

NORTHWOOD IN LIVING MEMORY

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS

by Clive Allen

Earliest memories of Northwood are in Westbury Road, over the border in Moor Park. In the late 1940s it was still a stony track full of potholes which were flooded in wet weather. The only houses then were nos. 13-23, all along the north side bordering the southern end of the golf course. There was a large black pipeline running from south-west to north-east across the rough ground next to the course. It might still be there now covered with grass. Westbury Road was developed after 1958. The Fairway was also undeveloped in the late 40s. In Wolsey Road just after the war no. 98 The Croft was the PNEU, a kindergarten school. This has long since been a private house

In our house in Moor Park Road there was a small kitchen and breakfast room with a coal fired boiler. There was a large wooden clothes rack suspended from the ceiling, raised and lowered by a pulley. Outside was a mangle which squeezed water from clothes etc after washing. The sitting room was heated by a peat *[where from]* fire which gave off a lovely heat in the winter. There was no heating upstairs apart from electric fires, and in really cold weather the windows were sometimes iced-up inside.

At this time Northwood was still lit by gas lamps and I remember a chap going round on his bike lighting them with a long pole. The gas lamps were replaced with electricity, the orange sodium lights, in 1953.

Milk was delivered by horse drawn cart from Park Farm Dairies in Ducks Hill Road. I had fun sitting up on the milk-cart and driving the horse sometimes, pretending it was a stage-coach. As well as milk, bread and groceries could be delivered to your door. There was a chap called Lucas who delivered groceries in his lorry.

Winters were more snowy then and with all the coal fired houses the air was much more polluted. Thick fogs were far more frequent and there was the Great Smog of December 1952 which lasted for days and even out here in the suburbs you could not see across the road at

times through this grey-green smoke filled fog. After the clean-air act in 1956 air quality was greatly improved although we still had plenty of winter fogs. Ten years later we had the Big Freeze with thick snow on the ground from December 1962 through to March. Traffic seemed to manage and trains actually kept running. Ice on Ruislip Lido was about eight inches thick and was great for skating on.

Back in the 1950s everything was much freer. We could happily run around playing with wooden swords, or cap guns which were very realistic. Yes we did actually play cowboys and Indians in those days. Imagine what would happen nowadays if a child walked down Green Lane with a (toy) gun in its holster or were playing in the woods firing off their cap-guns.

Years ago we had a fully staffed Police Station and for many years there was an officer on duty at the zebra crossing on Green Lane by the Station to see people safely across, especially when children were coming to or from school in the rush hour. There was less traffic in those days along Green Lane. Now you rarely see a policeman from one month to the next.

I remember seeing cattle being driven down Joel St in Northwood Hills from their field to the farm *[Joel Street Farm]* before it became a vet's clinic. This would not be possible now with the volume of traffic.

Education

At school in the early 50s we started at 9am and finished at 4 or 4.15pm in winter, and 4.30 in summer. If the weather was too bad for games in the afternoon we were taken in crocodile formation for walks around Northwood, or if it was really bad we organised charades or games indoors which was great fun. Discipline was very strict and you could get a beating with the gym-shoe, a size ten, for something trivial like leaving your towel by the pool after swimming sessions. Severe misdemeanours got the cane.

Transport

Through the 1950s the Met line had the old brown slam door carriages with eight seats each side of the compartment. I recall one winter morning, when there was a lot of ice, the train couldn't get up the slight incline over the bridge crossing the Pinner Road. The old Northwood Station which had been there since 1887 was demolished and a new station was built in 1962. Additional rail tracks were laid which allowed fast trains to bypass the station. The old carriages were replaced by the modern silver coloured open plan types.

Moor Park Station which had been a simple wooden halt was also rebuilt in 1960 and the old brick bridge over the Pinner Road was replaced by the present iron bridge in 1961. Steam trains ran to and from Marylebone and Aylesbury and beyond at certain times. The last steam train through Northwood was in 1966. Journey times to London have not changed after all these years though frequency of trains is now much better. There was a time not so long ago that there were only three trains an hour into London outside the rush hour.

Years ago there were only two bus services that I remember; the 183 which ran all the way to Golders Green and the 347 Greenline from Uxbridge to Hemel Hempstead. The service was very infrequent. It is only in recent years that the 282 to Ealing and the 133 to Ruislip and Uxbridge were introduced.

Entertainment

Back in the 1950s and 60s there were no computers, internet, mobile phones or many of the electrical gadgets that we have now. We made our own entertainment and games. We had our first television in 1953 just before the Coronation. I think it was a nine inch screen with a large glass magnifier. There was only one channel and that was on for only a few hours a day.

Through to the swinging 60s there was a lot more local entertainment than there is now. We had the Rex cinema in Northwood Hills, the Langham in Pinner, one in North Harrow, one in Rayners Lane and two in Ruislip. Now you have to go to Uxbridge, Watford or Harrow to see a film. We had the Acre Hall in the Pinner Road, demolished in the 1980s, now Jasmin Close. There were dances to live groups every Friday in the

mid 60s with some disco music. The Who played there one night. There were also dances in the Church Hall in Oaklands Gate. There were dances and private parties in the former Boys' Club in Hallowell Road, the building set back off the road. There were also social events at the Tennis Club in Carew Road.

Looking back at these events when a lot of people smoked, the air inside the hall was dreadful. Now there hardly seems to be any local events to attract a younger crowd. Besides, the 'music' played now has changed beyond recognition compared to the hit tunes of the 1960s and 70s.

The Shops of Former Times

(Please note that the dates given here should only be used as a guide, and from the 1980s dates are mostly when a shop existed when the survey was done. Shops in the High Street are not included) As this is intended as personal memories I shall not go into a great history of all the shops through the years, but I do have such a record going back to earliest times when the first shops appeared in the late 1890s in Green Lane opposite Dene Road, known as The Pavement.

Thirty years ago we had a very good variety of shops in Green Lane. Starting at the car park opposite Dene Road on the south side; at no. 24 there had been a tobacconist/confectioners since before 1906. Rhodes was the last from 1959-86. It later became the Maharaja Indian Restaurant.

At no. 26 there was Darvills Music Store 1923-59, then Munions. It became Green Lane Electric from 1970-83. Next at no. 28, the Old Vienna Delicatessen 1959-70, then Christians, was a popular meeting place for coffee and a chat. Bennetts, then Aliens, was a good greengrocers at no. 30 from 1923-86. Upstairs Mrs Bennett had an employment registry for domestic helps, cooks, nannies, etc. The shop then became the Impressive Dry Cleaners. Further up at no. 38 the Express Dairy had a small food store from 1959-90, then a charity shop.

Before it became hairdressers, no. 40 was Sainsburys Grocers from 1924-67. This was before it became a leading supermarket. There was a counter on each side with staff in white caps and overalls. On one side was cold meats, cheese etc.

and the other side was general groceries. Chairs were available for customers to sit down if they wished while waiting to be served. The scene couldn't have changed since the stores earliest times.

Next at no. 42 was Salmons, hardware, taken over by Cullens in 1970 then W.H. Cullen, grocers from 1983-96. This then became the Abbey Building Society. Next door W.H. Cullen had been a long established upmarket grocer from 1923 through to 1996. At no. 48 was Macfisheries, fishmongers, from 1923-77 then Gerrards greengrocers. The shop later became a hairdresser.

Clive Parade replaced the Northwood Hotel on the corner of Maxwell Road in 1965-6. The first shops were West, butchers, at no. 11 from 1970-83. Homevision had a long run at no. 9 from 1970-93 when it became a travel agent. Bowleys shoe shop moved from across the road to its present site in 1966.

Along Maxwell Road the shops have changed regularly. One of the earliest was Clarks, bakers, in 1966, then Sharmans, chemist, who had moved up from the bottom of Green Lane. Then there was Bishops, the first supermarket in Northwood from 1966-83. This then became The Complete Golfer. Lastly on this side was The Reindeer Pub, which was demolished in 2009.

On the other side of Maxwell Road is the second oldest parade of shops, dating back to the early 1890s. On the corner of Murray Road was Caroline Ladies' Shop in 1959. It was a travel Agents for many years and by 2003 a nurses surgery. At no. 23 was Elizabeth's Cake Shop from 1959-70, then Wenzels bakers. Next door has been an ironmongers/hardware store ever since it first opened a hundred years or more ago. It was Careys from 1910 to the early 1980s. No. 19 was The International Stores, grocers, in the 1920s to the late 50s before it became a Chinese restaurant. They also had the premises next door.

Fine Fare had a small supermarket for a time in the 80s before it became Bottoms Up, wine store. Before that in the 1970s it was Hudsons, grocers. Leonard French had a gentlemen's and school outfitters through the 1950s and 70s at no. 9 before it became Nationwide. A little further up Freeman Hardy Willis was a long established shoe shop at no. 5-7 from 1923 to 1988. Since then it has been a cafe under various names.

Upon the bridge a major change came when Waitrose was opened in 1987. Before the store came there was a drive going down to Colliver Fisher's garage and motor works, where the car park is now beside the railway.

On the corner of Station Approach in Green Lane the National Provincial had a bank in the 1970s it then became Abbey National. Another long standing shop was Baldwins Hairdressers at no. 60 in 1959, then Philipsharon. After being a betting Shop then a phone shop it became Steve's, barbers. At no. 64b Kerley had his barbers shop from 1934 to 63, after which it became Steve's. This must hold the joint record along with Jackdaw for the longest period for being the same type of business in Northwood.

By 1983 The Madison Bowl Chinese Takeaway had replaced the Tara Coffee Shop. A little further up at no. 72a Cooke had a pet supplies and corn merchants store until 1999. This then became a kitchen studio. Hedges had a nice antique shop at no. 74 in the 1970s and early 80s; this later became Pressed For Time and Space, hairdressers. Lastly on the corner with Hallowell Road, Pizza Hut had replaced the Midland Bank by 2006 which had been there since 1936.

Going back to the corner of Dene Road and working our way up the north side of Green Lane, there are just as many changes over the years. Fullers Tea Rooms stood on the corner, which became the site of The Misty Moon PH. Through the 1950s and 60s it was a popular venue for morning coffee and gossip. The decor was very 1920s and 30s with small tables and round backed wooden chairs of that period. Next door at no. 29 was Andrews Upholsterers then Boyes from around 1959 to 2006.

At no. 31 was Sharmans, chemist, from 1923-86. Then at no. 33 was an off licence/wine store for many years until around 2005. For many years the Post Office was on the corner of Oaklands Gate until 1999, when it became Ask the Italian restaurant. Ryders Drapers was another very long standing shop from 1923 through to around 1970 when the Nat West Bank expanded and took over its premises. Another family shop was next door at no. 41. Rawlinsons Stationers and Booksellers was here from 1912 to 1959. It was Arthur Edmunds in the 1970s and closed in 2009.

There was a good greengrocer at no. 43, E.H. Wilson, through the 50s and 70s. The premises were taken over by Edmunds by 1983. Since then it has changed hands frequently. Before it became a charity shop, Warboys had a butchers here from the early 1920s through to the 80s. Martins Newsagents was at no. 51 for at least forty years and closed in 2009. Next door Cullens had a good wine shop from around 1923 to the early 80s.

Further up the hill at no. 61 was the Bluebird Cafe, a popular meeting place in the 1960s. This was extended and became Harts Wine Bar by 1983. By 1997 there was a lot of trouble here with rowdy drunks coming out at closing time late in the evening and it was closed down. Since then it has been a succession of restaurants.

At no. 65 Bowleys had a shoe shop here for many years before moving to Clive Parade. Also in the 1950s to the early 80s Garners Bakers was here. It later became an opticians. Then there was a good travel and leather goods shop at Descours from the 1950s. By the early 80s the premises had become part of the Woolwich Estate Agents then Harts. Note a lot of these shops have expanded and been taken over by larger shops. I have only mentioned some of the shops which were here over the years.

On the corner of Eastbury Road was Colliver Fishers Motor Show Room [see Fig below]. They also had a garage and taxi service. On the wall outside was a large clock. By 1983 it had become an expensive furniture showroom. It later became the Blockbuster video store in the late 1990s.

Rowland Place did not exist before 1961. There was a hedge and a high bank with Claremont behind. The shops and flats were built in 1961-62 and have changed hands many times. The estate agents and Lloyds Bank have been there the longest. There were originally four shops at nos. 8-12 which by the 1970s had been absorbed into The Linen Chest. This became Grosvenor Galleries. Howards Interiors at nos. 11 and 12 replaced some of Grosvenor Galleries and by 2000 had become the Tai Pan Chinese Takeaway.

Years ago the shops all shut on Sundays, early closing Wednesdays and some even on a Saturday afternoon. Many of the shops had canopies drawn across the pavement to keep the rain off shoppers and to protect the windows

from the sun. In the 1970s and early 80s we were really spoilt for choice. Taking 1970 as an example, in Green Lane and Maxwell Road we had no fewer than five greengrocers/fruiterers, four butchers, a fishmonger, two hardware shops, five ladies hairdressers, two grocers, three cafes a good selection of mens and ladies clothes shops and six estate agents. Of all the original food outlets we now have just one baker.

How Northwood Has Changed in Sixty Years

Up until the 1960s Northwood had changed very little since WW2 but it was in the '70s that many of the big older houses with large gardens were demolished and replaced by small estates of flats and smaller houses. Let's go around Northwood and discover what it used to be like and when changes were made. I shall try to cover this area by area.

As mentioned earlier, Westbury Road was developed in the late 1950s. Going along Batchworth Lane, Eastbury Farm stood off Woodside Avenue between The Fairway and Farm Way. The farm closed many years ago and the barns and farmhouse itself was finally demolished around 2006-7. There is an aerial view of this on Google Earth. A private gated development of houses now stands on the site.

Further along Batchworth Lane is Grove Farm on the left. There were quite extensive fields and barns behind the farm which were developed into Grove Farm Park in the late 1970s and early 80s. A little further on the left the new development of houses stand in what used to be the 'Rugby Field' at St Martin's School.

Continuing up the hill towards Batchworth Heath is a partially hidden turning into Farm Road, now an overgrown path. A footpath continues over a slight hill across to Rickmansworth Road coming out opposite to the entrance of Mount Vernon Hospital. Up to the late 1950s this path crossed open country through grassy fields, as Kewferry Drive had not yet been built on where the footpath ran. By 1963 houses had sprung up and the footpath was fenced in with gardens each side. Neighbouring Thirlmere Gardens was developed by 1973.

Coming down Rickmansworth Road and into Ducks Hill Road on the right is the old farmhouse to Park Farm. Many years ago this

was a dairy, then an equestrian centre. This closed, and a large Health and Fitness Centre opened in 1995.

In recent years Ducks Hill Road has changed a lot with many houses being replaced with blocks of smart flats. Up Ducks Hill and into Jackets Lane on the right; the footpath is very old and was always an impassable quagmire, but has now been cleared and is a pleasant walk across to White Hill, the road to Harefield.

Retracing our route and continuing along Rickmansworth Road past Green Lane we pass a new block of flats on the right which have been built on the site of The True Lovers Knot PH. There had been a pub here for many years but not long ago it became derelict and was finally gutted by fire. A little further along is the Belair Restaurant, previously The Ripple Tea Rooms. This was the oldest shop in Northwood, going back to the mid 1800s. It became a restaurant by 1970. At the same time the garage and motor works next door closed. The Northwood Golf Club clubhouse was rebuilt in 1972-73.

Across the road from the Golf Club stood some large houses. The Manor, previously called The Thorns was a nurses' home for Mt. Vernon Hospital. This was replaced by the Moray House flats in 1977. The Manor Lodge is the only one of the original group of houses left apart from Kiln Farm. I will deal with the major changes on the left of Rickmansworth Road shortly but first continue to Highfield Road on the left. Lodge Farm up to the late 1890s stood here, replaced by May Lodge. The barns of the farm remained and were used by Page the Builders until a few years ago when new houses were built.

Carry on along the main road towards Northwood Hills and just past the hospital is the much altered Hundred Acre farmhouse. Behind the house was the Express Dairies Milk Depot but flats are now on this site.

On the other side of the road is Waller Drive. The Pinner Road Council School stood here and closed in 1975. The Rex Cinema closed in 1973. The last film showed was James Bond's Live and Let Die. Since then there was a supermarket under several names. The last was left empty for some time, but now demolished to make way for more flats.

Going back along the Pinner Road to the Iron Bridge and right into The High Street, there were a couple of old cottages on the corner which had been derelict for some time. They were demolished in 1953. Also on the corner with Hallowell Road was a Methodist church and the Pinner Liberal Synagogue. These went in 1981 when James Court, the old peoples' home was built.

Hallowell Road and most of old Northwood have hardly changed over the years and apart from the cars looks very much like it would have been a hundred years ago. Nos. 112-114 Hallowell Road, now offices, used to be Read's Hardware shop. This closed and was derelict for some time. Further up on the left at nos. 26-28 was Sidney Williams, grocers. I well remember this shop which had a single counter, bare wooden floorboards and some chairs for customers to sit while ordering their provisions. It was a typical old village stores stocking everything. After 1959 it became A.W. Pope to 1967. It then changed hands and Ebornes the florists and nurserymen took it over in 1968. They had greenhouses and a large nursery in Chester Road where Wychwood Way is now. The nursery closed down in the late 1960s and the florists shop in 1974.

Going down Green Lane then left into Maxwell Road then into Murray Road, this area of Northwood between Green Lane and Rickmansworth Road has perhaps seen the greatest changes. Gone are the large houses with acres of land to be replaced by estates of flats. At the bottom of Murray Road on the left stood South Hill and on the opposite side was The Hatch, a fine late Victorian house, the upper story half-timbered and set in a large garden with fir trees which are still there. This house was demolished and Grangedale Close constructed during 1968-71. The land where South Hill was sited was also developed around 1970-71.

On the corner of Maxwell Road and Rickmansworth Road just below Northwood College was Soval. This was demolished around 1973 and the land built on by Soval Court. I seem to remember allotments or nursery gardens running down from the house to the main road. All the land between Maxwell Road and Murray Road was re-developed around this time.

Further along Rickmansworth Road past Moray House was Santa Rosa set back in acres of land with an entrance in Green Lane. This finally went and the land was developed around 1970-72 into Myrleside Close. Still in Green Lane, Dell Court has been demolished and a new block of flats built.

The Glen was built in 1958-59 on the land occupied by The Firs. This was one of the first major developments in Northwood. On the other side of the road where there once were fields was to become St John's College around 1955. This in turn became The London Bible College and now The London College of Divinity.

On the corner of Dene Road and Green Lane blocks of flats were built in 1970-71 on the site of Dr Thompson's house and the two houses next door in Dene Road were pulled down and replaced by flats. All the original houses in this part of Dene Road have gone except one. Continuing around the corner along Dene Road stood another large House, Oakdene, previously called Tower Dene in the 1930s. This was gone by 1968 when the houses in Fox Dell were built. Further on just past the junction with Hill Road on the right, Miss Maycock had the Northwood Nursery School at nos. 56-58 for many years. When this closed around 1972 the land was sold and blocks of flats were built, now High Elms Close and Harrison Close.

Hill Road was for many years a pot-holed unmade stony lane until it was surfaced around 2007. In Moor Park Road some of the land backing on to residents' gardens was compulsory purchased and Mezen Close was built in the late 1970s.

Going back along Green Lane into Eastbury Road; on the corner of Rofant Road was Terry's School, now Northwood Prep School. They moved to Sandy Lodge Road in Moor Park in 1982 on the site of the old Manor of the Moor. Nos. 44-60 Eastbury Road were built on the former school playing fields in the late 1980s. There has been much development up Eastbury Avenue with only a few of the original houses still standing.

Lastly back in Green Lane just past the sports hall entrance to St. Helen's School were two houses where the school coach park is now. There was St Helen's Junior School, now gone, and next door St Philomena's Convent. They were still standing in 1971. The convent was derelict for some time and demolished in 1977. Little St Helens which was next door still stands.

There are only a couple of the original older houses left in the lower part of Watford Road on the right hand side just past Carew Road. Ravenswood Park was developed in 1966-7. Ravenswood was a large Edwardian house set in acres of land with ancient oaks adjoining the footpath bordering the garden. Further up Watford Road several of the large old houses still stand being in the Frithwood Conservation area.

In the Eastbury Estate the old Eastbury House was gutted by fire and demolished in 1969. This was formerly a hotel, The Chateau de Madrid before the last war.

That just about completes this tour around Northwood. If any readers would like to make additional comments or provide information or even corrections, please feel free to do so.
[via RNELHS]

Sources

Apart from my own recollections my thanks to:

The Local Studies at Uxbridge Library

Kelly's Local directories

Old OS Maps and

Assistance from various long time residents



