsham Road – my mum won medals there.

Search lights and aeroplanes was a game we played during the War.

We would take some sandwiches and a bottle of tea and go over to Mousehold Heath and we would be there all day or we would stay a bit closer to home and play on the fields that are where the Fiddlewood estate is now. Back then it was all corn fields and we used to play with the bales of hay making dens.

We would go out all day and play and we came home when we were hungry. We would always be home in time for the evening meal, because of the rationing, nobody ever missed their meals as there was nothing else to eat in between.

Before Saffron Square was built we used the ground as a cycle speedway track. We used to ride our bikes on there and challenge other kids to races, if you didn't have a bike you would borrow one. We used to adopt the names of real speedway racers such as Bert Spencer and Sid Littlewood.

We all had mouth organs, we all went up the city playing them it was a great thing then, you could get one for about five shillings.

You could make a blow gun out of elderberry, you got the pith out of a branch with a hot poker and put acorns in.

We used to spend all day out playing. During the War there was double summertime which meant that it was still light at 10.00pm.

Older boys used to play cards in a pit in what is now Weston Road for 1d's and halfpennies out of the way of the Police. Smaller kids got clay to make marbles.

There were some tragedies, on one occasion a boy dug himself a cave in the sand which with gorse, made up the area in Weston Road. Sadly, when he entered the cave it collapsed and he was suffocated.

Street Games

You hardly ever saw any cars back then so we were safe playing in the road.

There would be a number of games going on in each street, at one end there would be cricket, further up there would be football. Sometimes a shout would travel up the street 'look out there's a car' because you wouldn't normally see a car unless it was someone such as the Doctor visiting. We would all go up onto the pavement and wait for the car to go by and then our games would continue.

As children in our row of houses we grew up and played together, rounders on the green, marbles, five stones, skipping and hopscotch.

We used to chalk on the pavements, we also had skipping ropes, the boys used to tie ropes to the lamp-posts and swing around. I had a hoop and stick.

I remember playing with whips and tops in the middle of the road. We didn't play in our gardens as they were used for growing food and keeping livestock such as chickens and rabbits.

During the 1940's nobody had a car so we played football on the road using the drains as goal posts, we played rounders and cricket using the trees as stumps.

The road was our playground and all sorts of games could be played if you had either a piece of chalk, a ball or some rope to tie around a lamp post. The only vehicles we saw were the ones that came round to clear the drains.

We mostly played out in the street, the boys played football and cricket, if anyone had a ball. The girls always had skipping games using an old piece of washing line. If there weren't many playing one end was tied to our front fence. Hopscotch was another favourite.

We used to play football. The game would be started by 'the boss' this was the boy who had a football. The game would start small maybe only two or three a side and gradually it build up until you had maybe 15 a side, we played across one of the fields. Nothing was organised, you just turned up and joined in and we would play for hours until it was dark.

There were gangs on the estate – the Philly Boys, Catton Boys and the Klondike Boys. The Klondike was George Pope Road, Palmer Road and Bullard Road. They called it the Klondike because there were big piles of sand that looked like gold.

Children often had adult bikes, blocks were put on the pedals to help if your legs were too short. Children would share their bikes with friends, everyone would want to have a go on your bike if you had one.

We flew kites in the street, the street lights were always littered with broken kites.

Some games were played in the back garden, shops, schools and shows (pretending to be the singers we heard on the radio) these needed privacy away from the boys.

We used to play knock down ginger – knocking on doors and running away!

There was a gambling den on Weston Road in the clay pit. We gave someone a shilling to have a lookout it was a big thing – you weren't allowed to gamble, coppers used to ride up on a bike looking for you "gotcha" they said!

We all used to bike down the alley from George Pope Road to Philadelphia Lane. We weren't supposed to cycle in the alleyway and the local Policeman would hide at the bottom of the alley and fine you 5 pennies if he caught you. He never caught me as you could see top of his helmet poking over the fence!



Sunday School

We used to go to Sunday School at Oak Grove Chapel, 300 children used to go each week, it was packed, the older children used to look after the younger ones. On Monday night there was a youth club, the Ministry of Food used to give us coupons to spend in the Chapel canteen.

In 1935 Oak Grove Chapel was built. Many children when they were old enough attended Sunday school here, a hut was erected at the back of the chapel to take the overflow of children.

Oak Grove Chapel had a Sunday School on Sunday afternoons. This group contributed a lot to the community and their outings were something to look forward to. There were activities for children every day of the week. There was a girls' night, a boys' night and a mixed youth group for over 14's. I volunteered at the Canteen serving food to the younger children and went to the youth club.



Miss Murton's Sunday School Group in the early 1950's.

June Gidney (nee Platten) is in the front row, third from the left.

Oak Grove Chapel

Although care had gone into providing housing and schooling in the area, there was little else apart from the pub where people could meet and nothing in the way of community facilities for families in the early days. Wensum Chapel, then based in Cowgate, used this opportunity to extend their mission and so Oak Grove Hall – later to be called Oak Grove Chapel - was born. A success from the start, some 300 children arrived for the first meeting of the Oak Grove Sunday School.



Converted from an old barn, Oak Grove Hall provided not only a Sunday School, but prayer meetings, acts of worship and perhaps importantly on an estate built for families, a place for mid-week women's meetings. In 1967 the Hall was rebuilt and remains a well-used community facility today.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WATERLOO PARK

Whilst the development of the Catton Grove estate started in the 1930's, the development of Waterloo Park dates back much earlier to the last years of the reign of Queen Victoria.

In 1897, the Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Association leased a section of land in the north of the City from the Great Hospital Trust. This land was to become Waterloo Park. It was laid out as a park and was officially opened in 1904. It was originally named Catton Recreation Ground.

In the early 1920's, the men who had survived both the miseries of the First World War and the ravages of the Spanish Flu epidemic that swept across the World just after peace had been declared, found themselves with a new problem. Mass unemployment saw many families plunge into extreme hardship. The solution to this problem was to develop schemes to employ large bodies of men in construction tasks that would benefit the community as a whole.

The Government of the time recognised the link between public health and recreation and encouraged local Councils across the County to invest in public parks where there would be areas for sporting activity, alongside areas for those who wanted to relax and enjoy a healthy, outdoor environment. These new parks would be constructed by men who were claiming unemployment benefits, thus giving them an opportunity to be gainfully employed and earn money for their families.

Across the 1920's and 1930's a number of public parks were developed by the Norwich Corporation under the leadership of Parks Superintendent Captain Arnold Sandys-Winsch.

Captain Arnold Edward Sandys-Winsch 1888 – 1964

Arnold Sandys-Winsch was born in Cheshire in 1888. At the age 17, he gained a scholarship to the Cheshire Horticultural College where he received a gold medal for his research work in botany and entomology. After leaving college, he started working for renowned landscape architect, Thomas Mawson.

Arnold's career was put on hold with the outbreak of World War One in 1914 where he served in the armed forces until 1919. After leaving the armed forces, Captain Sandys-Winsch, as he was now known, started working for the Norwich Corporation as Superintendent of the City's Parks and Gardens. Captain Sandys-Winsch had a reputation of being firm but fair, using the skills he learnt in the Army to get the most from his workforce. In return for hard work and loyalty, he passionately fought for decent pay and fair working conditions for everyone who worked under him.



Captain Sandys-Winsch retired in 1953. Over the 33 years that he worked for the Norwich Corporation he had overseen the development of a number of prominent public parks including Eaton Park, Waterloo Park, Wensum Park, Heigham Park, Sloughbottom Park and Mile Cross Gardens. He was also responsible for planting over 20,000 street-trees across the City.

In the mid-1920's a proposal was put forward to redevelop Catton Recreation Ground and in 1929 a design was drawn up by the Parks Superintendent Captain Sandys-Winsch. Work to redevelop the site began in 1931 and two years later, in 1933, the park was formally re-opened under the new name of Waterloo Park. As with Eaton Park, to the south of Norwich, Waterloo Park had a number of areas for active recreation including grass tennis courts, football pitches, bowling greens and a children's playground. The park also had a number of areas set aside as formal gardens, including one of the longest herbaceous borders in any public park in the Country. The park also had a grand pavilion, a bandstand, pergola walks and colonnades. The construction of the park cost £37,209 and provided work for 63 men for a total of 117 weeks.



The original plan for Waterloo Park, designed by Captain Arnold Sandys-Winsch in 1929

Waterloo Park was officially opened on Saturday 25th April 1933 by the Lord Mayor of Norwich, Mr N.H. Holmes. It was reported that hundreds of children were waiting at the gates of the park, eager to enjoy the delights of the new playground. There was a band playing in the bandstand and boys from the City of Norwich School played cricket. The Priory Gymnastic Squad gave a demonstration of their acrobatic skills and there was drill and dancing for the children. The children also enjoyed the new paddling pool while the adults played tennis on the grass courts.

In the pavilion there was a lovely tea-room on the ground floor, with a second tea-room on the first floor, along with a sprung oak floor for dancing.

The park also had three well used bowling greens with pavilions for shelter and storage. The greens to the right of the main entrance were used nightly in the summer. Many local companies such as StartRite had their own teams who would play friendly games. The greens to the left of the main entrance were reserved for County matches.

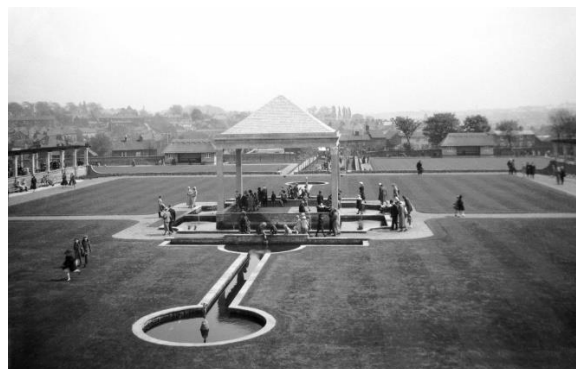
In later years, during the Second World War, the pavilion was used a temporary mortuary for those who were killed during an air-raids that devastated parts of the City around Riverside and Carrow Road. The casualties were taken, with a Police escort, to the park where people were enjoying themselves, unaware of the true horror of events that were happening on the other side of the City.

After the Second World War, financial constraints saw the City Council struggling to maintain its collection of parks, including Waterloo Park. Newspaper articles from this time show that features such as the herbaceous borders were proving very costly and there was concern for their future. In 1962, the City Council spent £1,000 on repairs to the pavilion, as the expenditure was approved, Finance Committee members exclaimed that 'this high level of expenditure cannot go on!'

Fortunately, the City Council did not give up on Waterloo Park and in 1993 the park was Grade II* listed as a park of historic importance. In 2021, the park was awarded Green Flag status, recognising that Waterloo Park is one of the finest parks in the Country.

This brief history of Waterloo Park has been extracted from a longer article written by the Friends of Waterloo Park. To find out more about Waterloo Park and the work of the Friends of Waterloo Park please visit their website www.friendsofwaterloopark.org.uk.

Waterloo Park was officially opened in April 1933, local photographer George Plunkett captured this event as part of his work to document the changing face of Norwich. Here is a selection of his photographs of the early days of Waterloo Park....



Left - Waterloo Park Main Avenue as approached from the main gates on Angel Road

Right - Waterloo Park Bandstand, as seen from the roof of the Pavilion



Waterloo Park Paddling Pool and Sandpit

In the summer months, at weekends and during the school holidays, we would spend all of our time outdoors, come rain or shine. We left home after breakfast and would roam around the estate for hours, playing with whoever we found. We went much further afield in those days, more than children of today seem to do. We only went home when it started to get dark, or when we were hungry and wanted our tea!

Waterloo Park was a great place to play, there was always someone there to hook up with. There was so much space, we were never bored, although we did have to keep an eye out for the park-keepers who always thought we were up to mischief – and sometimes they were right!



GROWING UP

Becoming a Teenager

These were exciting times, things were changing and parents started giving their children more leniency than they ever had.

Being a teenager, you weren't a teenager for long, as soon as you left school at 15 you went in to work and for boys you went into National Service at 18.

Before the 1960's teenagers didn't really exist, boys wore short trousers until they were 11 and you could leave school at 14 years old, really you went from child to adult, your teenage years were not recognised.

Leaving School

Many left school with no qualifications, if you did this you left school at 14, if you stayed on to take exams you left at 15 years old. Further education was rare. Sometimes you went back to continue your studies at night school when you had started work.

Boys would leave school and go into apprenticeships. Girls would go into employment in the boot and shoe factories.

You could leave at Christmas, Easter or summer terms. In 1948 they changed it from 14 to 15 and I had to stay on an extra term which I didn't like.

We had a sort of bank on Monday mornings at school when you paid 1d or 2d. I used to help collect the money and take it to Mrs Scarlet's office. She got me a job in an office but I didn't want to go. I wanted to go to the factory where there was more money. Dad went up to the school, he had to go when I said I wouldn't go to the office job. He said I want her to be happy so if that what's she wants that's what she can do – which I've regretted ever since. My dad said I'd regret it and I have. When I left, my friend had to go on 'til August I left in Easter. She said they were always calling for me to do the books, but Mrs Scarlet said "the silly girl is working in a boot factory" my friend said they were sick of hearing it!

Starting Work

Jobs were for life, you left school and the next day you started work. You went out and got yourself a job, there was no waiting for something to be offered to you.

I left school at 15, saw an advert in the local paper, got the 88 bus into the city and got a job by tea time.

When you left school you went straight into a job, there was plenty of work, everyone had a job. If you lost your job on a Friday you started a new job the following Monday.

Job prospects in Norwich were very good, there were lots of jobs in the shoe industry.

I worked at Clarkes shoe factory which was on Sussex Street, at that time nearly every family had someone working in a shoe factory in Norwich.

Everyone cycled to work, 3 – 4 abreast along the road. If you needed a bike, you could buy one on hire purchase for 5 shillings per week.

I built my own bike from bits and pieces from the dump behind the Woodcock Pub.

If you lived at home you were expected to give your parents housekeeping money.

Many children worked part time before leaving school. I looked after pigs at the Cattlemarket, I travelled by bus if I had the money.

My first job was in an opticians, we were very busy as it was just after the National Health Service was set up and everyone was coming in for their free glasses!

I went to Wittons in St Georges where they made the children's shoes. I was a machinist. I went to Norwich Wood Heels down the end of Weston Road in 1956 when I had my son. We made up all the wooden heels. Then I worked on the market on Reggies Tea Stall, then to Sharp's Bedrooms on Heigham Street then Queen Street – I travelled all over. I always worked.

I went to Robinsons Garage, I did everything, they had Rolls Royces and you had to make them sparkle, even underneath. The foreman helped me get a new job. He sent me to Jacobs in Heigham Road, but there was a long queue, I came back the next day and the queue was still there. I got nearly to the front but a man came out and said the job had been taken. Then he held my collar until everyone was gone, then took me in and offered me the job! I was paid £3/17/- and got a tin of biscuits every month.



Working at the Norvic Shoe Factory

Photo courtesy of Pinky Young

Leisure Time

Youth clubs held in local churches were very important to socialise with friends and meet boys!

Speedway was very popular, there was a speedway track near the airport, race meetings would be in the evenings, plus going to football on Saturday afternoons.

I remember the Boundary BATTERY Café with its jukebox where all the biker boys hung out.

I remember when the Beatles came to Norwich to the Grosvenor Rooms, a Dance Hall on Prince of Wales Road.

The '6.5 Special' and 'Oh Boy' music programmes on the TV. I was in the forces then, still working on the railway for the army as part of my national service. We used to go down to the canteen and watch the 6.5 Special – it was the highlight of the week.

There was nothing to do on Sundays, the pubs were closed, the cinema only showed one film a day.

As teenagers we would cycle in groups to Hemsby, Yarmouth or Sea Palling, you would go in groups with people you worked with.

I remember going to the funfair when it was held at the Cattlemarket next to the Castle, the Castle Mall stands there now.

When I was 14 I joined the Army Cadet Force which met on Aylsham Road. We used to do marching and rifle drills and helped prepare me for my National Service.

We used to go to the pictures a lot, going to the Capitol on Aylsham Road. They used to show several different films a week, you could go into the pictures at any time and stay as long as you liked, sometimes we would go mid-way through a film, see the end and then watch the whole film over again.

Next to the Capitol Cinema on Aylsham Road was the Lido Dance Hall where there was a swimming pool underneath the dance floor.

I remember dancing at the Lido, there you could meet American service personnel based at Horsham St Faiths.

I went dancing a lot, the Lido and Samson and Hercules. On Saturday nights the dance halls closed by 11.55pm.



Getting ready for a night out Woodcock Road c. early 1950's

The Lido Dance Hall

Built next door to the Capitol Cinema the Lido Crystal Indoor Swimming Pool in Aylsham Road opened on 31st May 1934. In the winter months the pool was covered over and used as a ballroom. The Council allowed this only on the basis that 'dancing in swimming costumes was strictly forbidden'. The swimming pool struggled financially and after a few years closed permanently allowing the ballroom to open all year-round. In 1960 the ballroom was sold to Mecca who re-modelled the building, filling in the pool area and levelling the sloping floor. The Lido reopened in October 1960 as a large and stylish Dancehall, later to be renamed as The Norwood Rooms. The Dancehall closed its doors for the final time in January 1987. The building is now home to Mecca Bingo.

National Service

There was compulsory National Service for boys when they reached 18 years old.

You could join the forces at 16 if you wanted to, many did this as they believed that they would get a better deal rather than wait until 18 for compulsory National Service, you had more of a say if you signed on early, I got to join RAF this way.

When I was sixteen I went to a dance hall. I met some American Service Men who took me to breakfast the next day. I ate sausages, eggs and bacon; I had never seen anything like it, I signed up the next day so I could be fed.

National Service didn't do me any harm but some of my friends were not so lucky and died during their National Service in places like Korea and Singapore. In those days the Army didn't repatriate bodies of fallen servicemen so these boys were buried in the country where they fell.

Getting Married and Leaving Home

Women tended to live at home until they were married.

Women didn't have jobs unless they were unmarried or didn't have children.

On marriage most women were expected to leave work and look after the home and later on care for children. Women were expected to be homemakers unless they were not married.

Only men could get a mortgage and were based on a man's wages only.

I was given money from the bank where I worked when I married, as married women were not supposed to continue to work.

I didn't think you had to stop working. I had to go back to work because I was on my own with a baby. My sister brought the baby in a pram to meet me from work. My mum used to push children in the pram from Costessey to St Georges to her mother then she worked on the market.

My mother was the only mother I knew who worked and this did set me apart a bit from the other children. She wasn't around as much and if I was sick I would have to go to a neighbour to be cared for.

When we were first married we left our parents homes and moved into 'rooms'. We had a bedroom and shared a bathroom and kitchen with our landlord. This was common practice for newly-weds, we lived in rooms until we were offered housing by the Council, usually this would happen when you were expecting your first child. If you didn't move into rooms you would move in with your in-laws, there was a lot of over-crowding after the War as there was a housing shortage.

When you married and moved in together for the first time your house was furnished with things given from the family, you saved for the rest of your purchases or rented items, paying each week.

LOCAL CHARACTERS

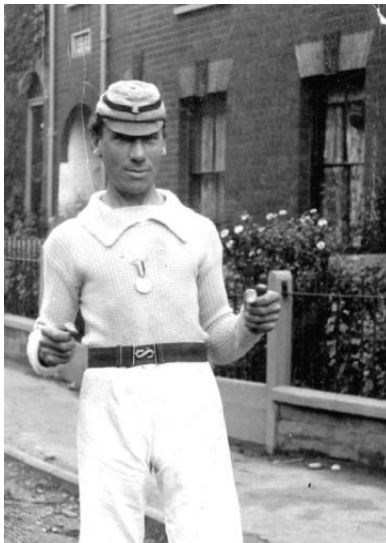
Derek Rayner lived at 54 Harmer Road, he became CEO of Marks and Spencer and an advisor to Margaret Thatcher. He was made Lord Rayner for his services. Derek was head boy at Catton Grove School and his sister Audrey was head girl.

Mr Kemp, a dairy farmer from Rackham Road used to bring his cows along Catton Grove Road to the fields in Old Catton. I remember on one occasion while we were playing on the green one of the cows broke away from the herd and ran into our front garden, we all ran into the nearest house, it was a very scary event.

I remember the Fishers in Middleton Close, he was the local rag and bone man and the rumour was that he kept his horse in the bathroom!

The Pointer family had seven brothers and owned a lot of land in the area.

I remember Billy Bluelight. He lived in Palmer Road, he was a very small chap who always wore a bowler hat. He carried a basket and used to doff his hat at the ladies.



Billy Bluelight

William Cullum, otherwise known as Billy Bluelight, was born in 1859. It was not known exactly how he earned his nick-name Bluelight but this could have come from the time when he sold blue-tipped matches on the streets of Norwich. Billy became a well-known figure when he began racing steam pleasure boats along the river Yare in the 1920's and 30's. Dressed in long white shorts, a cricket cap, plimsolls and with medals on his chest Billy would race the boats along the river bank whilst reciting his trade-mark rhyme 'My name is Billy Bluelight, my age is 45, I hope to get to Carrow Bridge before the boat arrive'. In the 1940's Billy lived at 43 Palmer Road. He died in 1949 aged 90.

Cutty lived in the Forfix , the name for the woods by what is now Catton Park. He never worked, but lived by his wits. He built dens in the wood. He was ex forces from the First World War. He used to collect scrap and nick flowers from the nursery to sell on the market. The kids would play in the woods and bring him sandwiches.

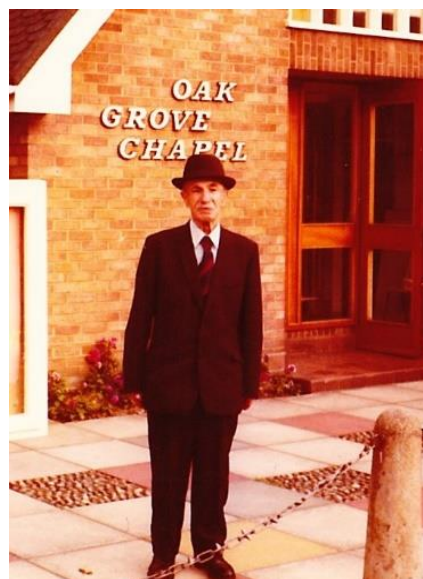
Mick Andrews was someone people were scared of, looking back he probably had epileptic fits. He had been in the Guards. His sons were champion javelin throwers. He lived in Brightwell Road. He helped at the Sunday School in Oak Grove Chapel.

There was a little lady known as “the old woman” she lived in the gatehouse to Catton Hall and stopped people going in to pick chestnuts. I once asked permission and was told “no, but you can have ones I’ve taken off those naughty boys”

Mr Catton was a carpenter who worked at Oak Grove Chapel Sunday School, where everyone went. He took the boys to Lowestoft as a treat for good attendance in the 40s and 50s – one year someone stole the cruet!

Mr John Catton

John Catton was born in 1894 and served in the First World War. He was always smartly dressed, wearing a suit and boots, even on seaside trips. He used to take boys to Lowestoft for an afternoon tea as a treat for good attendance at Sunday School. At a time when seaside trips, let alone afternoon tea, were rare this would have been something very special indeed. John was a carpenter by trade and owned a number of local properties. Mr Catton celebrated his 80th birthday with a party at Oak Grove Chapel in 1975.



Ginger Sadd was a champion boxer. He lived in Bullard Road in the 1930’s and was the only person in the road to own a car.



Ginger Sadd – Champion Boxer

Arthur ‘Ginger’ Sadd was born in Norwich in 1914 and grew up in the area around Oak Street. In the late 1930’s he moved to 1 Bullard Road. Ginger’s boxing career began in 1929 and ran through to 1951, during his career he held both the Eastern Area Welterweight and Middleweight titles. Ginger beat many of the top boxers of his era but only had one attempt at a British title when he fought Jock McAvoy over 15 rounds in May 1939. In total, he fought 250 matches, winning 187 bouts, including 43 knock-outs. Ginger passed away in 1992, aged 78.

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

Philadelphia Lane

Before redevelopment Philadelphia Lane used to be a through road running between Angel Road and Aylsham Road. It had 4 pubs, a number of shops, a fish shop and a coal merchants. The houses were all small cottage-style 2 up 2 down houses with outside toilets and gas lighting.

Philadelphia Lane was known as “Filthy Dirty Lane”.

It was pulled down in the late 50s early 60s to make way for higher density housing. The people who lived there were moved to the Sussex Street / St Augustine’s area.

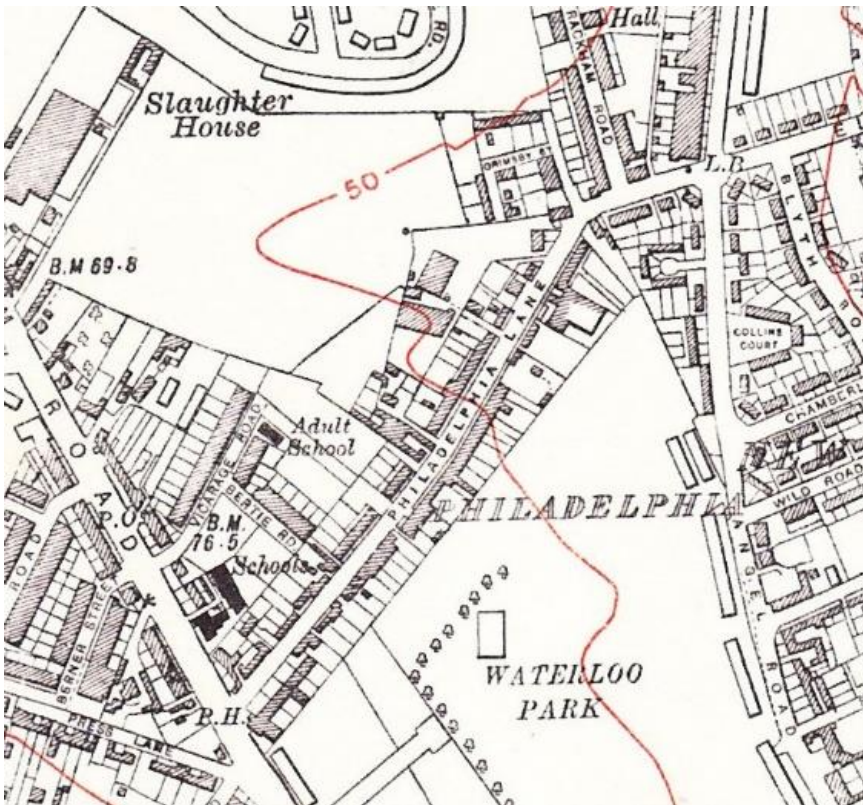
There was a bakers called Pointers – you could buy dumplings there on a Sunday and he would bake your Christmas cake as people didn’t have ovens. He delivered bread on a bike. When they redeveloped the area Mr Pointer set up a protest when they pulled his shop down and he wouldn’t budge.

There was a coal yard in Philadelphia Lane – Mr Betts who delivered to everyone.

Half way up the lane was a piggery.

A lady lived in Philadelphia Lane who collected draw money. Prices - a department store in Magdalen Street - had a draw every 20 weeks - you picked a number to determine the week. For every pound you put in you got a guinea which was one pound one shilling.

Mabbuttts was on Aylsham Road after the corner with Philadelphia Lane.



Philadelphia Lane as it was in 1938 before redevelopment which led to the road being divided into two sections with the creation of two new roads, Penn Grove and Sleaford Green

YOUR MEMORIES

We hope you have enjoyed this brief history of Catton Grove estate. If you have memories that you would like share, please give us brief details below. We would also like to see more old photographs of the area, we can return these to you if you include your name and address.

My memories of living in Catton Grove.....

Name

Address

Telephone

Email

Please send your replies to **Catton Grove History Project,**
c/o 44 Catton Grove Road, Norwich NR3 3NW or you can send
your replies to us via e-mail at **cattongrovecentre@hotmail.co.uk**

