

# THE BREW 'US BUGLE

The Magazine of the  
Ladywood History Group

Number 1  
December 2001

M  
Millennium Awards

Birmingham City Council  
Housing Department  
Housing Education Initiative

## HELLO AND WELCOME...

**Welcome to this new magazine all about Ladywood in days gone by. This first issue has been funded by a grant from the Millennium Awards obtained by two Ladywood residents, Edie Ockford and Jean Brown supported by Birmingham City Council's Housing Education Initiative.**

The Housing Education Initiative works with children in local schools and with residents on issues relating to the changing face of Ladywood and the work is co-ordinated by Norman Bartlam, who many of you will have heard of through his two books on Old Ladywood.

The title of this magazine refers to one of the most talked about and frequently visited buildings in any backyard, the brewhouse or brew 'us. If you know what a brew 'us is then this magazine is for you. If you'd never heard of the word then this magazine is for you too because you've clearly got a lot to learn! The Millennium grant has also paid for the reproduction costs of many old Ladywood photographs which will go on display throughout Ladywood Health & Community Centre. Jean and Edie said: 'We got a lot of enjoyment out of this project and we hope the photo display will bring back many happy memories and help younger people appreciate how Ladywood has changed'.

We hope you will enjoy reading this issue and that you will contribute to the next edition due out in March/ April 2002. Send your contributions and comments on this issue to:

Norman Bartlam at  
Ladywood Arts & Leisure Centre, Monument Road  
Ladywood, B16 0QT or phone us on 0121 455 0663.



*'I've been framed!' Jan Stebbens of Ladywood Health & Community Centre on St Vincent Street receives the first framed photographs from Jean and Edie prior to them being hung in the centre, er, I mean the photos will be hung not the ladies!*

**THE BREW 'US BUGLE QUIZ Q1**

**WHO WAS MP FOR LADYWOOD FOR MOST OF THE 1920s ?**

# A natter with the blowks 'n wenches of Ladywood

In December Carrie Coles celebrates her 90th birthday. She'll have many memories to recall and if she needs help she can call on her sisters, Doris who is only 88 and Clara who is 92! That's 270 years of experiences between them! This is their story of life in 1920s Ladywood around Morville Street and Sherborne Street, as told to Gordon Cull of the 'Old Ladywood Reunion Association' and Norman Bartlam.



Doris, Clara and Carrie at the Old Ladywood Reunion Association get together at the Clarendon Suite in October 2001.

"Well it was a bit rough, our mother had 16 children, The eldest two died with measles. She then had a further 11 girls and 3 boys and we had a one-house attic with a downstairs living room and the coalhole where we threw the coal in. Outside there were big bay windows and just a yard with the toilets just a 100 yards away from where we were. On the down side the toilets were near where the dustbins were. Further down there were about nine cottages. The washhouse was at the bottom of the yard.

If you got on anybody's ground on the Monday to wash then god help ya! Rows! They used to say, 'that's my part and you shouldn't put that line out so far'. Across the yard there was a big wall and over that wall was the canal and it ran from where we were up to Gas Street. There was a lot of ground and at the back was the Spread Eagle, which my dad used to use. My poor mother she used to go and get half a pint and take it to the old lady in the front of where we lived, Mrs. Cable and sit in the little smoke room a Sunday lunchtime. That was all they could afford and that was their pleasure.

Mother used to get up in the morning, she used to work as a cleaner at Lloyds Bank on Colmore Row, she worked there for 28 years and after each child was born she went back to work and the oldest one at home looked after us and sent us to school and that's how it went on.

There was a wall and the youngsters used to get on bricks and look over the wall, which was next to the canal. And sometimes when there was strike or when we had no coal they used to climb over to the coal boats and shovel the coal out on to the side. The kids used to go and collect the coal and collect it in buckets to bring it up so we could have a fire.

Our father was a painter and decorator by trade but never seemed to be at work. Father used to find some money from somewhere to go boozing. We had Daily Mail boots and the clothes as well. There used to be red jerseys and they had black stockings with the ribs up them. The girls had them as well. If our teacher said I've got some clothes that I'm bringing tomorrow to sell we couldn't get there quick enough to see if we could get the best ones! We

thought we were the cat's whiskers when we got the Daily Mail boots at Christmas!

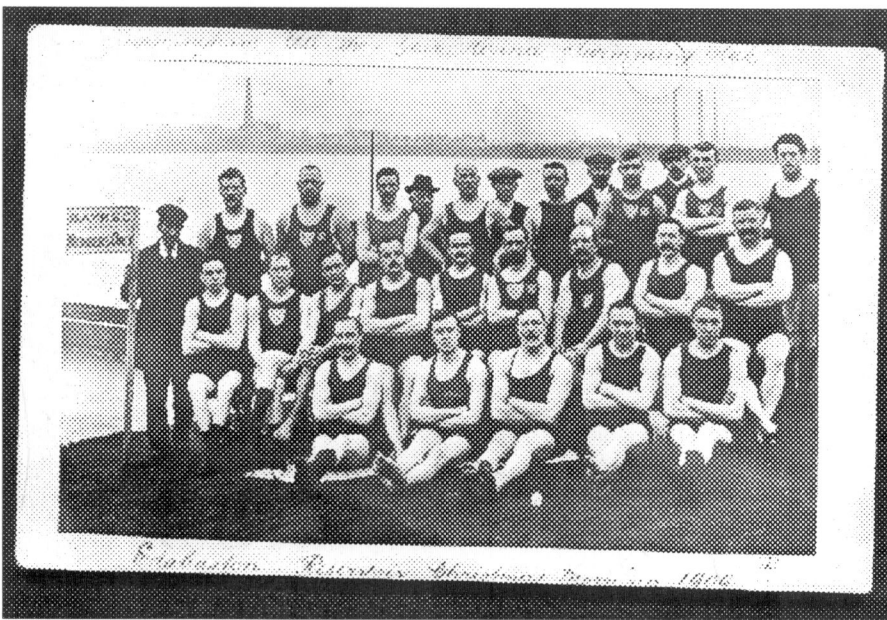
My poor mother used to have stuff on the strap from Riley's, that was in Ledsam Street by Morville Street and we used to have boots and we had to take them off and she'd rub them up and take them to the pawnshop. Then we'd have to wait twelve months. She had to pay off a penny a week for them to keep them and we had to go the next Christmas to see if they still fitted us!

I'll tell you the position our mother was in. She used to go to the pawnshop and with her being out early in the morning I used to work at the GPO when I was 18 and I used to do shift work. If I was on at ten o'clock to six I used to get all the sheets off the beds and wash them and peg them out then I used to go to work and Mom used to say: 'Whoa there's a hole in this sheet so I'll turn it in side out'. They used to open the clothes you know at the pawn shop and Miss Reader never took a lot of notice of our Mom's washing because she knew she'd got a big family and our Mom used to say its your turn to stand in the queue this morning. That was on a Monday and then she'd meet us and stand in the queue while we ran to school and many a time we'd get a walloping for being late!

**Happy 90th birthday Carrie!**

## Christmas at the Rezza

This was the Birmingham All the Year Round Swimming Club pictured at Edgbaston Reservoir on Christmas morning 1909. The weather that day was said to be more spring like than winter. The local press reported, 'Instead of frost and snow Birmingham people enjoyed bright sunshine and a pleasant southwesterly breeze. Under foot, however, the conditions were most unpleasant, but the state of affairs did not prevent many people from taking a walk in the country', or it seems a dip in the rezza.



Len Thornton (born 1919) recalls: 'We used to go the Reservoir on Christmas morning where the Ladywood Police 'B' Division would assemble and do their annual swim in the very cold water. When they came out I would generally help around. I used to give them their towels, then would wash up the mugs they had had with coffee or tea laced with rum. I used to get 10 shillings for this, it was the first time I had been given paper money. A boy who had a ten-shilling note or a £1.00 note on him had a lot of explaining to do to his parents! They would have a court of inquiry, asking where he got it from!'

In December 1859 the police records show that a number of police officers were put on special duty at Edgbaston Reservoir to prevent people from skating on thin ice. It is recorded: 'The surgeon having advised that the Men on duty in the streets this frosty weather should frequently rub their ears, if impossible to wear any covering, until warm, to prevent them from being frostbitten'.

## The Way We Were Fifty Years Ago December 1951

The local press had the following reports:

'Crowds of tea time shoppers in the Bull Ring were scattered yesterday when a four year old heifer escaped from the Bull Ring Meat Market. After running wildly on the slippery cobbles and narrowly missing several laden barrows. It was halted by an elderly, slightly built, ex-farmer from Birmingham. 'I held it by the nostrils and threw an arm round its head and put my thumb in its eye,' he said. Fifteen men pushed the heifer on to a lorry.

'A 150 year old Birmingham firm that once provided the palaces of the East with elaborate illumination, is again manufacturing a giant chandelier for the Orient, this time with Government backing. Special facilities have been granted to the firm, Osler & Faraday so that the job may be completed

quickly and efficiently to boost Britain's prestige in the East'. F C Osler had a manufactory in Freeth Street and major workshop and showroom on Broad Street, next to Lee Longland. Follett Osler was instrumental in setting up the weather observatory at Perrott's Folly. A road was named after him in Ladywood and the school built on it also shared his name.

Meanwhile at Bingley Hall an 18-year-old Tiller girl featured in a forty feet high big top circus where she swung by her knees from a trapeze. 'At first I was terrified but I love it now', she said.

On New Year's Eve it was announced that 1951 had been the wettest on record with 38.92 inches of rain recorded at Edgbaston Observatory, which was on the roof of Perrott's Folly.

## There's a zebra crossing up the road!

In December 1951 The Birmingham Gazette stated: 'The new zebra crossings were accident free over Christmas'. Earlier in the month the worst traffic jams ever seen in the city were blamed on the newly introduced zebra crossings. 'The crossings have greatly aggravated an already serious situation because pedestrians using them are ignoring road rules and continually forcing traffic to a standstill'. A police officer added: 'Four times today I have seen a car bump into the back of another forced to halt hurriedly at a zebra'.

# TO GROCERS & FRUITERERS. Baldwin's Patent Square-Bottomed Paper Bags

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## MORE HISTORY DISAPPEARS



A piece of Ladywood's history is disappearing from the skyline. The demolition men have moved in to 'convert' Sherborne Mill, the home of Baldwin's paperworks since 1829. Upmarket houses are to be built on the Morville Street site and the development will extend along Browning Street on to the canal. The founder of the works was James Baldwin, who became Mayor of Birmingham in 1853-54. An 1888 industrial survey stated: 'Messrs. James Baldwin & Sons is one of the oldest and largest in the neighbourhood. A very large staff of skilled operatives is engaged. The firm is so well known that that it has achieved a high position and an ever-spreading popularity. A speciality of manufacture is square bottomed paper bags and gun wadding'. A larger paper mill was later erected in King's Norton and the Ladywood works become their depot and printing plant. Does anyone know anybody who worked there or have any stories about it?

### Christmas Memories .....

Christmas was always a special time for me and my twelve brothers and sisters. I was born at 1 back of 23 Ruston Street in April 1958. It was a typical house of the time with two bedrooms, no bathroom and outside toilet, all the families were in the same position. On Christmas morning the attic bedroom was a hive of activity, just like in most houses that had children in them. When I was about ten years of old I remember that three of us had roller skates and another three had skipping ropes and we were skating and skipping across the lino floor, making quite a noise, in our night dresses at 4.00am. I found out about Father Christmas when I opened an annual from Cath my big sister. I read the message 'love from Father Christmas', but I recognized that it was in my sister's handwriting and she admitted to me that she had written it. Until then I'd always believed my Dad when he said that he'd seen Father Christmas disappearing back up the chimney after delivering our presents! I was so upset! Most of the presents we did have were bought with a help of a Provident cheque redeemed at Pearce Brothers' shop. When I was little Mom always said that my sister Collette, who is 40 now, was found under a Christmas tree where as I was found in a sack of spuds! My youngest brother was said to have been found in a cabbage and I was always nervous when Mom cut one of them open!

Bernie Stringfellow nee Ryan

# A song at every lamppost!

by Len Thornton

**Our family always had our Christmas dinner and tea at home in Friston Street, and after that we would all walk down to Winson Green where my Dad's brother and wife lived (not in the Prison) in fact all the related families would gather there. It was a sort of annual natter and get together. The Festivities would start and go on all night, from Christmas Day evening until Boxing Day evening.**

The children and grown ups just slept where they fell, then woke up and started all over again! A beer barrel would be in one corner and loads of food would be on the sideboard, mostly turkey, beef or pork sandwiches plus loads of home made pickled onions and red cabbage and of course a mountain of mince pies. It was the Annual Gorge, the rest of the year you could starve and did! The reason we went to my aunt's house was because it had a front room and was bigger than our house. There was even a piano "Wow!" and always someone who could play it?? Of course a piano was a status symbol those days. It was so polished you could see your face in it. The ones who owned one would always mention it in conversation and the lower minions would gracefully curtsy when going away, then go home and talk about her, "stuck up old cow ... I remember when she used to wash in carbolic!"

At these do's there was always someone who said they could sing and being half drunk the others couldn't have cared less and because of being in that condition they all wanted to have a go, with the aid of the pianist, a Jews Harp, mouth organ and a pair of spoons it would be

'Nellie Dean' 'In a Monastery Garden', 'The Old Rugged Cross', 'Burlington Bertie' and a few First World War Army songs with different words to the original words??? Then a cry would go up "Don't forget there are children here!" In real fact we had taught our parents the words! All I would do was to keep out of the way of falling bodies who would stagger up and dash outside into the back yard, be sick, then come back and start all over again. After all it was a "Kitty" they had all paid into and they mentally knew how much they had drunk. Oh yes! There would be a few fallouts and then the dirt would fly, very enlightening!



Then about nine o'clock in the evening when the beer barrel had been drunk dry and all the "compliments" given to each other, everybody started to make their way home, more or less on their bended knees and legs. I know my Dad used to get home a treat until someone trod on his fingers. It was quite a walk for us to Ladywood from Winson Green, the trains were not running on Christmas Day or Boxing Day but it did mean Dad and Mom had sobered up more or less by the time they had reached home, not forgetting Dad had to be at work by 7.00 am the next morning. How he got to work I will never know; we didn't get home until about 2.00am. On his way home he had a song and a wee at every lamppost and would say 'I know you are in there's a light on upstairs' or he would put his arms around a post box and say 'I like you better with your false teeth in'. He would only get drunk on rare occasions so Mom would always be tolerant she would just kick him!

## Useful Contacts:

### **The Old Ladywood Reunion Association:**

Gordon Cull 024 76746886

### **The Old Ladywood Website run by**

Mac Joseph: [www.oldladywood.co.uk](http://www.oldladywood.co.uk)

### **The Brew 'Us Bugle:**

Norman Bartlam Eileen Doyle 0121 455 0663

**THE BREW 'US BUGLE Q3 WHAT WAS THE NUMBER OF THE LADYWOOD TRAM ROUTE?**

# A LIFE TIME OF WORK...

## A conversation with Bill Landon.

**In December 1927 the Crown cinema opened on Icknield Port Road. One of the youngsters who visited it was Bill Landon of Steward Street. Little did he know that he would still be visiting the building over 70 years later, but by then he'd not be watching films but would be selling bathrooms in it! Bill, who is now 82 years old told Norman Bartlam about his working life, which has resulted in him becoming one of the most well known figures in the area.**

'We started when I came out of the forces and was demobbed in 1946.

I was a railway man and as that didn't pay much I decided to become a builder. At that time the government was licensing service people for trade, so I got a licence and my brother Edward who was a builder left the firm of Price's and joined me. I was given ninety pounds for six and a half years service and put into our new business and suddenly I was a carpenter! Our kid told me to learn as I went along. I've always been a bit handy but not that good! We built an office out of timber in Spring Hill Passage. None of us knew about drawings and things like that but we built them aright. They were delighted, it escalated into more work.

One day we had to push our handcart to the Wolverhampton Road but unfortunately the number we wanted was at the far end past Burnt Tree Island and by the time we got there it was time to come back so we left our handcart there and walked back home! We didn't even start the job that day.

We progressed and bought an Austin Seven and put a body on it, but they wouldn't give us a 'C' licence so we got an ex army lorry with a water browser! We were OK then for a few years and worked with upto 60 men. We had too many jobs going and a lot of stuff went missing so we lost money. We sacked them all and started again and once again began to make money from rock bottom, but we soon got back up the ladder!

By then we had a shop on the corner of Steward Street which sold grates, tiles and glass, we opened seven days a week 6am-7pm. We fitted thousands of grates and became well known, but I'd liked the idea of going into catering. I decided to do the catering in part of the shop and my brother carried on in the rest of it. Mom, Dad and two sisters started to work with me and we built it up to do 100 dinners a day. Mother was a wonderful cook, she was ideal for that café. We built up the trade because of our quality.

After a while I went into car sales, during petrol rationing the business declined so I went back to the café. Later I bought a wagon with a 'B' licence for carrying goods in a certain area. I was restricted to a 15-mile radius. I went to factories including Lesbrook's metal people in Icknield Square. They gave me a job collecting scrap from the Austin. They were loading it one day and said you've got about two ton and it overhung the truck. They didn't want to keep loading it but I carried on because I needed the money I'd got a family to keep!

'I'll risk it' I said. I kept in the middle of the road and drove slowly. I got to



the lights in the middle of Northfield and had to stop. When I tried to start again the metal had gone through the floorboards and all the sheets of metal shot across the road. The police said I'd have to hurry up and get it shifted but what could I do I was on my own. The wagon was stuck right in the middle of the road! My brother came and he gashed his hand and I had to take him to hospital and ended up paying someone to help move the remains of the metal.

I got another motor, one with a long wheelbase this time, but eventually it needed to have so much work on it that I had to get rid of it. I was out of work, but only for four days because I found a job on the meat market with a haulier from Smethwick. When business slackened I was laid off but he still paid me. Eventually I decided that I'd got to earn my wages honestly and I couldn't go on taking his money for nothing so I left.

I got a job back with my brother for about twelve months. By then we'd moved up to Summerhill opposite the Palace and did well. My brother was taken ill and eventually died so I ran the business with his wife before deciding to once again start on my own. We had a little shop next to the baths and my son Tony started to work with me



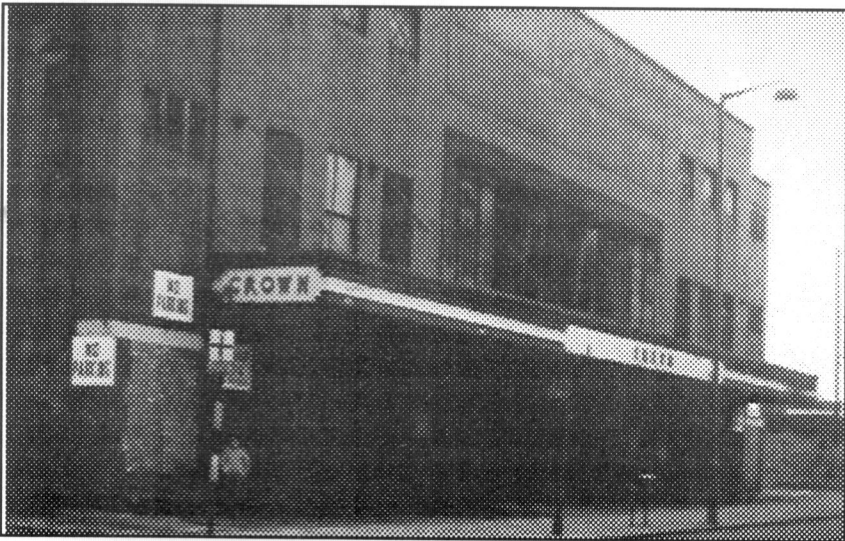


**'I'D SUDDENLY BOUGHT A CINEMA FULL OF BRICKS AND RUBBLE!' Bill Landon continued.**

As we are all Ladywood kids we wanted to stay in the area. The only place that seemed to be available was the Crown. It had been shut for nine years and my oldest son Bill was the one who suggested it. There were holes in the roof and walls and it was in a terrible state. The architect refused to go right up the ladders, he said it was unsafe and he advised me not to buy it. I was sure I could make something of it. I offered ABC Cinemas a fair price and suddenly I'd got an old cinema full of bricks and rubble with ropes hanging from the rafters where kids had been swinging!

I needed some hardcore. Opposite on Icknield Port Road they were demolishing the houses. I told the foreman that I could take all his rubble but I couldn't give him anything for it, but he wouldn't do a deal even though it was a quick drop for him.

I was told they were going to build a new building for the ITV on Broad Street and I went to see them and found they were going to dig deep foundations and so had loads of sand to take away. The foreman said: 'How many lorry loads can you take in a day'. I said: 'Just keep sending it!' So he did! Sure enough I had hundreds of tons of it and levelled the floor off. There was an accident one day when lorry went down a hole where the heating ducts used to be. It took us about twelve months to get the building into a serviceable state. From then on we progressed into getting it in to something worthwhile.



There was no car park and we couldn't afford anyone to do it so we asked different people to say if you've got any concrete you wanted to tip then you could, our gates were always opened until about midnight. They used to roll up at all hours! One load was rapid hardening concrete and the wife was there in a pair of Wellingtons pouring water on it to stop it going off! I've got three sons and a daughter and they are wonderfully loyal and we've all been in this together we treat people well and don't sell shoddy stuff and work to a high standard We are one of the old school. I can't praise them enough and we love each other such love is worth such a lot. Someone else who was like another son was my nephew Douglas Watts a lovely lad who went to live in Canada, but we still keep in touch.



We built a new floor across the auditorium to make extra floor space. The old projection room is now one of our offices. People often come in saying they remember it when it was a cinema. My mother in law Mrs Pell used to be a cleaner at it.

We had a big opening with a table full of food and we had new carpets. I said to one lady be careful or you'll spill your drink and stain the carpet! Yes, the first person did spill her drink all over the carpet.

We went from strength to strength and became the first people in the country to do bathroom settings and went from strength to strength with selling bathrooms. We got a lot of visitors from around the country they copied us, and we changed our displays again and again. Now it's known as one of the finest showrooms in the country'.

and my wife Rosa and sister Laura helped the business. We got involved with Fisher & Ludlow's, they seemed to take to me and put things my way. They made good sink tops and they supplied me with seconds, which were still good. Then the Corporation said we want you out because were going to knock the building down. We went into Freeth Street in an old warehouse and stayed for about three years. I made it bearable and waterproofed it. One day I was putting in a big window at the front when there was a tap on me shoulder, (joke!). It was a man from the council and he said don't bother because we want you out we're going to knock this down.

# Monday Washday Blues

by Maurice Price of Anderton Street

DID YOU HAVE TO START THE FIRE  
PILES OF DIRTY CLOTHES GETTING HIGHER  
MONDAY WASHDAY LOOMED ONCE MORE  
OPEN THE BREWHOUSE DOOR

SHIRTS, SOCKS, PULLOVERS AND FROCKS  
BLANKETS, SHEETS TO BE WASHED  
HAVE TO HURRY, IT WON'T TAKE LONG  
BEFORE YOU HEAR MUM'S MIGHTY TONGUE

GALLONS OF WATER BOILING HIGHER  
ABOVE THE COKE ROARING FIRE  
GO AND FETCH THE PERSIL "YES YOU"  
AND DON'T FORGET BRING DOLLY BLUE

DOLLY WAS NO LADY, SOUNDS AWFUL BUT TRUE  
DOLLY HELPED THE WASHING MAKE THE WHITES LOOK LIKE NEW  
NO DOLLY WASN'T A MAID THAT WAS SOMETHING OTHER  
THIS WAS PUSHED UP AND DOWN ROUGHLY BY MOTHER

WE HAD NO WASHING MACHINE NO SPIN DRIER  
IN FACT NOTHING WITH AN ELECTRIC WIRE  
WITH WASHING LINE SUPPORTED BY THE PROP  
HOPE IT DOESN'T RAIN I THINK I FELT A DROP

TIP IN THE POWDER THROW IN THE CLOTHES  
DON'T LET THE NEIGHBOURS SEE THEY LOVE TO NOSE  
GET OUT THE WASHBOARD GIVE CLOTHES A SCRUB  
TAKE OUT THE CLOTHES AND THROW IN THE TUB

PUT THROUGH THE MANGLE, WATCH FINGERS DO  
SHIRTS POP A BUTTON WHILST GOING THROUGH  
DAD'S ON HIS WAY HOME BETTER START THE TEA  
WASHING BLOWING, COULD DRY MAYBE

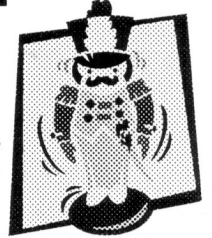
WASHING DONE TOOK, A DAY  
NOW IT'S TIME TO REST MAYBE GO PLAY  
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, THINK SOME MORE  
THE IRONS BEHIND THE PANTRY DOOR!

## Extracts from the Christmas 1957 Edition of The Oracle - The Magazine of The Oratory Secondary Modern School

### THINGS KIDS HATE

#### Fourth year pupils hate:

As teenagers we hate: dentists, people who say, "she is getting a big girl, isn't she", doctors with cold hands, sticky babies, teachers who repeat themselves, and (the boys at least) big sisters.



We heartily dislike: returning things to shops, kissing relatives, making beds, washing necks, apologising, folding trousers up to be placed on hanger, medicine, and, of course, getting up.

Our individual dislikes are many and varied. We hate: teeth braces, tripe, donning wet swimming trunks, people who remove their false teeth, small cheerless fires, Liberace, and walking down the aisle in church wearing squeaking shoes.

Some of our more exotic dislikes were: the mark left by sticking plaster, the rind in marmalade, Tide advertisements, the smell of cooking Ostermilk, cold hot-water bottles, people who crunch celery, eggshells in sandwiches, winter clothing Californian Poppy people, first thing in the morning, mending punctures, cold boiled eggs, hot milk on Cornflakes, wet cats, beer, people who poke you while they're talking, and two faced women.

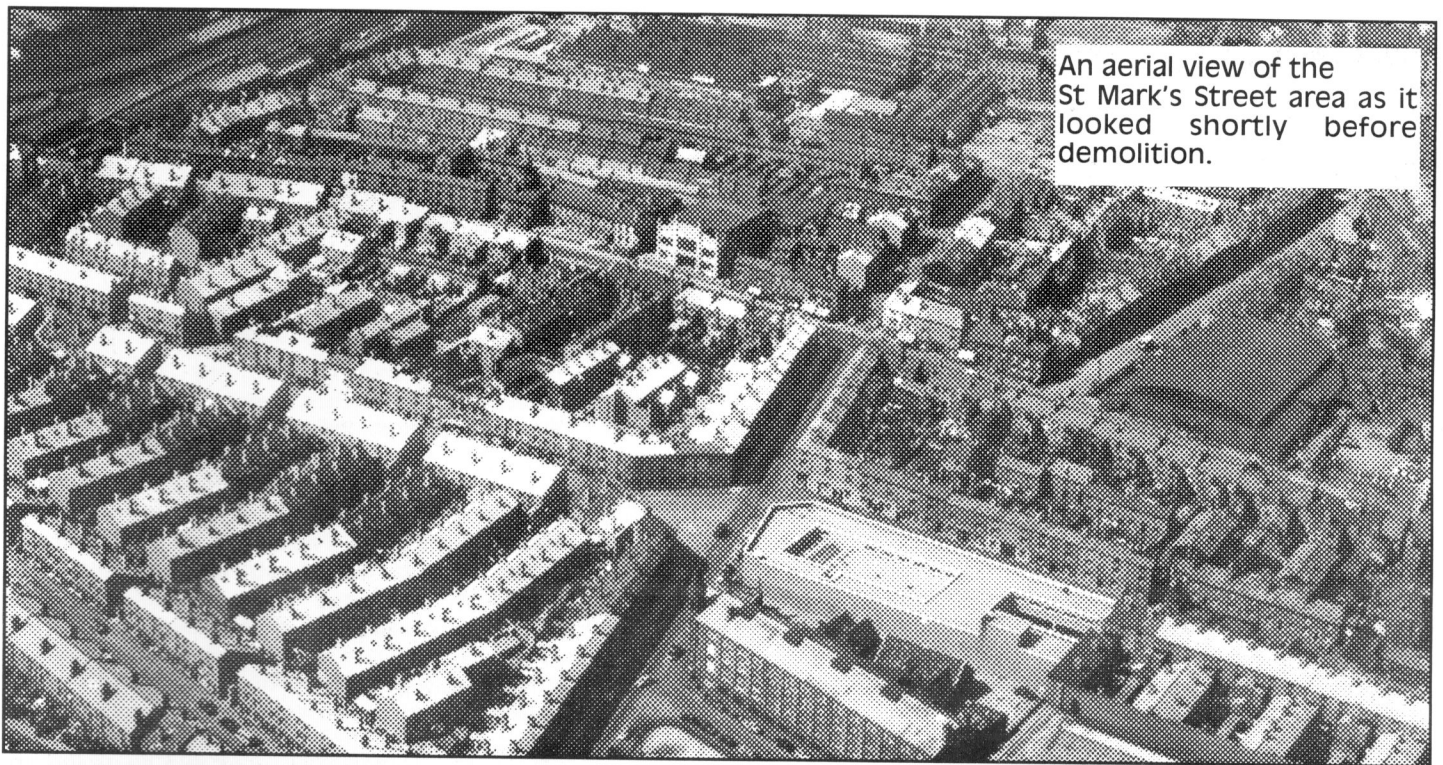
## THE CHANGING FACE OF LADYWOOD



The logbook of St. George's Primary School records: 'December 21 1961 School closed for Christmas Party. During this last year all the houses in Beaufort Road and Plough and Harrow Road have been demolished. To complete a large triangle for rebuilding, houses in Monument Road, Ladywood Road, Francis Road and Duchess Road have also been pulled down. New blocks of flats are already rising on the site and in the new year we shall expect children to come to us from the maisonettes in Plough and Harrow Road'.

**Photo:** St George's School as it looked in the mid 1960s with the new maisonettes and Chamberlain Gardens flats springing up around it. The oldest part of the school dates from 1853. The present school on this site opened in 1967.





An aerial view of the St Mark's Street area as it looked shortly before demolition.

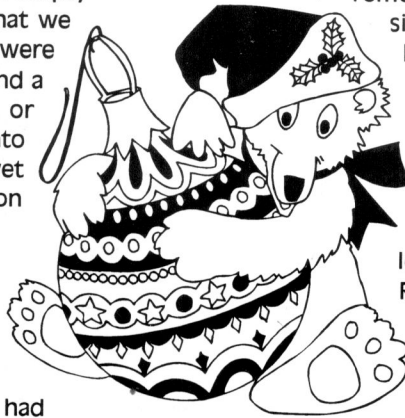
## A 1930s Christmas

by Edie Ockford

**I was born in 1923 and lived with mom, dad, three brothers and two sisters in Anderton Street, and later Garbett Street before we moved to a bigger house in St. Mark's Street in about 1936. I still live in Ladywood today.**

We were always poor and so Christmas Day wasn't much different to any other day of the year. We used to put an empty stocking at the foot of our bed in the hope that we would get a present or two, but we knew we were going to get a few nuts, an apple and orange and a few pennies. We usually never had chocolates or anything like that. One year though Mom got into debt when she bought me and my sister a velvet dress from Sid Butts' drapery shop in Anderton Street not far from where we lived.

Sometimes Mom's sister bought us a present like a handkerchief or a pair of socks. One year one of my sisters, Trudie, had a crock-faced doll and she kept it on a bedside table. Sadly it fell off and was smashed. Trudie was the only one to ever have a doll. My brother Sid, who is now in Australia, once had a bike from Clews of Monument Road. It was paid for weekly, this too ended sadly because it was stolen later in the year.

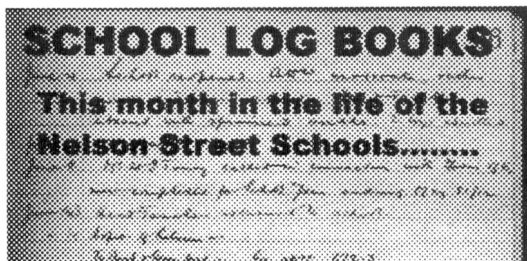


We didn't have a Christmas tree but we made some decorations to hang up in the house. Dad took the wooden rims from apple tubs, which he got from Hickman's greengrocers. He trimmed them up with fancy paper and made bell shapes. We hung one up in the house. Dad used to make up to fifty of these bells shapes and we used to go knocking on doors to sell them for about five shillings to people in the neighbourhood. We had orders from pubs, especially The Bell in Anderton Street and The Robin Hood at the bottom of Garbett Street. Sadly most of the money went to Dad and he spent it all in the boozier. We had no turkey for Christmas dinner; we just had ordinary meat usually from Houghton's on Broad Street. For Christmas tea we had bread and margarine followed by jelly and custard. The evening was like an ordinary night because we didn't have a piano, not even a wireless so, we made our own games. So

Christmas night was usually spent playing tiddlywinks or snakes and ladders, which had been given to us, second-hand. During the day we used to watch the other kids playing with their new toys, but we were happy in our own way because we knew that our mom really loved us.

Some years my sister and me were given tickets for a Christmas party at Belliss & Morcom. It was really a party for the children of the workers but they invited a number of poor children like us. I remember we were so excited that Edna, my sister and me were running and I pushed her to hurry her up. She tripped over outside the Nico factory on some of the grating, the kind that had a number of glass squares in them. She cut her herself and still has the scar today! Belliss & Morcom gave us all presents at the end of the party and there were at least 300 kids there. I had a 'Little Red Riding Hood' book, other girls had different books and the boys had Meccano.

A lady who I will never forget held another party. She was called Miss Olive Race and her party was held at Moseley Road Institute. You had to save farthings and take them along with you. She collected them and gave them to a charity. There were hundreds of kids there and we sang songs, and watched them do tap dancing for us. We were given a little present each such as tiddlywinks or a writing book. Then we had to get the tram back to town and walked back to Ladywood from there and back to reality. As the years rolled on our lives got much better and we all vouched that when we had children they would never have a life like we did, and they haven't. They have the love of a Mom and Dad".



**4 December 1940**

'Evacuation from Castle Bromwich station. 19 more children from this school'. Children went to Worksop.

**6 December 1915**

'School closes this afternoon until after Christmas holidays owing to the influenza epidemic'.

**6 December 1926**

'Examinations in full swing, it is surprising to find a high proportion of marks in arithmetic thrown away through trivial mistakes'.

**9 December 1942**

'During the morning 15 children were seized with severe sickness. As this happened within 15 mins of the children taking their milk the headteacher was suspicious and rang up the office'. On 23 December a rep from the dairy called to report that 'analysis of the milk had revealed nothing which would assist us in tracing the cause of the trouble'.

**10 December 1909**

'Attendance not good this week. Weather being wet and children's boots in bad condition'.

**15 December 1905**

'School closed pm so that the teachers might prepare the room for a jumble sale to be held in the evening in order to raise funds for a school Christmas treat'.

**16 December 1940**

'A letter received 'all well at Worksop' following latest evacuation. 'A very sudden alert heralded by gunfire, was sounded at 2.25pm'. Children were in shelters until 2.55pm.

**18 December 1917**

'School closed in the afternoon for work in connection with the Lord Mayor's Food Distribution scheme'.

**20 December 1907**

'The teachers provided a Christmas tree and present for the children on breaking up day. The children enjoyed themselves'.

**22 December 1937**

'Timetable suspended to allow each class to present a short play. Very creditable performances were given. Two fresh cases of diphtheria reported'.

**Osmag 1949**

Extracts from "Osmag" The Chronicle of Osler Street Secondary Modern Boys' School in December 1949

- \* Congratulations to the Highway Code Quiz Team, which defeated Tinker's Farm Secondary Modern School by a narrow margin.
- \* Our printing department has been working at full stretch and our School Fund will benefit accordingly. Due to the enormous demand for Christmas cards. Mr Hussain Aly Agamawi, one of his Majesty's inspectors of Schools in Cairo, paid us a visit. He took a keen interest in many of our activities.
- \* The prize winners for the best description of the "School visit to Rhyl" were L. Lantham, F Frazier, M Cox.
- \* Michael Atkinson 1B has done an excellent painting of a spanish galleon and made a model. He should be an example to other boys showing how to spend a dark winter evening profitably.
- \* Our numbers are increasing but out classroom space has been reduced. As a result we have been compelled to rent rooms in the Ladywood Methodist Chapel.
- \* We have not had a successful soccer season so far. The loss of Len Bryan international trial, White and Hyde Birmingham team has caused much reorganisation. We hope to work our way back to the front rank in the near future.

# The Ritual of Cooking the Christmas Pudding.



**As witnessed by and later eaten by Len Thornton**

'Mom always made at least four Christmas puddings, this was done to a sacred ritual. When the big day came along to make them, we all had to wash our hands, as a youngster I couldn't think why because Mom always liked a dark pudding! Then we would all be involved in breaking the bread into crumbs, stoning the large Valencia raisins, chopping the nuts, and any fingers that got in the way! We'd grate the lumps of suet and the candied peel, which used to come in rock hard lumps with sugar on it. You never see it these days. Then all the rest of the fruit would be put in and any other mystic ingredients, not forgetting the odd sixpence and the bottle of stout and a tot of rum (6d).

Mind you all this was quite expensive but it only happened once a year and it was worth it. Then we all had a stir at the mixture real thick stuff, I was good at stirring it, I, still am?? We all made a wish while doing this mine never came true I never found the sixpence. The puddings were put in crock basins, covered in greaseproof paper and then covered with a cloth and tied down.

On the allotted day of the week the boiler would be filled in the washhouse, up the yard, fire under it, and when nearly boiling the ceremony of the Pudding Boiling took place. Duly marked for identification the puddings were immersed in the copper of boiling water, all the neighbours took part in this and they all had their own ideas about how long they should be boiled. This used to cause a certain amount of confusion but by and large it sorted itself out, with a scolds here and there, the puddings were all collected and stored away till Christmas. Peace reigned until another year!

Then the great moment on Christmas Day when the pud was removed from the boiling water in which it had been simmering for about two hours, The cloth was taken off, paper removed, I remember Mom standing there, tight lipped, we children were dead quiet, even my dad looked very serious, he would he get the blame if things were not exactly to specification! Then there was a smile of deep satisfaction when the Pudding emerged, a lovely rich dark brown, with a smell of heaven coming from it. It was the moment of truth! We all knew it would taste as nice as it looked. Peace would reign in our house over Christmas! We children thought it wonderful when Mom would pour a drop of brandy over the pud and light it with a match, to see a blue flame lick round it, it was moments like this that added to the of mystique of Christmas.

# DECEMBER DAYS AND DATES: THE SENSATION OF THE MIDLANDS



On 20 December 1923 the Palais de Danse issued a souvenir of the third anniversary of the building. It was described as the 'sensation of the Midlands- a building that is twice daily the scene of the best dancing at the lowest imaginable rates of admission'.

<b>Boxing Day Carnival</b>	<b>8.00pm-1.00am</b>	5/- admission
<b>Christmas Fancy Dress Carnival</b>	<b>December 28th</b>	2/6
<b>New Year's Eve Ball</b>		7/6

Arthur Unitt writes: 'I was born in Ickniel Square in 1922 not far from Ingleby Street / Monument Road where the Palais stood. It had a revolving bandstand and I used to stand outside collecting balloons and other trinkets from the revelers, all in their tuxedos and ladies in their ball gowns'.

Audrey Spettigue adds: "Outside it looked nothing, it was like a tin shed but it was a really nice beautiful place inside. In the centre of the room there was a water fountain. The Lord Mayor used to have lots of do's there. I used to stand outside and watch all the ladies and gentleman in their beautiful clothes going in and there were numerous popular bands that played there. Roy Fox used to come to Birmingham a lot and he may have played there. Jimmy Spettigue, my brother in law once got in during one of the Lord Mayor's do's and his hat ended up in the fountain! My husband was called from home to help get him out of there. He visited it when on leave during the War. He was on a submarine and unfortunately he went down, he was only about 28 years old".



## Ladywood then and now

This was the corner of Monument Road and Ickniel Port Road as it looked in 1962 and as it looks today from the same spot. The curved building with the impressive entrance is the Municipal Savings Bank which was built in 1924, although the bank operated from there since 1919. The swimming baths can just be seen in the distance. Hickman's greengrocery shop and Landon's are two of the other shops. Hickman's moved into premises on St Vincent Street and finally closed down on Christmas Eve 2000. The modern building, which replaced these is Ladywood Fire Station. This part of Monument Road is now a dead end leading into the carpark of Ladywood Arts & Leisure Centre, formerly Ladywood School. Ladywood School (1972-1990) was built to replace Osler Street School.

## I WISH .....

Extracts from the Christmas 1957 edition of 'The Oracle', The Magazine of The Oratory Secondary Modern School, loaned by former pupil Jim Cunningham. Jim is the caretaker at the modern Oratory Primary School.

'I wish that boys and girls were born without hair so that you didn't have the trouble of combing it every morning. And, also, when you were married you wouldn't have bills to meet for your wife's hair'.  
*Peter Moran*

'I wish that I had two heads. Then, when I was alone I could talk to myself'.  
*Pat Jarvis.*

'I wish that teachers would get better pay. Then they'd be better tempered'.  
*James Farrell.*

'I wish that boys and girls who have just left school were not so looked down upon and taken for granted. Reason: I'm leaving soon and am frightened to death'.  
*Noreen Boyle.*

'I wish there were no swear words. I don't like being sworn at'.  
*Michael McKeown.*

'I wish I could give £5,000 to spastics, blind, deaf and dumb, because I should like to thank God for my health and happiness'.  
*Cecelia Martin.*

'I wish that we could live our lives twice. Then we could profit by our first mistakes'.  
*Mary Blackburn.*

# 'Goo `n play up yer own end'

The Brew `Us Bugle Sports Page

**John Richmond was the captain of Osler Street School F.C. during the 1952-53. This is the story of the season based on an article he wrote in his school exercise book at the time.**

## OSLER STREET MISS OUT ON CHAMPIONSHIP BY ONE POINT

Osler Street started the season with a very poor result when we lost to Barford Road 0-3. I put through my own goal after a misunderstanding with our goalkeeper. This was followed by an altogether better performance. We were in on tiptop form and thrashed St Patrick's 9-1, but I gave away the penalty from which they scored. After that we beat Hope Street 6-0. We were 1-0 up at half time in what I call a swimming pool. It really was wet! With the wind against us we scored five second half goals.. Our centre forward scored three in two and a half minutes. Against Wattville Road he scored three in as many minutes! Against top of the league Handsworth New Road we managed to win 1-0 by a fluky goal from our right back just on the centre circle line. He took a wild shot at goal, a good shot I must say, the sun was in the goalies eyes, and he fumbled with it and pushed it into their net. The back tried to kick it off their line but it

was all in vain. When we beat St. Thomas's 6-3, we were twisted for two goals. The ball rolled out for a goal kick to us. The outside left ran after it and centred it, one of the forwards headed for a goal and the other one was offside, but we still won easily. We beat Barford Road in the Villa Cup 4-1. They had two Birmingham backs but there was no holding us. We took on Hope Street, that is all they had, hope! We blinded them 7-0. We then trounced Handsworth New Road 6-3 in the next round of the Villa Cup. I'll never forget the game. We scored two very quick goals, our centre half hit a lovely drop shot from the half way line, which went straight in the top corner of the net. Our goalie made two slips, which resulted

in goals. We started the second half and I came near to scoring with in minutes of the kick off. Then just after that we scored to make it 3-2. Then this midget I was marking ran towards our open goal. Just outside our area I caught up with him and I was just about to kick it off his foot when I slipped on top of him. The whistle went for a penalty. I used some language to the referee! They took the penalty to the right of our goal. The referee said 'take it again' because our goalie moved. They put it wide to the left. They scored just after to make it 3-3. We scored again to put us 4-3 in the lead. They hit the post, but we held out and scored two more to make it 6-3. I had one of my top form moments as we won 3-0 against Wattville Road and then we beat Barford Road won 5-3 and how the wind howled and how it snowed! It was not a very good game. Osler Street beat St. Thomas's 6-0. We scored two goals in about three minutes. That was the score until midway through the second half. I ran through on my own and caught the goalie out of position and scored, but a back pushed it out. Then it happened, there was a free kick about twenty yards out. There was



OSLER STREET'S FOOTBALL			
GAMES	W	D	L
BARFORD ROAD	0	3	0-3
ST. PATRICKS	9	1	Pen
HOPE STREET	6	0	
WATTVILLE ROAD	4	0	
HANDSWORTH NEW ROAD	1	0	
ST. THOMAS'S	6	3	
BARFORD ROAD (VILLA CUP)	4	1	
HOPE STREET	7	0	
HANDSWORTH NEW ROAD (VILLA CUP)	6	3	
WATTVILLE ROAD	3	0	
BARFORD ROAD	5	3	
ST. THOMAS'S	9	0	Pen
KING'S NORTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL	2	4	
ST. ALBAN'S	2	1	
ORATORY	6	1	Pen
ORATORY	7	0	Pen
ST. ALBAN'S	3	1	
HANDSWORTH NEW ROAD	1	0	

OSLER STREET F.C.			
OPPONENT	SCORE	DATE	VENUE
BARFORD ROAD	0-3	20	HOME
ST. PATRICKS	9-1	27	AWAY
HOPE STREET	6-0	30	HOME
WATTVILLE ROAD	3-0	6	HOME
HANDSWORTH NEW ROAD	1-0	13	AWAY
ST. THOMAS'S	6-3	20	HOME
BARFORD ROAD (VILLA CUP)	4-1	27	AWAY
HOPE STREET	7-0	30	HOME
HANDSWORTH NEW ROAD (VILLA CUP)	6-3	6	AWAY
WATTVILLE ROAD	3-0	13	HOME
BARFORD ROAD	5-3	20	HOME
ST. THOMAS'S	6-0	27	HOME
KING'S NORTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL	2-4	24	AWAY
ST. ALBAN'S	2-1	31	AWAY
ORATORY	6-1	7	HOME
ORATORY	7-0	14	HOME
ST. ALBAN'S	3-1	21	AWAY
HANDSWORTH NEW ROAD	1-0	28	AWAY

snow on the ground but I didn't worry and toe-poked it, it went about four inches off the ground. A back was just about to stop it when my cousin Joe, a clever inside left kicked his foot for the ball; it went straight under their feet and into the net. We then went out of the Villa Cup losing 2-4 against King's Norton Grammar School and never fought so hard all through the season. St. Alban's was a tough game for us, but we won 2-1 before twice taking on The Oratory and winning 6-1 and 7-0! I scored in the 6-1 walkover, I had a bad foot and had to play right half I pushed up the ball to Ronnie Kelly. He pushed the ball between the defence to me, I ran to the extreme right and shot for goal. He caught it but pushed it over the line for a goal. I scored again, in the 7-0 victory, from the right half position. I had just missed a sitter with my left and the ball came to me about ten yards out, a nice bouncing ball, I slammed it with all I'd got into the back of the net. Then against St. Alban's we won 3-1. The game against Handsworth New Road was the game, which decided the league championship. There were about 400 kids watching us. They scored two goals and Joey then scored to reduce the arrears. The referee gave a penalty against us for nothing at all! We'd certainly have got an equalizer but they scored off a penalty to make it 3-1. They were on really good form. Altogether it was a great season for Osler Street and we lost by just one point.