

Memories of Carol McCorquodale

Kiln Cottage in Westfield Lane

Westfield Lane was that part of what is now Westfield Road after the latter had joined Kiln Lane at its western end. There was one house next to Westfield, then Kiln Cottage. There were no other houses in Westfield Lane. Later, half the garden was sold off and another bungalow built there.

I moved to Wheatley as a 6 year old, in 1960. We lived at Kiln Cottage in Westfield Lane. My father was William Howard Buckley & he became Principal of the Oxford College of Technology, later to be Oxford Polytechnic - and now Oxford Brookes University. My mother, Margaret, was a housewife. There was one other house at the end of the lane, then it was all fields. On the other side of us was what I called "Ivy Wood" - an area of trees covered in ivy that bordered our drive. Beyond Ivy Wood was a general area that had once been home to lime kilns, and was known as "The Pit" - where our other neighbours, the Smiths lived.

The Smiths had built 2 new bungalows at the top of the Pit, to the back of Kiln Cottage - in one lived Bill Smith, a builder, his wife Gert & their dog Prince. Gert was an avid Oxford Utd fan & went to all their matches, home & away. The other bungalow was called "Linden Lea", occupied by John Smith (Bill's nephew) his wife Muriel, their daughters Linda & Ellen, & Muriel's mother, known as Grandma Palmer. John worked at the saw mill in the Pit, then later did nights at Morris's Cowley works.

A third bungalow was being built in between Bill's & John's, for another Smith, but can't recall the name.

Bill Smith helped Dad carry out a lot of alterations at Kiln Cottage - 2 bedrooms were put in the loft, and the dining room was made downstairs with wooden floors & large French windows opening on to the sunny patio, overlooking the large sloping garden that led down to Westfield Lane. In the back garden there was an enormous weeping willow tree in the middle of the lawn when we first moved in - John Smith was asked to cut it down, allowing more light to come into the kitchen. There was a sumach tree outside the kitchen window, with leaves that turned flame red in autumn. As the Smiths finished work on their bungalows, a rough road was built linking the Pit with the road that joined the A40, & Dad built a driveway & a car port to the back of the house - this eventually became the main entrance, allowing access to the A40 & Oxford without having to go through the village.

Westfield Lane was bordered on one side by wild flowers & a hedge of sweet smelling dog roses. The other side was the wall of the garden to the Borns' house. Linda & Ellen Smith, Caroline Born, and I were all friends & used to play together in our gardens & the fields. Caroline's father had hung a rope swing from a tree at the bottom of their garden, and we spent many happy hours taking it in turns to swing across the stream that ran through the garden & on into the field.

At the top of Westfield Lane the road divided into Westfield Road & Kiln Lane. In the middle was a cottage occupied by the Hilsdens, Mrs Hilsden was often outside leaning on her railing & chatting to passers by. She was a lovely, friendly lady. Inside her tiny kitchen was a great copper used to heat water. I would sometimes be invited into the cottage for tea and cake. Further up Westfield Road was a large house occupied by Mrs Tame, an elderly lady who gave piano lessons.

At the top were the Allans, who did the milk round. Their daughter, Catherine lived in Kiln Lane.

Other memories of Wheatley

The Sun Inn was painted white at that time, & the area opposite which now has houses was just waste ground which bordered on to the recreation ground. In the centre of the village, Gosticks was the main grocery store, and was self-service i.e. an early "supermarket". It was absolutely rammed with goods, & had freezers in the middle of the shop. Further down the High St was Mrs Bax's grocery shop, where you went in & asked for goods at the counter. We had a weekly delivery from Mrs Bax, & , unlike Gosticks, she did Greenshields stamps! But she didn't stock such a wide range of goods.

Walde's was the drapers , where you could buy anything from handkerchiefs, vests, socks, wool, sewing needs, all sorts of things.

Samuels the butchers also had a fish & chip shop, as youngsters we often bought "a tanner's worth" of chips. That's 6d in old money!

I went to the primary school , the headmaster was Mr Evans. Opposite the school was Dodds the bakers, where we bought 1d buns & sweets from jars. The school was partly in the old building & then there were newer classrooms for years 5 & 6. The teachers for those years were Mr Stimpson, and Mr Brooker. I was very happy at the primary school, I think it was a good little school. After this I went to Holton Park, cycling there every day with 2 friends.

When I was about 10 ('63) I started going to the Congregational church Sunday school & choir - run by the Brocks, a young American couple. They made everything fun & lively so it was enjoyable to attend although as a family we were not church or chapel goers. The C of E church was rather more formal.

My mother helped with the Infant Welfare Clinic at the Merry Bells, she was in charge of the Delrosa rose hip syrup, and orange juice which was given out to the young mums. My friend's mum Esme Lyne did the baby weighing. Mum also helped with meals on wheels.

I read in the archive about May day celebrations but I can't recall these in the 60s. There was usually a fete or two at Col Haldare's house around Whit weekend but don't recall a May Queen. There was a yearly Festival of Queens held at Oxford Town Hall, which involved a procession of "queens" and their attendants chosen from schools around the area - presume it must have been a charitable event but can't remember the details.

At age 14 I started going to the Youth Club, next to the Secondary school in Littleworth Road, this was a thriving club with an excellent juke box that introduced me & my friends to Tamala Motown. Boys & girls from surrounding villages such as Forest Hill, Garsington & Stanton St John came to the Club as well as ones from Wheatley. There was table tennis and table football, & a "coffee bar. Going to Club on a Tuesday & Friday evening was a chance to mix with others out of school, & was the only place we grammar school girls could meet boys!

The Sandpiper was the pub in the village with music, very popular from 1970 onwards with all us youngsters. The Bridge Hotel on the edge of the village had a reputation for being a bit rough but had discos on Friday & Saturday nights, so sometimes went there as a teenager. The Brimpton Grange was the main place to go to at weekends for discos until 2 a.m. , everyone would head there after the pubs shut. I don't recall live music in Wheatley but there were concerts at the Town Hall in Oxford (Free, T Rex) and at the New Theatre.

We left Wheatley after my father died suddenly in 1974.