

## **AN OLD WOODFORDIAN LOOKS BACK**

**by Roland Buggey with additional material by Edna Buggey**

We first moved to Woodford when we were married in 1958 and bought 25 Arundel Drive. It was a semi-detached house built in the 1930s by the local builder A.E. Sheppard, at a time that London's suburbs were rapidly expanding. Behind our house was a small park known as Salway Gardens, running between Cavendish Avenue and Fairlawn Drive. On the opposite side of the park was Parkland Road. In the 1930s Sheppard offered these houses for sale at £920. When we bought ours, we paid £2,800 and my mortgage was £15 a month - we could not afford to go to £3,000! We bought it off the then owner of the Woodford Times - Courtney Jones.

Edna was Forest Gate born and bred, but I was no stranger to Woodford, having lived since 1936 just over the border in Forest Edge, Buckhurst Hill and my memories of the area goback to the war years.

I attended the Union Church on The Green, where the Minister was The Rev F.G. Lintern. He was coming to the end of his long ministry there— he is shown in the 1927 Kelly's Directory as being Minister then. He lived in the Manse, which was at the top end of Monkams Avenue, backing on to Harts. I joined the 20<sup>th</sup> Epping Forest South Scouts and a lot of our activities took place on Woodford golf course. I can remember the 'blasted oak' near the school. It stood dead and stark against the sky for many years. I believe it has now gone. Two of my fellow scouts achieved great things in entirely different fields. David Southgate became a professor and world recognised authority on food science. Tony Donegan, who lived with his mother in a side extension to a large house in Whitehall Road, used to bring his guitar to camp. He went on to become the King of Skiffle, Lonnie Donegan. Sadly both have since died.

In 1947 the Union Church combined with the Congregational Church to become the United Free Church. The Congregational's premises had been wrecked by two flying bombs in 1944. It was at the Union Church that I got to know Ken Bray, who was then just beginning his photographic career. He took our wedding photographs (in black and white) and 23 years later took our elder daughter Elizabeth's wedding (in colour). I also got to know Ernest Fulcher in those early days and caught up with him later at Woodford Methodist Church.

Our four children were brought up originally in Arundel Drive and went to the local primary school, Churchfields. It had a good reputation. Miss Hollis was Head of the Infants and I can still remember the names of some of the teachers – Doreen Hunt (who retired to the Tewkesbury area), Pat Manning (who lives in Saffron Walden) and in the Junior School, Dennis Miles, who has since died. Following Churchfields the girls went to Woodford County High School under Miss Satchell, and the boys went to my old school, Buckhurst Hill County High School.

Needing more room as the family grew up, we moved in 1967 to 28 Broomhill Road, a town house built in the 1880s facing The Green. This cost us £7,000+ and was our

home for 28 years until we moved to Norfolk in 1995. We sold it for £190,000, but it has been on the market twice since then, the latest being in late 2010, when it sold for £925,000! We could buy a mansion in Norfolk for that.

Trying to remember Woodford in the 1950s, 60s and 70s makes me wish I had kept a diary to record events and changes. When changes are gradual, they do not get noticed or just become part of life and accepted.

Physically, Woodford did not change too drastically while we lived there. Most development had taken place before the war and what transpired after the war was a response to changing conditions and needs.

The biggest post-war 'landscape' change was at Gates Comer and the old Southend Road in the early 1970s. I can well remember the traffic lights and congestion in that area. On my last visit to Woodford I found the High Road just as congested!

Soon after the War, the railway was electrified and came under London Transport, a plan begun before the War. This involved the closure of the level crossings at Woodford Broadway and George Lane and the building of the bridge at Broadmead Road and the George Lane Flyover.

The 1960s saw the building of the Broadmead Road estate, the largest development in Woodford at the time and completed in 1968. Broadmead Road also featured in another 'landscape' change in the mid-60s. Up to 1964 it had ended at the junction with Horn Lane and traffic then went up Fairfield Road, making a right turn at the top and then a left to join The Terrace up to the lights at the bank. With the increasing volume of traffic and the growing size of lorries, it was decided to extend Broadmead. This involved demolishing a line of cottages in Little Horn Lane and number 13 Broomhill Road. Edna can remember pushing a pram up Little Horn Lane to get from Arundel Drive to the doctor's surgery. To finish the scheme, Broadmead Road was dualled where it crossed The Green and Broomhill Road was sealed off. I can remember the building and opening of the Hawkey Hall in 1955.

Just before we moved to Broomhill Road, the avenue of poplars, planted in 1880, was felled, the trees having developed a list, due to the prevailing winds. At first it seemed like sheer devastation, but they were replaced in 1968-9 by alternating planes and black poplars. The avenue was slightly re-aligned to focus on the statue of Sir Winston Churchill unveiled in 1959. If you look back from the statue, it focuses on the fire station tower! All the trees have now had 40 years of growth and we have forgotten how bleak it had been without them.

Whilst on the subject of The Green, and living opposite to it, we frequently had

unwanted visitors in our garden - the cattle that were then permitted to graze on The Green decided our grass was better!

Possibly the biggest changes that took place during the years we lived in Woodford were in the shops and shopping habits.

Our groceries came mainly from Williams Bros. in Electric Parade at the top of George Lane - Williams was an 'old fashioned' type shop with a counter down each side, each needing separate visits. One side sold groceries and the other provisions.

It was personal service then. It was possible to leave an order and pick it up later, packing it into a pram negotiating the traffic and crossings at Gates Comer on our way back to Arundel Drive – no car in those early days. A few shops down from Williams was Edwards, the first\_ supermarket. There was a small Sainsbury's in the Broadway between Barclay's Bank and Puddicombes and a small Tesco in George Lane, near the much lamented Woolworths. Sometime in the 70s, Bishops arrived, later to become Budgens, at the junction of Snakes Lane and Charteris Road, part of it being on the site of Sylvia Pankhurst's house. The demolition of the Plaza Cinema and the Congregational Church in George Lane saw the arrival of a Sainsbury's supermarket and Iceland. The supermarket car park was once nurseries. The other two supermarkets, at Gates Corner and Charlie Browns arrived after we had left Woodford.

Our children's school uniforms came from Warnes in George Lane (is it still there?) In 1955, I bought my BSA Bantam 150cc motor bike at Longstaffs. This dealer was between the White Hart and St Mary's Church in the High Road, South Woodford. Near The Castle, a small supermarket replaced Kent's grocery shop and Wheelers was still a butcher's shop. The Post Office in Johnston Road had closed before we left Woodford. Broome's the Chemist, in the High Road and Puddicombes in the Broadway seemed timeless and were still in business when we left Woodford. But what has happened since? Harris the butchers opposite Johnston Pond had been closed for many years but had never changed hands. It still had its name on the front and its sole window decoration was a line of 'old' brass weights. I can remember a small antique shop set back beside The Castle. It would make an interesting book to chart the comings and goings of shops and businesses in Woodford and South Woodford over this period.

How many people remember the 'Miss Haversham' figure who used to frequent The Broadway and Snakes Lane? I used to see her quite frequently but she eventually 'disappeared'. The actress Liz Smith, who lived locally for a while, mentions her in her autobiography. I never really heard who she was, but I understood she had a son killed in the First World War and it had affected her mentally. She would walk to

the station, hoping to still meet him.

Woodford has many memories for our family, spread over nearly 40 years. We have a daughter who still lives there, plus numerous friends who help us to keep in touch.

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