

The Harringay I remember.

Beginnings.

My wife, Jill and I were both born in the *Year of the Three Kings*, 1936.

My family moved into Harringay in early 1941 from the Archway, Holloway, when I was just four years old and I left in 1963, aged 27, with a wife, Jill and baby of 18 months, to emigrate to Barnehurst in darkest Kent. Part of Bexleyheath actually! We left Barnehurst in 1967, for Hillingdon in Middlesex, then back to Kent in 1970, to Gravesend, where we've been ever since!

Why my family moved to Harringay I was never told but, with the hindsight of age, it may be because my paternal grandparents lived in Burgoyne Road and, perhaps my dad stayed with them whilst Mum and I were evacuated to Northampton. I've no idea why we left Holloway in the first place!

I was born in the then St Mary's wing of the Whittington Hospital, only a few yards from the famous Whittington Stone:

The Whittington Stone is an 1821 monumental stone and statue of a cat at the foot of Highgate Hill, a street, in Archway. It marks roughly where it is recounted that a forlorn Dick Whittington, returning to his home from the city of London after losing faith as a scullion in a scullery, heard Bow Bells ringing from 4½ miles (7.2 km) away, prophesying his good fortune leading to the homage "Turn again Whittington, thrice Lord Mayor of London!"

At the time my family lived in MacDonald Road, just off Highgate Hill and near Junction Road Holloway. The road was named Brunswick Road on earlier maps and I assume that it was renamed after the First World War because it sounded too Germanic! My earliest memory is one of being held by my Dad to show to his mates and being surrounded by several faces. It was hazy and perhaps I'm being fanciful but I still have this remembrance of Dads pride. Our house had steps leading up the front door and as a small child I remember sitting on the steps watching the trolley buses which used the road as a stand, terminating their run up Holloway Road. Where they'd started I've no idea.

We moved to Duncombe Road just the other side of Holloway road and were then until the outbreak of war in 1939. I remember playing in the communal air-raid shelter with my tin box of toys, always kept there, just in case. I remember firemen coming through our house to fight a fire in the factory behind us, with one of them saying to a colleague "Through 'ere Fred" as he passed the hose though a gap in the fence! Throughout my childhood I always believed that's what firemen said when they were fighting fires! My dad didn't let me watch the fire directly, I just saw the glow through the frosted glass of our back door. Several days later Dad made me a ladder to fit on my pedal car and painted the car red and the ladder yellow! However, I used the ladder to climb the three feet high wall and got into next door's garden but couldn't get back! I remember being in trouble but not who rescued me!

I remember standing outside our house in Duncombe Road watching a fleet of the then new RT-class buses as they reversed down the street to collect children from the local school to take them to the railway stations presumably for evacuation. Where the drivers were unused

to the steering column gear boxes in the new buses, they hit several lamp posts in the street! I'm not sure of the date but I distinctly remember them having strangely coloured wheels. When was older I discovered that the early RT class buses had coloured flanges on their rear wheels! The nascent engineer in me was in operation even then!

Now to Harringay.

My Mum and I were evacuated to Northampton in 1941 but Mum didn't like being away from London, so we came back after only six months, to be with Dad, who'd stayed in London. He was in a reserved occupation and therefore wasn't allowed to join the forces to fight in the war. He was a skilled centre lathe turner, working for Negretti & Zambra, scientific instrument makers and because they were making instrumentation for the Royal Navy's ships, it meant that many men with his skills were essential for the manufacture of weapons and equipment as part of the war effort. Dad's principal job was to set up a number of centre lathes in a workshop for the largely female workers to turn out the thousands of components required for various kinds of military equipment. However, he was always falling out with his foreman (supervisor, for those who've never worked in a factory environment) and storming off to the army recruiting office only for them to refuse to sign him up! And would someone from Negretti's come and take him back - again!

I was told some years later that our house in Holloway was hit by a bomb after we'd left and then, just after we'd left Northampton, a stray bomb landed on the stone mason's yard opposite the house we were billeted in, hurling a tombstone through our bedroom window! And with the doodlebug flying bomb on the Ever Ready factory in 1944, missing us by only 300-400 yards, I had a lucky war!

We moved into 19 Stanhope Gardens in 1941 and stayed there until 1947, when we were evicted and moved to 63c Grand Parade, Green Lanes. The owner had moved to the west country for the duration and wanted her house back at the end of the war.

I began school at what was then Woodlands Park Infants School (presumably now part of Chestnuts Primary School) in 1941 and have class photos from 1941 and 1942. I went up into the Junior (boys) School around 1943-44 and in 1947 passed my "scholarship", as we called it (eleven-plus to younger readers!) to go on to Hornsey County Grammar School in Pemberton Road, just over Tottenham's border with Hornsey. I left Hornsey County in 1952, aged sixteen, to go to work. This was the usual age to leave school, although many left at fifteen, as did my wife. Coincidentally, the grammar school closed for good at the end of that summer term.

I remember about growing up in Harringay, especially during the war years, with adventures on bomb sites (our playgrounds!), collecting shrapnel from bombs and ack-ack guns. Bomb sites were our playgrounds. Several houses in Warwick Gardens, next to the railway line, where it met Stanhope, had been blitzed and remained as an empty bomb site until a number of pre-fabricated houses were built on it after the war. The oddest thing I remember about that site was a forlorn bath tub nestling amid the rubble! It somehow seemed spooky!

On the other side of the old London Tilbury & Southend Railway line was an area occupied by Harringay Arena, Harringay Stadium and another large building, known, if I remember correctly, as the Monikendum Bakery but I'm not too sure of the spelling. Harringay history nerds could put me right on that, as I never knew much about it! This building was actually on Green Lanes itself. Both it and the Arena were taken over by Kinlock's, the food

distributor, as a supply depot in the early 1960s. My wife got a job as a typist there until she left after our first child was born.

But, back to bomb site adventures, there was an empty but overgrown area beyond the stadium that was known to us kids as “Death Valley”! Why, I never knew but it was rumoured that people had been killed there - how, we never knew! It was a true adventure area for us with many shrubs and bushes, ideal for dens. However, I was always a bit scared and kept a lookout over my shoulder in case something (or someone) spooky should appear! I never admitted this to my friends but I dare say they all felt the same! We could get to it by way of under the railway bridge in the short cul-de-sac of Grafton Gardens, which actually led to a car parking area behind the stadium, but our preferred route was via the bomb site in Warwick Gardens and bunking over the railway lines! Sometimes we’d pause to put pennies on the track for trains to run over! We knew it was dangerous but we dared to anyway! The danger, although real, was minimal; trains were very slow then and, being steam and in need of maintenance, we’d hear them coming from a long way off. You couldn’t do it today because trains are faster and quieter but you have to remember that in wartime, maintenance of the railway infrastructure wasn’t a high priority. We even explored the beams and staunchions under the platforms of Harringay Station and listened to the people walking about on the platforms!

I particularly remember the night a doodlebug landed on the Ever-Ready factory about 350m from our house in Stanhope! I was woken up by a strange rushing sound over the house. Only later as I grew up did I realise the noise was the slipstream of the flying bomb as it fell, making me realise just how close it had been. Strangely, I didn’t hear the explosion but saw the results on my way to school the next day; the Ever-Ready factory was utterly destroyed! Oddly, I have no recollection of the effects of the blast on the school! I remember that Dad wouldn’t let me leave the house until he’d shaken all the shards of glass from the two small lime trees in our front garden where the blast had sucked out all our front windows! There’s a link, describing the graphic memories of someone who lived in Warwick Gardens on the night of the bomb:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/40/a3762740.shtml>. It’s worth a read.

I have no recollection of air raids but do remember hearing the ack-ack guns in Finsbury Park going off. However, air raid warnings were frequent and give me goose bumps to this day! We had a Morrison shelter in our downstairs bedroom which I slept in until the end of the war. I don’t recall living in fear but got more scared as I grew a bit older and realised what the Doodlebugs and V2 rockets could do! My friend Alan and I were always on the alert while walking to and from school, dropping to the ground when there was a big explosion as a V2 landed somewhere a way off.

One tale I must relate, happened not to me but my wife, Jill and her older brother, early in the war, when Green Lanes in Harringay was strafed by a German fighter plane. She herself has no recollection of it but was told the story by her brother who’s five older than her. They lived in Grand Parade, close to the Salisbury Hotel and had been walking in Green Lanes, when a German fighter roared overhead firing its guns along Green Lanes. He pulled her into a shop doorway for safety. We don’t know exactly when this happened but it must have been early, c.1940. My wife was about three or four so her brother would have been eight or nine. It was before my time in Harringay because I never heard the story.

Trams

For many years trams had run along Green Lanes from the Embankment at Westminster but, all the time I lived in Haringay, they terminated at Manor House. The tracks were still in place but hidden beneath the road surface, which consisted of tarred wood blocks, about the size of house bricks. One day, I suppose some time in 1944, workmen arrived to dig up Green Lanes to recover the tram tracks for the steel. They would pile up the wooden blocks in the side roads, where the locals would help themselves as a substitute for coal! However, they would also leave their equipment on the wood heaps, which included big jacks, used to prise the rails from the road foundation. Being a budding engineer, I found these jacks tempting to play with and I worked out how to raise one up to nearly full height of about 18 inches (nearly 50cm in new money!). Unfortunately, I also discovered, to my cost, that they had a quick-release mechanism, which I managed to trigger while my thumb was still on the lower anvil. I was lucky my thumb wasn't broken but it developed a massive bruise which lasted for weeks and eventually I lost the thumbnail! My dad was sympathetic, but only up to a point! It was my own fault; we learned the hard way not to meddle!

However, every so often, Dad would take me on the No.33 tram from Manor House, all the way to Westminster. I used to sit upstairs ("outside" it was still called), in the front seat, if possible and hang on tight as it careered downhill, wobbling frighteningly round the bend past Clissold Park! The best bit was going underground in Holborn Kingsway, to emerge beneath Waterloo Bridge on the Embankment. An inspector would open a wide level crossing gate across the road to allow the trams to cross and pass along the riverside until they terminated by Boadicea's statue. The other good bit about trams was that the seats were reversible, so that passengers could always sit facing the direction of travel. The fun bit at the terminus was to help the conductor reverse the seats for the return journey!

It was exciting to see the river, watching the tugs lowering their tall funnels to pass beneath the bridges.

I'm not sure when the trams stopped running as far as Manor House but as I got older the tram tracks were a real hazard to cyclists. We learned to keep our bike's wheels well clear of them!

I also remember the bonfires in Stanhope Gardens with the celebrations on VE night! Someone brought out a piano and there was singing and dancing and, probably much else but I was too young to know about that!

My Dad kept rabbits to supplement our food supplies. He made hutches for them and pens to let them nibble the lawn as he cleaned the hutches which got very smelly. I loved playing with them but was under no illusions why we had them; they were extra food! He would let me help with skinning and gutting them, which I found fascinating! But, he never let me watch him kill them.

Hinchcliffe – coal merchant – coal yard Haringay Station.

We used to get our coal delivered from Hinchcliffe's coal merchant, who had a horse-drawn dray to deliver around the streets. Remember, houses used coal fires; central didn't exist for most of us. The horse was a sad looking shire and the coaly (coalman) was a stocky man, who always seemed to look grumpy. Each coal sack contained 1 cwt (hundred-weight, 112 pounds = 51kg) and the coaly had to heft each sack from the cart and carry it through the house and dump it wherever the coal store was and there was usually more than one sack for each house! In Stanhope, our coal was stored at the back of the house opposite the toilet.

He probably wasn't well paid and was justified in feeling grumpy and put upon. He didn't seem sympathetic to his horse and on one occasion, the horse rebelled, rearing up and neighing loudly and the coalie had to struggle to restore order! It was quite frightening to me since I was standing on the pavement beside them while it was going on! The one thing I remember about the coal wagon was that the horse used to pee in the road, where he stood. It was like the Niagara Falls! We used to gather the horse droppings in buckets for our dads' gardens and allotments. Not my favourite job but my friend Mike thought it was fun to pick up pieces of dung and throw them at other kids. Especially the girls! No wonder we grew up resistant to a lot of diseases!

Cinema

As kids, we'd all go to Saturday morning flicks at the Coliseum Cinema, aka the Colly or Fleapit, on the corner of Green Lanes and St Ann's Road, to watch Flash Gordon battling the Emperor Ming and my favourites, the cowboy films of Bill Boyd in Hopalong Cassidy adventures!

When we got older, we had a number of top-notch cinemas within easy reach: the Ritz at Turnpike Lane, the Gaumont in Wood Green; the Astoria at Finsbury Park and the Rink, also at Finsbury Park. Our favourite was ever the Astoria, with its Art Deco interior and hacienda balconies either side of the screen but, best of all was its dark navy ceiling covered with twinkling lights, giving the impression of being under a starlit night sky! Magic!

Paper rounds – Turner's

Bike races around the perimeter road in Finsbury Park

Flying model gliders in Finsbury Park

First bike 7th birthday – cycled to Epping Forest with Mike Lens – got lost coming home– got back about 11 p.m. in the dark passing out Dads walking long St Ann's Road to the police station on the corner of Hermitage Road to report us missing! On the way home, we stopped at a café and asked for a bun and a drink but we'd only got a penny between us so the lady gave us a glass of water and a stale bun! On the way we ran into a bunch of men, we took for soldiers who turned out to be Italian POWs, who told us "We Italianos, we not know way to 'arringay!"

Second bike at 14 – Phillips - £14-18s-6d. Hire purchase – paid a third with my paper round wages. Morris's bike shop – corner of Umfreville Road

Harringay Arena & Stadium

Roller speedway in the Arena, with teams from America and Europe. This was a weekly entertainment which I often attended.

Motor cycle speedway of Friday evenings in the Stadium which I attended regularly. – which aping the slides on our bikes on the cinder covered car park – wrecking our rear tyres! Harringay Racers. Vic Duggan, champion rider for the Wembley Lions. Always an exciting evening.

Stock car racing

Ice hockey in the arena with Harringay Racers & kid's roller hockey in streets – Portland gardens, as the only street with a tarmac surface suitable for skating on! Scrounging broken hockey sticks from the arena
Dog racing – crowds – queues for buses
Hornsey County School games afternoon – football in the Stadium.

Stanhope Social Cub.

Jill (also from Harringay) and I got married in 1958 at St Paul's Church, Wightman Road and we were lucky enough to actually rent a small flat in the vicarage for the next 18 months. We had gone to the vicarage to arrange the wedding. The vicar, Derek Bond, told us he wanted to let the flat to a married student so, since I was a student and wanted to get married, he let us have it for the grand sum of 30 shillings a week (£1.50 in today's coinage!) The flat comprised two small rooms and a kitchenette, which had once been the old servants' quarters. We used to get better service from traders when we gave our address! We were very happy there but we wanted to start a family, so we managed to get a larger flat in Grand Parade, No.63a, actually below my Mum & Dad, who lived in 63c! Jill's family also lived in Grand Parade (No.4c), close to the Salisbury Hotel. She also attended the same schools but a year behind.



We started dating in about 1956, while attending the *Stanhope Social Club* which met every Monday evening in the then scout hut at the bottom of Stanhope Gardens. There must have been about a dozen of us regulars, a mix of half-and-half chaps and girls and, with opportunities for romance. I guess most of us had dated every one of the opposite sex at one time or another! It was never racy, but lots of smooching and jive. Afterwards, at about 10 p.m. we'd stroll along to a late-night café in Green Lanes,

almost opposite St Anne's Road. The building in Stanhope is now known as *The Chapel in the Valley*. We had a club reunion some years ago and it was good to see the old faces but sadly, although I kept in touch with some, they've all passed on, leaving just me and Jill!

Miscellaneous



The Anderson shelter. Source: Wikipedia.



Me sitting on the remains of our Anderson Shelter in 19 Stanhope Gardens, c.1944. Socks were always wrinkly then and boys always wore short trousers! I graduated to long trousers when I reached eleven years old!



The Morrison shelter

Link for doodlebugs: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-terrifying-german-revenge-weapons-of-the-second-world-war>

Hobbies kits – crane made by my dad following the destruction of the Ever-Ready factory by a doodlebug. Fretwork toys.

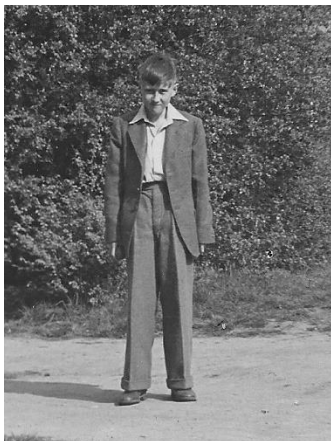


Pencil drawing by me of the St Paul's Vicarage, Wightman Road, Harringay, 1959.

Our flat was in the attic space – the small windows in the roof.



Turner's news agent shop to right of photo.



Me at 11 years old - first pair of long trousers! Day out at Epping Forest



Messing about with pals, age 14, in Chesterfield Gardens. Note the tie worn outside the pullover - the height of cool!