

# **A STREET IN DONCASTER**

**EARLSTON DRIVE, BENTLEY, DONCASTER  
1940 to 1955**

**W T ‘Bill’ Raynes**

**With contributions by  
Carol Edgar (née Pearson) and Carol Summerill (née Burkill)  
And notes by Grace Griffiths (née Jones)**

**A record of local history**

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**Editorial support: Ken Cooke**

**A record of local history. Completed 20 August 2021.**

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## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Introduction . . . . .	1
1 The Street . . . . .	2
2 The Surroundings . . . . .	5
3 The People . . . . .	9
4 Personal Memories of Bill Raynes . . . . .	14
5 Personal Memories of Carol Pearson . . . . .	21
6 Personal Memories of Carol Burkill . . . . .	28
7 The Residents: with notes by the authors . . . . .	32

## INTRODUCTION

In September 2009 I attended a reunion to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the Percy Jackson Grammar School, Adwick-le-Street. At that reunion I met Grace Griffiths and Carol Edgar who, like myself, had both lived on Earlston Drive, Bentley, during the 1940s and 1950s (as Grace Jones and Carol Pearson, respectively). I first challenged them – and myself – to recall the names of the residents of the fifty-two dwellings of the street during our years there. We succeeded for the most part, but in the end, we had to consult the electoral registers of those years to complete the task.

In the course of obtaining the names of the residents, Grace made a few notes on some of the people she knew. Carol Pearson and I then added our own notes and, together with the list of residents, this constitutes Section 7 below. This subsequently stimulated me to produce a detailed account of the houses of Earlston Drive, the surrounding area, the nature and character of the people who lived there - particularly the lives and activities of its children during the war and the years following (Sections 1,2 and 3). To this I added an account of my own personal experiences in those years (Section 4) and Carol Pearson added an account of her own (Section 5). More recently Carol Burkill was invited to make her own contribution (Section 6). Some of the events described in these personal accounts took place in the years after 1955. The authors hope that this description of the area, as it was more than half-a century ago, will be of interest and assistance to present and future local historians.

W T ‘Bill’ Raynes, August 2021.

# 1 THE STREET

As originally built, Earlston Drive was a *cul-de-sac* consisting of 26 pairs of semi-detached houses. It was built in the years 1935 and 1936 and all the houses were in occupation by the summer of 1937. It runs off the west side of Bentley Road (the A19) which, itself, runs north from Doncaster passing through the former mining village of Bentley about one mile further north. The portion of Bentley Road from which Earlston Drive stems, was traditionally referred to as “Bentley Rise”. Bentley Road rises gently from the Yarborough Terrace area (see map) up to just past Earlston Drive before falling slightly towards the Methodist Chapel - hence “Bentley Rise”. Up to 1974 the street came under the Urban District Council of Bentley with Arksey which was under the control of the West Riding County Council; however, in that year control was transferred to Doncaster Borough Council.

The houses were numbered consecutively from 1 to 53 starting on the north side, with No.13 being omitted, and finishing on the south side. At the western end the pairs 20/21 and 22/23 on the north side and the opposite pairs 33/34 and 34/35 on the south side were successively set back and the four pairs from 23/24 to 31/32 built in a perpendicular direction to all the others thus enclosing the street and forming an elongated oval area known by local children as “The Frying Pan”.



**Fig.1 Earlston Drive in 2021 looking from above the School Fields. The Frying Pan is clearly visible in the foreground and the “Rec” in the distance. The location of the “Cinder Track” can be seen at the very bottom of the photo.**

## The Street

Individually, the houses conformed to the standard features of the English semi-detached residence which was then relatively new but became very common later. Upstairs were front and back bedrooms and a smaller bedroom above the front door entrance below. At the top of the stairs was a bathroom with a single bath and wash basin. Downstairs there was a front room and a kitchen/living room, each having a grate for a coal fire. In the space below the stairs there was room for a small pantry. The living room contained a built-in oven and a sink with draining board beside. A toilet and the back garden were accessible from the kitchen. Also built into the structure of the house, and accessible only from the rear, was an enclosed space meant for the storage of coal - "the coal house". Within a few years some residents had built small conservatories attached to the rear of their houses and a few of the gardens contained greenhouses.

Much of family life at home took place in the kitchen with coal fire lit (when cold outside) and wireless blaring. Some families appeared to keep the wireless on loudly and continuously throughout the day. Front room fires were usually only lit on special occasions and at weekends. There was no central heating but the front and back bedrooms each had a single bar, vertical electric fire built into the wall. On winter nights two or three blankets would be needed to ensure a good night's sleep.



**Fig.2. A recent photograph of Earlston Drive. The original wooden fencing at the front of the houses has been replaced by brick or stone but otherwise there is little change from the original appearance. There was no car owner living there in our period apart from Mr Ward at No.21.**

Although the street itself was paved from the beginning, the area between the sides of the houses on Bentley Road through which one had to pass to gain entry to the street was un-made and consisted of very rough and uneven terrain which, in bad weather, was often dotted with puddles and muddy patches. It was finally paved in the late fifties.

The street is distant about one and a half miles from Doncaster Town Centre, travel to which was straightforward either by bus from a stop in front of Bentley Road Post Office (see map) or on foot (very few people owned private cars in the period covered here). From where or

## The Street

whom the name “Earlston” originates is not known. The appellation “Drive” seems inappropriate but it may well have sounded “superior” in 1935.



**Fig.3. Typical houses on Earlston Drive. The original metal dustbins are long gone and the bins must now be put in the street for the binmen, unlike earlier times when they came in to get them from the back of each house. Originally, neighbouring houses were separated by wooden fences but later, neighbours agreed to remove them, as here, to allow for the passage of vehicles to the rear.**



## 2 THE SURROUNDINGS

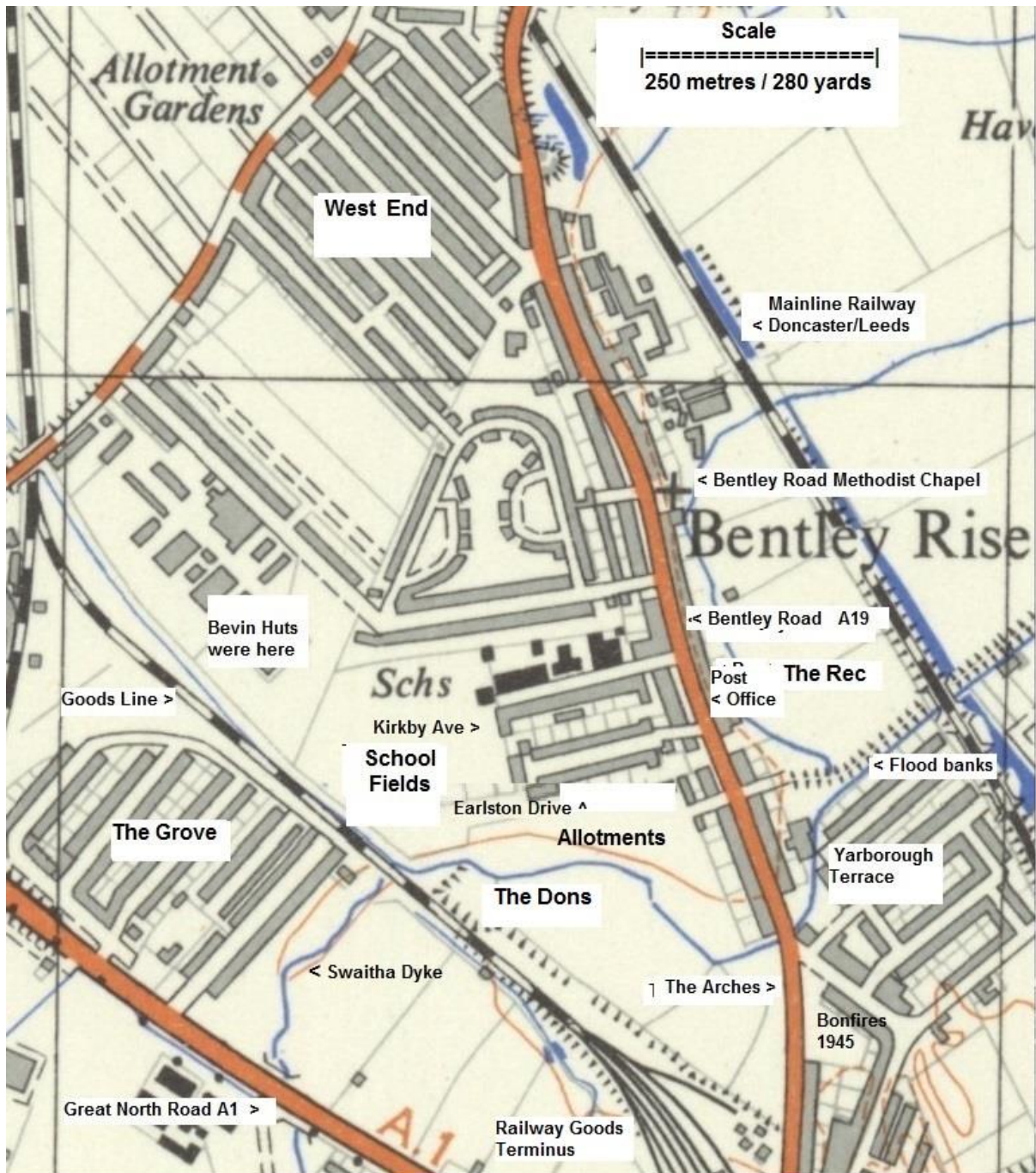


Fig 4: OS Map 1944, with revisions to 1961, of Bentley Rise and area, showing features mentioned in the text. The 'Top Line' referred to was the railway running east/west just south of this map.

Immediately to the north and parallel to Earlston Drive is another *cul-de-sac*, Kirkby Avenue which also runs westwards off Bentley Road and is almost exactly the same length as Earlston Drive. However, the houses on the south side of Kirkby Avenue are considerably older dating probably from the 1905 -1910 period. On the north side was Kirkby Avenue School which existed in three parts: at the eastern end was the Junior School completed in 1910 and built in

## The Surroundings

the familiar architectural style of schools following the 1905 Balfour Education Act. Boys and girls had separate playgrounds and separate entrances.

Then the Senior School probably built a little later and, at the western end, the Infants School which, in our period, was a large, green-painted, corrugated-iron structure set back from the others. In addition, the top two years in the Infant School were taught in two classrooms at the end of the Senior School closest to the Infants School. To the north of Kirkby Avenue was a large area of somewhat rough ground stretching several hundred yards to the built-up area known as West End; this terrain was eventually filled with housing starting with Haslemere Grove for which construction began in September 1946.

To the west of Earlston Drive lay a vast grassed area known as “the School Fields” and, as implied, used by the schools. Between the School Fields and houses Nos. 23-32 of Earlston Drive ran a narrow path, fenced off from these fields, known as “the cinder track” even though the cinders which covered it were eventually themselves covered over with concrete slabs. This path went all way to the area of housing known as “The Grove”, passing over a narrow stream and under a railway bridge the tracks of which ran to a railway goods terminus (see below). A few yards over the fencing in the School Fields were the zig-zag shaped brick air-raid shelters built early in the war for use by the school in case of bombing. Beyond the school fields was a building site containing piles of bricks which, for some reason, the children termed “Soldier's Camp”. Further on was a prefabricated residence for the Bevin Boys who worked at Bentley Colliery.

To the south of Earlston Drive the ground sloped down to the narrow stream referred to above and known as “the Dyke”; its full name is “Swaitha Dyke” a name which is probably Norse (or Anglo-Saxon) in origin. This sloping ground was covered with allotments. It was extensively flooded in the Spring of 1947 when snow melted after the very severe winter. Beyond Swaitha Dyke was an open field in which a few horses roamed until 1953 when it became the home ground of Doncaster Rugby League Club – the Dons. (They had been formed in 1951 and at first played their home games at the Doncaster Greyhound Stadium (“the Dog Track”) on the other side of The Great North Road - see below). Beyond that were the goods sidings which was a terminus used only for rail goods vehicles – trucks and wagons of various kinds. It had been built in the days of the Great Central Railway just before World War 1.

Beyond that, across a field, was the “Great North Road” (the A1) from which the A19 had diverged a hundred yards or so nearer to Doncaster. This road was often referred to as “York Road” even though it doesn't go to York! Towering above all was the “Top Line” - a railway line built on a very high embankment and crossing the A1 and A19, just after their point of divergence (just south of the map in Fig 4). It was built in 1910 to avoid Doncaster Railway Station and the Plant Works and to carry coal to the east coast. It was still in use in the 1940s. The huge letters of “GUINNESS IS GOOD FOR YOU” on the bridge crossing the A19 were visible over a great distance as were those of “FILTRATE” on the bridge over the A1. The area bounded by the Top Line, the Don Cinema to the east, the River Don Bridge and Warriner's Garage, a ramshackle collection of wooden buildings, to the west was generally known as “Town End”.



## The Surroundings

As stated above, the part of Bentley Road lying immediately to the east of Earlston Drive is referred to on maps as “Bentley Rise”, although this term was rarely used by the locals. Further to the east is “the Rec” (Recreation Ground), a huge rectangular grassed area measuring about 200 yards to the east and about 300 yards in a north-south direction. In those days there was at the northern end, a mound known as “The Clay Hill”, not a natural feature but probably created when excavated material from elsewhere was dumped there. Straight ahead, and forming the eastern boundary of the Rec, was the main Doncaster to Leeds railway line.



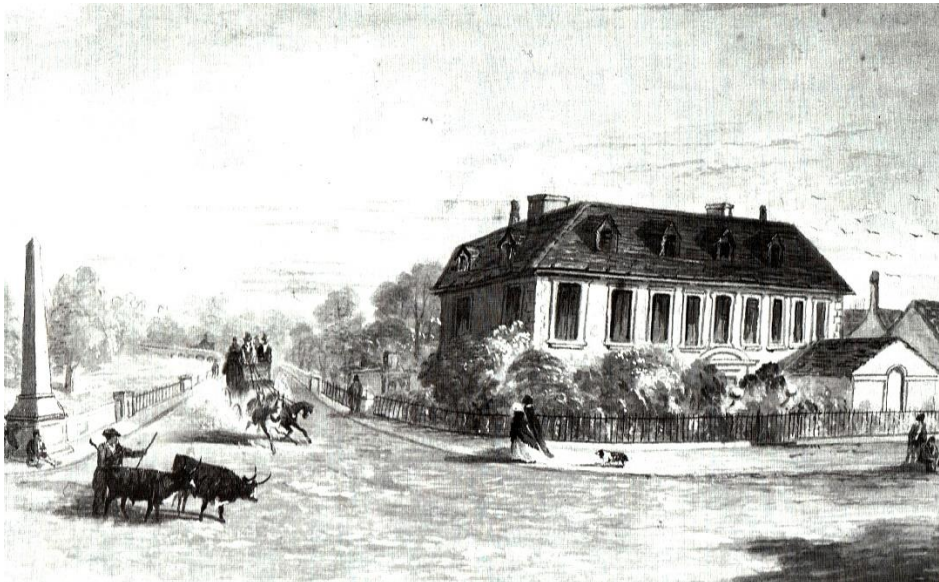
**Fig.5. Bentley Causeway, known locally as “The Arches” (see map), was built by Doncaster-Selby Turnpike Trust in 1833. Many of the arches are original stonework but some have since been reinforced with iron plates and tie rods and a few renewed in brick. It was built following an 1832 Act “to provide safe passage over the River Don floodplain”. The whole area is only a few feet above sea level.**

On the fourth, and southern end, was the first section of “the Flood Banks”, built to prevent recurrence of the extensive flooding that had occurred at some earlier time – probably around 1920. Much of the land in the area is just a few feet above sea-level. Some of the material to build the flood banks was dug from the ground nearby; these holes had filled up with rainwater and were known to the locals as “parneys”. On the other side of the flood banks and beyond Swaitha Dyke could be seen the rooftops of the semi-detached houses of Frank Road in the Yarborough Terrace area which filled up the land bounded to the south by the “Top Line”, to the east by the Doncaster to Leeds line and to the west by Bentley Road.

For any child growing up in Earlston Drive in the war years it seemed as if the whole area had been there from time immemorial but that was far from the case. Just fifty years earlier a traveller from Doncaster to Bentley would have seen open country on either side of Bentley Road until reaching the end of The Arches (see Fig. 5). Then there would be almost continuous red-brick terraced housing on the eastern side, which had been built in the 1870s, until he reached The Methodist Chapel (see below). Beyond that there would be more terraced housing

## The Surroundings

up to the West End. On the western side, starting at The Arches (see Fig.5), there would also be red-brick terraced housing, built in the 1880s, but the individual houses were very much more substantial in character. They continued until the “off-licence” opposite the Methodist Chapel after which, right to the West End, were the standard 1870s type of terraced housing matching those on the eastern side. From 1909 much of the West End was developed with Fern, Austerfield, Royston and Broughton Avenues being completed by 1911. The remaining streets, West End Avenue, Washington Grove and Wellington Grove were mostly completed by 1914. The Yarborough Terrace area of Frank Road, Conyers Road and Cromwell Road was built in the early 1920s. Hunt Lane had been developed earlier. Earlston Drive was the last street to be built in the whole area before WW2. Most of the houses in The Grove were built in the nineteen thirties



**Junction of Bentley Road with Great North Road c 1850 with Bridge Hall (right)  
The Arches are on the left behind the carriage (enlarged below)**



### 3 THE PEOPLE

Both socially and economically the people of Earlston Drive must have been very close to the average for the England of those days and “respectable working class” is probably a fair phrase with which to describe them. Some of the houses were owner-occupied and others rented. Most of the men in employment worked either in the railway workshops in Doncaster - “The Plant Works” - or at Bentley Colliery about two miles to the north. With one exception (see later) none of the women had paid work outside the home. Quite a large number of retired people lived there and in 1945 only three families had more than two children. There were sixteen children between the ages of five and fifteen living in just thirteen of the 52 homes.

All, or almost all, the people were of English birth, and Scottish, Welsh, and Irish accents were seldom to be heard; indeed, accents from distant parts of England were few and far between. Until the fifties there was no accessible telephone in or near the street and if there was urgent need of a doctor one had to go to a house on Bentley Road several hundred yards away where there was a phone for use in case of emergency. Shopping would not have been easy for older residents. The nearest shop was Bentley Road Post Office (see map) close to the bottom of the street but that sold little apart from stationery and sweets. About 150 yards further north was a Cooperative store and still further on was a small shop called Womack's.

Towards Doncaster a few small shops clustered together near Yarborough Terrace including a cobbler's shop and Pawson's, the butcher. In addition, and very importantly, two fish and chip shops at the West End were open in the evenings - Shackleton's on Broughton Avenue and Sanderson's in Royston Avenue. During the war years it was extremely rare to see a parked car on Earlston Drive and even on Bentley Road cars were few and far between. Well into the fifties much the busiest period for traffic was from 5 to 6 p.m. when one side of Bentley Road would be thick with men on bicycles wearing overalls and boiler-suits riding home from work.

There was no public house in the vicinity; the nearest ones being The Three Horse Shoes near the River Don Bridge half a mile to the south and The West End Club half a mile to the north. Beer and spirits could be bought from an “off-licence” opposite Bentley Road Methodist Chapel managed by a jovial Yorkshireman called Sam Landers.

There was little sign of religion among the residents nor, indeed, among the people of the whole area. Sunday morning church and chapel goers were few in number. The nearest place of worship was Bentley Road Methodist Chapel about 400 yards away whilst Bentley Parish Church was a good mile off. It is likely that most people were nominally Methodist or Church of England. However, a fair number of children attended the “Sunday School” at the Methodist Chapel.

Politically, the whole area was solidly Labour. In the 1940s it formed part of the parliamentary constituency of Don Valley. From 1922 to 1959, it was represented in Parliament by Tom Williams, a former miner, who was Minister of Agriculture in the post-war government. He cut a striking figure with his angular features and his habit of wearing a stiff collar and cravat, long after these items had gone out of fashion.

## The People

During the early part of the period British life was dominated by the War. In 1939-1940 all the wrought iron railings on the walls fronting houses on Bentley Road were cut down and taken away, but Earlston Drive was unaffected by this as its houses were fronted by wooden fencing. Apart from “the blackout” and the sound of the sirens, everyday life as experienced by children of the street was little affected; the air-raid shelters on the School Fields were never used. Shortly after the war began everyone was issued with a gas mask and each child was expected to have it with them at school; however, as fears faded of a gas attack by the Luftwaffe this requirement was dropped. In the Autumn of 1939, the authorities started building small air-raid shelters at the bottom of the garden of one of every three houses in the street and when the sirens sounded people packed into their nearest shelter.

The worst event in the area occurred on 21st December 1940 when a German bomb fell on Royston Avenue in the West End. Fifteen people were killed and there were many injuries. It had probably been intended for the Plant Works. One girl in my class lost so much hair as a result of shock from the bombing that she was permitted to wear a bonnet during school classes. One day during 1941 news spread around that The King would be visiting Bentley Colliery and several people from the street walked down to Bentley Road hoping to catch a glimpse of him.

Around the end of the war a group of workmen came to carry out repairs at the bottom of the street and it was learned that they were Polish – probably the first foreigners that some local children had ever seen. There was insufficient collective spirit and leadership in the street for any party or celebration to be held following the victories over Germany (VE Day) and Japan (VJ Day); however, huge bonfires were lit in the open, triangular-shaped area of land near Yarborough Terrace to celebrate these victories in May, 1945 and August, 1945, respectively, which were attended by many of the street's children.

Despite the effects of the war and the period of austerity which followed, there were few signs of real deprivation in the area – presumably due to the efficiency of the rationing system during the war and the long period of full employment which followed it. Of course, some food items - bananas, for example, - were unavailable until after 1945. Furthermore, there were few signs of income variation in the whole area; the only local person to be clearly better off was Mr. Nicklin, a builder, who lived in a large house on Bentley Road adjacent to the entrance to Earlston Drive on the south side. Crime was virtually non-existent, as was vandalism.

The most unpleasant feature of life in Earlston Drive (and for miles around) for many years was the dreadful stench produced by the factory of J. Prosper de Mulder located some half a mile away beyond the Yarborough Terrace area and next to the Doncaster to Leeds railway line. There they killed horses and other farm animals. It occurred every week or two. Nothing could be done about it at the time and it wasn't until many years later when local environmental services brought an end to this particular nuisance.

For children the usual range of activities were all practiced in the street – football for the boys and hopscotch and skipping for the girls. Cricket was seldom played there for obvious reasons.

## The People

However, the Rec provided abundant space for all open-air games. Another delightful feature for both boys and girls was the existence of “slides” on frozen winter nights. Long sheets of ice formed in various parts of the street at these times and children lined up in queues to take their turns to run and then slide for several yards at a time. The best place for sliding was opposite number 43. Despite this there was no ice skating although roller-skating was moderately popular. In summer Massarella’s ice-cream sellers made regular visits using a horse-drawn cart and ringing a bell to gain attention. By the mid-1950s they started using motorised vehicles with piped music.

Taking long walks was also a part of life for the street group of lads; it was nothing to walk to Sprotborough and back or to Cusworth Lane to collect conkers in the autumn. Many trips were made along the flood banks until they reached the River Don opposite the textile factory then known as Bembergs, which was German-owned until the outbreak of WW2.

There was also the radio to listen to. TV became available in the North around 1950 but it wasn’t until 1953 and the Coronation that TV aerials appeared above houses in great numbers. For children there was the radio programme “Children’s Hour” from 5-6 p.m. on weekdays although not many listened to it with any regularity. However, many children did listen to adult comedy features such as “Happidrome”, “ITMA”, “Much Binding in the Marsh” and, later, “Take it from Here” in the early fifties.

Then there was the “professional Yorkshireman” Wilfred Pickles and his show “Have a Go”. From about 1950 “Dick Barton Special Agent”, with its loud and furious musical introduction – Devil’s Galop - was a popular radio serial on week nights from 6.45 to 7.00 p.m. mainly for boys but it was stopped after two or three years because it was thought to encourage juvenile delinquency. (After it ended “The Archers” took the same slot.) There was also “Paul Temple” a much more sedate and elegant detective programme preceded by the sweet and pleasant tones of “The Royal Scot” theme.

Train spotting was quite popular among boys, and, with Doncaster being a railway town, it was something of a paradise in that regard. With the Leeds and Edinburgh lines just on the other side of the Rec, a very good place to go was on the flood banks at a spot at the centre of the 150 yards which separated the diverging lines. In the year 1945-46 there was something of a stampede from Kirkby Avenue School after it closed at 4 p.m. across Bentley Road and on to the Rec. to see the Leeds train which left Doncaster station at 4 p.m. and came into sight there about five minutes later.

Stamp collecting (and swopping) was much more common on those days than it is today. Marbles and “snobs” were often played - games which nowadays appear to have died out. Conker fights were also fashionable in the early autumn. Comics were widely read with Beano and Dandy for younger children (including the unforgettable characters of Desperate Dan, Meddlesome Matty and Freddy the Fearless Fly) and Rover, Wizard, Hotspur and Adventure for older ones. In 1951 The Eagle and Girl comics were introduced. Bonfire night was celebrated every year and there was always “Mischievous Night” on the previous evening. (“Trick or Treat”, a later American import, was quite unknown.)



## The People

A rather less wholesome activity for children was a form of the old game of “tig” which was always played after dark. Someone would be “on” and would hide their face (always on the lamp post in the “Frying Pan”) and put their hand behind their back with one finger prominent, another would then trace a wavy line on the back and touch that finger while saying, “I draw a snake on a black man's back and who touches finger?” If the person who was “on” failed to guess correctly then he would hide his face once again while the others dispersed and took up hiding places in peoples' gardens, under privet hedges and sometimes on top of a privet hedge! After a minute or so the person “on” would shout: “Coming ready or not”. After one of the hidden persons had been correctly identified, the two would race back to the lamp post with the first arrival shouting, “Block, one, two, three” with the laggard then being “on” for the next game. This game was not popular with householders!

An even more unwholesome practice common among some boys involved cigarettes. “Tab ends” from the gutter were collected and the small amount of unburnt tobacco in each one was extracted and spread along a piece of “cigarette paper” which was then “rolled” to make a new cigarette ready to be smoked.

One other attraction for children was the cinema. The nearest was the Don Cinema located at the Town End just to the north of the River Don Bridge, where the A19 and A1 roads diverge. It had been opened in August 1939 and seemed very modern. In the other direction there was the Coliseum (known locally as “the Rat Pit”) in Bentley village. In Doncaster there was the Gaumont Cinema with its children's programme and opening theme-song “We all come along on Saturday morning, Greeting everybody with a smile”. There were several other cinemas in Doncaster too. Going to the cinema was, of course, a universally popular activity in those days and in the years after the war there were usually long queues of people at evening shows waiting outside to enter and with heavy coats and raised umbrellas in inclement weather; inside, the air reeked of sweat and tobacco smoke. There was no specific “show” at cinemas; one entered when one's place in the queue reached the box office, often in the middle of a film and then stayed there until that point in the film had come round again: “This is where we came in”. People could, of course, stay longer and they often did.

All the street children attended Kirkby Avenue Infant and Junior Schools. During the early forties the head of the Infants School was Miss Ord (or Orde), an elderly lady who did little teaching. (She was succeeded by Miss Loweth and, later, Mr. Blueman.) Other teachers were Miss Simmonds, who took the “baby class”, Miss Scott, “Miss” Patrick and Miss Rawson. Mrs Patrick, as she actually was, left to have a baby but died during its birth. From 1946 Mrs Raynes of No. 35 Earlston Drive taught in the Infants School until her retirement in 1966. The head of the Junior school at the time was Mr. Smalley. He seemed very old and could have been brought out of retirement to fill the post. Other teachers there were Miss Bartram, Miss Mattocks, Mr. Leach and Miss Martin. Mr Leach, who was in his thirties, suffered from asthma and had been excused service in the armed forces. (His son had failed “the scholarship” as the eleven-plus exam was then known, but Mr. Leach had paid for him to go to the Percy Jackson Grammar School, as was possible in those days before the Butler Education Act of 1944 was implemented.) The sight of a wayward boy writhing with pain as Miss Mattocks rained blows

## The People

on his knuckles with a ruler was long remembered. However, Miss Martin, who took the top class, was regarded as a very good teacher and was the most respected teacher in the school.

Most of the familiar slang words (*owt*, *nowt* etc.) and the “rude” words were well known to the children. However, some local or regional words were in common use: *mardy* described a spoilt or peevish child, *nesh* meant afraid of cold weather (or swimming in cold water), a *gennel* was a narrow passage-way usually between houses whilst a *snicket* had a similar but more general meaning, the narrow thoroughfare at the back of houses was called *the backs*, anyone who was sulking was said *to have the monk on* and a teenage girl who was sulking was said to be *like a nun with the monk on*. The word “radio” was seldom heard - one listened to “the wireless”. Any mental hospital (the nearest being in Wakefield) was known as *the Loony Bin*. A *keggy-hander* meant a left-handed person.

The shop facing the Methodist Chapel which sold beers, wines and spirits which had to be consumed “off the premises” was known as *the beer-off*. “Sweets” were sometimes referred to as *spice*. *Anyroad* was often used instead of “Anyway” at the beginning of a sentence. *Fisog* (from physiognomy) meant “face”; *lugs* and, sometimes, *tabs* denoted “ears” and *gob* meant “mouth”. To *gozz* or to *lagg* meant “to spit”. “*Ey’up*” was commonly used as a greeting but also as the start of a reproof. Some words were in the process of dying out: only old folk used *champion* or *right champion* to mean “splendid”. Some words common elsewhere in Yorkshire such as *bairn*, *laiker*, *b’ah* and *’appen* were never heard.

Grammar was less than perfect: the plural pronoun “us” sometimes became singular as in *Gis us a ride* and at other times an adjective as in *We cleaned us boots*. It was common to omit the plural “s” from nouns preceded by numbers as in “It’s five mile away”, “It cost ten pound” or “Fifty year ago ...”. Instead of “you” people often said *tha*, which is, of course, a corruption of the old word “thou”. Other archaic forms such as *sithee* were little used by children. However, some solecisms common today such as, for example, “We was there.” “It’s for you and I.”, “It was given to she.”, “He has ran all the way.” and “We have went there.” were unknown.

Pronunciation often varied widely from the norm; “water” became *watter*, “broken” became *brokken* and “making” became *mekking*. “Myself” and “yourself” became *missen* and *thissen*, respectively, with the emphasis on the second syllable in each word and, correspondingly, “himself” and “herself” became *hissen* and *hersen*.

## 4 PERSONAL MEMORIES of BILL RAYNES

For centuries the Raynes family lived in the small North Nottinghamshire village of Everton, three miles to the east of Bawtry. I have discovered a Thomas Reynes whose daughter Katherine was baptised there in October 1567. (The spelling was changed around 1660.) In the mid-1850s a John Raynes moved with his family to Mill Street, Bentley and soon found work at the new railway workshops in Doncaster which had opened in 1853. There followed three generations of railway workers at the “Plant Works”. In 1895 my grandfather, also William Raynes, paid a builder £212 and ten shillings for No. 195, Bentley Road, which is almost opposite to Kirkby Avenue. (Following renumbering it is now No. 275.) My father, Norman Vincent Raynes (born 1901) lived there until he married my mother in July 1933.

My mother, Frances Elizabeth Snowdon (born 1905) grew up in Loftus in Cleveland and moved to Doncaster with her family in 1925, following the closure of Liverton ironstone mines there after WW1. Her father found work at Bentley Colliery and they rented a house in the West End, at No. 20, Austerfield Avenue, where I was born on January 19th 1935. My parents moved to Earlston Drive in May 1937 - one of the last families to do so. In 1946 my father left the railways, bought up several of the allotments behind the house and started a business as a “Nurseryman and Florist”. He mainly sold flowers and tomatoes from a stall in Doncaster market but occasionally supplied flowers to hotels; I remember him doing this for the Danum Hotel in the nineteen fifties.

My closest association with the street occurred in the years from 1940 to 1946 during which, for much of the day time, I was playing there with other children who lived there, roaming around the district with other lads and attending Kirkby Avenue Infants and Junior Schools in the next street. From September 1946 I went to The Percy Jackson Grammar School (PJGS) at Adwick, four miles away, and made new friends there who lived much further away and so I became very much less involved with goings on in the street. However, I continued to live there until I left to go to London University in 1953. Even then I returned regularly during vacations. The social divisiveness of the old 11-plus exam was very evident to me – after passing I seldom even saw the boys who had been my close friends for as long as I could remember – Clifford Ayres, Darrell Nichols, John Ashmore, Trevor Ashmore and Alan Redfearn.

A very early memory, dating from before I started school, involves a door-to-door salesman who periodically came round the street. He was an old man with a kind face who carried a tray which hung down in front of him from a cord around his neck. On the tray were needles, thimbles, cheap jewellery and other small items. I sensed my mother's reluctance to buy but I felt sorry for him and I was often able to persuade her to buy something or other. Another memory, probably dating from Autumn 1939, was attending a demonstration of A.R.P. (Air Raid Precautions) on the school fields; I remember seeing men with tin hats, buckets of water and hose pipes.

I started at Kirkby Avenue Infants School in January 1940. After a few weeks some new boys appeared in the school. Straightaway I noticed that they had a very strange way of speaking English which I had never heard before. They were evacuees from London. We called them “vaccies”. However, they weren't there for long and disappeared as suddenly as they had

**Memories: Bill Raynes**

arrived. Learning to read involved looking at cards with pictures of various objects and with the name of the object - "car", "cat", "dog" etc. - printed beneath. I remember the amazement and admiration for one girl, Nova Lindop, who, having progressed well at reading, was "given a book!"

I recall my mother taking me down to see the King after his visit to Bentley Colliery in 1941. We stood near Bentley Road Post Office; I saw two large black saloons come by with the King sitting alone on the back seat of one of them. Also in 1941, I remember going with my parents and grandparents, who lived with us at that time, to the North Bridge from where we watched part of the Plant Works in flames. I can't recall if it was the result of German bombing or not but the sirens started while we were there causing us to return home in great haste.

Another of my earliest memories involves the main Doncaster-Leeds railway line on the other side of the Rec. Directly in line with the clay hill mentioned above there was a foot crossing which consisted of wooden planks placed between the rails. At the age of 5 or 6 I remember sitting on these planks with two or three other boys from the street when one of them spotted a train out of Doncaster heading straight for us at high speed and about 50 yards away. We scattered very quickly; the shouts from the footplate were difficult to hear as the train rushed by but it wasn't difficult to imagine what was being shouted.

Around the age of six I took much pleasure in repeating a joke I had heard someone say. There were then two forms of rationing: one involved a ration book for essential items (meat, milk etc) and the other a ration book for less essential items (sugar, tea etc). The latter contained what were called "points". Each person had so many points which could be used to buy items to suit one's choice up to a maximum. The Minister of Food at the time was Lord Woolton. The joke was, "Lord Woolton sat on his ration book and the points stuck into him!"

At the age of seven or eight I made a remark which would now be considered "racist". The de Mulder family referred to above had a son Marcel de Mulder who was about my age. Basing my remarks entirely on the name I said on the Rec one day that the de Mulders were "not really British". A few days later, also on the Rec, I suddenly heard a boy's voice say, "That's the kid" and he was pointing at me. Before I knew it, I was engaged in a fist fight with a bigger boy I had never seen before – presumably an older brother. I gave as good as I got but I realised afterwards that my view was wrong and that I had to be more careful about what I said.

A much more shameful episode in which I was involved occurred a year or so earlier. In a house near the top of Kirkby Avenue lived an Irish lady with two small children; I can't remember any man living there. She was usually referred to as "the Irishwoman". One day I was with a group of lads who waited until she had gone out, detached her washing line from the post to which it was tied and then lowered it until the bed sheets fastened to it were trailing in the soil of her garden, and then re-attached it. We crouched down behind the brick wall at the bottom of her garden and waited for her return. When we heard her cries of rage and frustration we crept silently away. As we did so I remember saying to myself, "What a rotten thing to do." In reflecting on this incident over the years I've often comforted myself with the thought that the prank was not my idea in the first place and that the experience may have helped to cure me of any xenophobia I might otherwise have had: I've never had any sympathy

**Memories: Bill Raynes**

with that segment of English society that likes to go on and on about “foreigners” and “immigrants”.

From January 1940 until the summer of 1942, I attended Kirkby Avenue Infants School but it was decided by the authorities that only the children born between September and December of 1934 would be allowed to go up to the Junior School and all those in the year whose birthdays were after that December would remain in the Infants School. As I was born in January, 1935 this meant that I would have to stay in the Infants School. My father couldn't accept this and he arranged for me to go the New Village Junior School in Bentley. This involved me taking the local bus for about two miles each way every day. This school was in the middle of an area of housing close to Bentley Colliery. It was a rather upsetting experience being treated as an outsider by the other children there who had grown older together and I never felt comfortable while I was there. Fortunately, the rule regarding Kirkby Avenue was rescinded soon after and from January, 1943 I was back in Kirkby Avenue but in the Junior School.

Around 1944 several of the boys started going to the Coliseum cinema in Bentley for the Saturday afternoon show for children; it cost just twopence (about 1p in decimal currency). I was always amused at the cheers from the audience when the US Cavalry appeared on the screen on their way to catch the villains in cowboy films or when the posse managed to head them off at the pass. In those days the National Anthem was played before films commenced; once, when I was on the third row, a young girl in front of me remained seated when it began and a boy next to her said, “Stand up! It's the National Anthem”. She replied, “Why should I stand up for him? He wouldn't stand up for me.”

I remember going to the Don Cinema with other children from the street including Grace Jones to see “The Cat and the Canary” with Bob Hope and Paulette Goddard. I never forgot the wall portrait with the eyes cut out so that the villain could spy on the others from a secret passage behind. In another film there in technicolour called “Home in Indiana”, there was a scene in which the characters entered a room containing a long table heaving with a delicious-looking spread of food. I've never forgotten the gasps of wonder at the sight from the wartime cinema audience. A film at the Don Cinema which nearly brought me to tears was “The Oxbow Incident” in which a drummed-up jury condemned two totally innocent men to hanging for cattle rustling. From late 1945 I started attending the Saturday morning children's matinee at the Gaumont Cinema in Doncaster and never again went to either the Don Cinema or the Coliseum.

From the age of about seven certain of my activities were influenced by what now seems a rather strange emotion: that it was quite humiliating to be seen in the street with one (or both) of my parents by other children. I presume that this feeling came from the “macho” character of the area noted above and the need to feel “free”, although I've no idea whether other boys in the area felt the same way. An example of this attitude which I very clearly recall is once going to the Don Cinema with my mother – except that I didn't “go with her”; I insisted on following about 10 yards or so behind for the half-mile walk. Of course, I caught right up with her at the box office. The same emotion – the need to be out with the other boys roaming around – meant



**Memories: Bill Raynes**

that I never listened to Children's Hour, although I was also put off the show by the highly affected accents of the female presenters.

I took part in and enjoyed many of the activities referred to above – stamp collecting, train spotting, winter slides, football, the long walks, the pictures, playing “snobs”, conkers etc. In 1944 I was introduced to the game of Monopoly by two of my cousins at their home in Hexthorpe and I soon acquired a Monopoly set of my own. In the next couple of years, I often played Monopoly with other children in the street. Of course, since I owned the game, I made myself the banker as well as being one of the players. I won many games which others believed to be due to experience and familiarity with the rules; however, I will now confess for the first time that I often won because I was not always as scrupulous as I should have been in keeping my accounts as a player separate from those of the bank. I discovered very early on that one could do very well if one were a banker!

My strongest memories of the Junior school are associated with Mr Leach's class in the year 1944-45. At some point in the year, we were all assigned the task of making a book. This involved various stages – cutting cardboard neatly to make the covers, cutting the pages of the book neatly and all to the same size, gluing and stitching the whole together, painting the cover etc. The cutting was done with some sort of guillotine and without the safety device that would be used today. At the end of each stage one had to take one's work up to Mr Leach's desk at the front for his approval before one could proceed to the next stage.

His frequent loud cries of “I could chew it better” were vividly remembered for years afterwards. It was from another boy's description of Mr Leach as a “sarcastic sod” that I came to know the meaning of the word “sarcastic”. I first became aware of the phenomenon known today as “skiving” while we were all making these books; on one occasion I joined the end of a queue of about ten children waiting to see Mr Leach to have their work checked. As I did so the boy just in front asked me to go ahead of him. I said “But you were here first”, to which he replied “That's alright”. I was puzzled at first but it dawned on me that he had no interest in making a book or doing any work at all but just wanted to stay at the end of the queue as long as possible with the hope of staying there until the class finished.



**Fig 6: Kirkby Avenue Junior School: Boys Side**

**Memories: Bill Raynes**

The goods siding, referred to above, provided a very exciting and potentially very dangerous play area for several of the boys. Only two tracks crossed over Swaitha Dyke near the Grove but they expanded into five or six before reaching the terminus in the angle formed by the diverging A1 and A19 roads. Many trucks (open wagons used for carrying coal and similar goods) and vans (roofed over wagons used for carrying perishable goods and transporting cattle, for example) were kept there. Occasionally, a locomotive would appear bringing new rolling stock, taking it away or shunting it about but there were many days when not only was there no locomotive around but no rail staff were to be seen. On such days a group of us would go there, uncouple one of the trucks, push it along the track away from the others for about 100 yards or so towards The Grove. Perhaps two or three of us would then climb up into the truck and two or three others would push the truck back to where we had found it. Eventually, it would gain a speed of some 5-10 miles per hour whereupon the pushers would let go and the truck would continue careering along the track until it crashed into the buffers of a stationary truck or van which would then itself move off whilst the occupied truck would recoil and come to a jarring halt. We did this quite often in late 1944 and early 1945. At one point I realised what a disaster it would be if one of us were to be hit by a moving truck but there was never an accident.

It was in connection with this goods siding that occurred my only serious brush with the law. Adjacent to the siding was the field, mentioned above, facing the Great North Road. It was used for playing cricket in summer and on the side nearest to the tracks was an old railway passenger carriage from which the wheels had been removed. The cricketers used it as a changing room and a place of storage for their equipment. One day some of the boys broke into this coach, removed some of the items (mostly bunting) and put them into one of the covered vans in the siding with the intention of making it into a camp or base. Unfortunately, one of us also removed a cricket bat, took it to Earlston Drive and started to use it. One day I was in the carriage when I saw a man's hand come through a gap and grab hold of a boy's ankle. The outcome was that we had our names taken.

A few weeks later at school Mr Leach came into the classroom, looked in my direction and said very loudly, "The policeman's been about you, Billy Raynes". Even though I was only ten years old I could detect a degree of gloating in the way these words were spoken. The upshot was that about nine of us lined up in the dock in Doncaster Juvenile Magistrates Court on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945 with our fathers standing behind us. We were fined 30 shillings each (£1.50) and were "bound over" for two years. I've always felt that we were treated quite harshly since all we had done collectively, was to transfer a few items just a few yards from one piece of railway property to another. Since the identity of the boy who stole the cricket bat was never established, we were all punished.

The advent of the war made it considerably more difficult for people to take summer holidays. With my father working at the Plant Works he was able to buy very cheap rail tickets and as a result we had earlier visited Paris (1937) of which visit I have no memory, Torquay (1938) and Weston-Super-Mare (1939). The next holiday didn't occur until 1943 when we visited Scarborough to where my mother's parents had moved just before Stephanie was born in 1942. My grandmother, Frances Annie Husband, had been born there in 1872. They lived in a

**Memories: Bill Raynes**

top-floor flat at a house in St Nicholas Street with lovely views over the Harbour. We stayed there for holidays every year up to 1949. My grandmother died in 1950 and my grandfather moved to Earlston Drive and lived with us until his own death in 1952. I've always had very fond memories of Scarborough but have only visited it once since 1949 - in 2004.

In February 1946 I sat the eleven-plus examination in Bentley Church Parish Hall and, having passed, as already mentioned, started at PJGS the following September. I and all those pupils from the Bentley Rise area who had passed were taken to PJGS by "special bus". During our first year there we had to catch it in front of Warriner's Garage at Town End (from where the bus proceeded up the Great North Road). It was a long trek from Earlston Drive early in the morning and very unpleasant in rainy weather. Fortunately, from the second year on the bus stopped at the bottom of Earlston Drive and the route went by way of Bentley and Toll Bar.

From February 1944 I had begun taking weekly piano lessons from Miss Gladys Carr whose house was opposite the Cooperative Stores at No. 175, Bentley Road. (Her fee for a one-hour lesson was one shilling and sixpence – 7.5 pence in decimal currency and it remained the same until I finished there in May 1952.) Thus, with homework from grammar school to do, the need to practice piano and my interest in collecting train numbers usually taking me to the wooden ramp on Hexthorpe Bridge in Doncaster, my familiarity with the street and its people began to fade, my contacts with local boys became very infrequent and my knowledge of new residents and interest in them diminished.

However, Mr Groome, the science teacher at Kirkby Avenue Senior School, held an open class there on Monday evenings and I remember attending some of those and carrying out experiments in physics for several weeks in 1946-47. From 1947 more and more of my non-school activity was outside the street – serving on my father's stall in Doncaster Market, training at the Plant Works Athletic Club in Hexthorpe, watching the Rovers at Belle View, going to the Ritz, Gaumont and other cinemas and, generally, socialising with school friends in the town centre.

My sister, Stephanie Raynes, was born at No.35 Earlston Drive on 3rd August 1942. She was permitted to start at Kirkby Avenue Infants School in 1946 at the age just four so that my mother could teach there due to a shortage of teachers at the time. She attended the Percy Jackson Grammar School from 1953 to 1958, after which she opted to join my father in his market garden business. She had already seen quite a bit of the world. In 1957 she and I hitch-hiked from Hamburg and got as far south as Florence and in 1958 we journeyed to Imatrankoski in eastern Finland where my friend Brian Fry was working in the local steelworks. Whilst there she befriended the daughter of the works manager and, with my parents' permission, remained there for several weeks after I returned, coming back home on her own.

By 1961 she had grown to be a very attractive young woman - on the tall side with thick, dark brown hair, lovely dark brown eyes and a very good figure. That summer Doncaster Rugby League Club had brought over a 23-year-old player from South Africa. I don't know how he met Stephanie - I was away working in America at the time.

**Memories: Bill Raynes**

Sometime in June 1962 she decided to end the relationship. He could not accept this and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July he shot and killed her inside the entrance to Berry's café on Printing Office Street in Doncaster, before turning the gun on himself. Upon receiving a telegram of her death, I returned home, attended the inquest and the funeral which took place at Rose Hill Crematorium on the 7<sup>th</sup> July. Her death was a very heavy blow to my parents and to myself.



**Fig 7: On their bikes in the early 1950s in Earlstun Drive.**

**Left to right: Rita Wadsworth (No 36), Stephanie Raynes (No 35), Jacqueline Barlow (No 37).**

It effectively ended my father's business. He gave up his market stall in 1964 but worked on for several years before dying of a heart attack at home in November 1973 - just three days before his 72nd birthday. He had been a heavy cigarette smoker all his life. My mother, as mentioned earlier, retired from teaching aged 61 years in 1966, lived on at No. 35 in declining health and passed away in October 1977 in Doncaster Royal Infirmary, following a stroke at home two days previously.

## 5 PERSONAL MEMORIES of CAROL PEARSON (now Edgar)

Though my mother, Lilian, was living at 46 Earlston Drive in 1943, I was born in Stockton on Tees on May 24th that year. This was because my father, Frank, was serving as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy, so my mother went to stay with her sister in Stockton for my birth. Dad was demobbed and back in Earlston Drive by Christmas 1945. My sister, Jean, was born there in September 1946.

My mother was born in 1913 in Stockton-on-Tees. She was the youngest of 5 surviving girls (but 13 pregnancies). Her mother was a Roman Catholic and times were very hard. Her father had fought in the Boer War, and subsequently found occasional work in the Tees-side shipyards. He was a stoker on ships during WW1. Poverty meant that my mother had to go into service, to live and work away from her home.

Her local doctor, Dr Manning, was a Lithuanian Jew. He and his wife, took Lilian under their wing as they had no children of their own and she had a job cleaning their step, for tuppence a week, each morning before school. Step cleaning was something that even the poorest women would do every day, even in the slums. Mrs Manning recognised that my mother was bright and loaned her books to read. Then they found her employment with their friends, Sir Montague Burton and his wife, at their home in Duchy Road, Harrogate. Mum started as a kitchen maid, but eventually worked her way up to being their cook. While there, she met my father. He worked as an assistant ironmonger and often delivered goods to the kitchen. They married in February 1939. My parents were very happily married and we had a lot of love and laughter in our home. During the war, my mother used to go by train to whichever port Dad's ship came into. One night in Plymouth, the house where she was meant to be staying was bombed, killing everyone in it. Luckily, her train had been delayed. She'd had to stay on the train all night. Had it been on time, I would not be here writing this.

My parents moved from a rented house in Sunnyfields, which is about a mile away from Earlston Drive, soon after I was born in 1943. When the owners emigrated to Canada after the war, they offered Dad the chance to buy No.46, which they did, for £350! We were very happy there and my sister and I look back fondly on our formative years



Fig 8: No 46 Photo taken c 2015



### Memories: Carol Pearson

Our mother was always hard working and very houseproud. In those days there were few washing machines and while the men were out at work, on Mondays, many women in Earlston Drive would have been washing by hand or with metal 'dolly' tubs, scrubbing boards and a 'posser' (a perforated metal cone on a staff) or a 'dolly', a strange round wooden circle with 3 or 4 "legs" again mounted on the end of a staff, which was used to push the clothes and sheets around in the tub. Washing was hung in the garden, on a long washing line, which was pushed up with a prop to make it higher from the ground. If the line broke, it all had to be done again.

It was an unwritten rule that washing should not be hung out on Sundays, a day of rest. Nor were shops open on Sundays in those days. In wet weather, the washing would be hung on a 'clothes horse' or over the brass-topped fireguard which wrapped around the whole of the fireplace and range. There was a similar fireguard in No. 43 too. I loved going into play cards and board games there with Derek Jones on cold winter nights, because their house had a big fire and a lovely smell of cooking came from their range. The coal fire heated the hot water and the ovens, which were used for cooking and baking, with a swivel plate that held the kettle over the coals. Cleaning the grate was a daily chore for women. These ranges had a back boiler, which heated the hot water but there was no central heating. Our houses had bathrooms, so we enjoyed our baths once a week. The toilet was downstairs.



**Fig 9: 1950s Frank Pearson working in his garden at No 46**

Dad enjoyed his garden, as many residents did in those days. He grew most of our vegetables and eventually built a greenhouse for tomatoes. We did have chickens at one time and my mother used to go to Finkle Street to buy their food. It was there that she used to see our little Yorkie, 'Tiny', tied up all the time, so she asked the man if he would sell her, and he did!

My mother cooked delicious meals using the black-leaded range. We had wonderful Sunday lunches after Dad had taken Jean and me for walks in Bentley Park; first with the big black pram, then later when we walked. After that lunch, as we grew older, we would go off to Sunday School at the Methodist Chapel in Bentley Road; then later I went to St Peter's, the

**Memories: Carol Pearson**

parish church. During the week we would have food like cold meat from the joint, then cottage pie with the minced up joint meat. Other meals were things like tripe and onions, fish, neck of mutton stew, with carrots, onions and pearl barley, made in a new invention, the pressure cooker, on the later addition of a single gas ring.

One day, my mother pulled the fire guard away from the fire to clean around it and my sister tripped over her and fell putting one hand into the embers. She screamed and screamed and I could hear the screams when I came out of Cooke Street Nursery that day. Luckily, the NHS had just started, so Jean had immediate help from the local surgery.

Mum would often stay up till the early hours making clothes for Jean and me. Our school cardigans and grey socks (which kept falling down) were knitted by my grandma, so we loved Easter time when we could move into white ankle socks and sandals and go to Harrogate.

My father was a wonderful happy-go-lucky man. When the war was over, he often told us that he believed that every day of the rest of his life was a bonus when so many of his colleagues had died. Several had been posted on the Prince of Wales, which went down, but he was sent to The Duke of York, which once took Churchill to meet Roosevelt. I think it was in 1941. He was warm and kind and, much to my mother's disapproval, would give away his last shilling if he felt someone else needed it more. He was also ambitious for us and decided he would only get a manager's job if he moved South. Which we all did in 1957.

Earlston Drive was a very safe street in which to play. We did hopscotch, skipping games to traditional children's songs, hide and seek on dark nights. I loved Bill's description of "Tig" as it was just as I remember it too, about 5 years later. We also played, 'What time is it Mr Wolf', and juggled "two ball" on the wall in "the backs" behind Nicklins. I enjoyed roller skating on the concrete road surface that still exists. The first car that I remember in the street belonged to Mr Hughes, a plumber, who lodged with Mrs Schofield, Cherry's mother, at No. 28. There was always someone to play with, and if no one was in the street, we would knock on a door and ask someone to come out to play.

We rarely went in other people's houses, though Carol Burkill tells me that she would go to our house with Jean till I came home after school. This was at the time when my mother had a job at the Famous Army Stores. Like Beatrice Burkill, my mother loved meeting people, and enjoyed working in that shop once we were old enough to let ourselves into the house before she came home from work at 5.30. I remember cleaning the grate for her once and she was so pleased, but we weren't asked to do jobs so I didn't do it very often. Carol Burkill remembers her father telling her off for not helping her mother in the house like Rita Wadsworth (No.36) did. He often pointed out to his daughter that Rita regularly cleaned the downstairs windows of her home.

Once I was playing with all the kids (probably with Derek Jones, we were always together in those days) in the back access lane to gardens of houses between Earlston Drive and Kirkby Avenue. We all, very bravely, ventured into the first air raid shelter on the school field. (They

## Memories: Carol Pearson

were bricked up later). They were very dark and smelly and we decided we would tidy up the entrance bit where we could see and I decided to go home and bring my dad's matches to light a fire to burn the rubbish. Of course, the smoke billowed out and we all ran away when Miss Loweth (Head of the Infants in those days) came rushing out of the infants and called us to stop. The next day at school, I was called to see her. She asked me whether it was me who lit the fire and I denied it vehemently. Then, Miss Loweth said some wise, but kind, words: "Carol, you have a very distinctive hair colour, the only person in this school with that colour. I saw you running away, so I know you are telling me a lie." I learned never to tell lies again!

A few years later, Mr Leach caught me reading a book under the desk when I was bored in his lesson. He sent me to Miss Palmer to have the cane! My sister was terrified of him. However, I do remember so much of our daily bible lessons with him, even today, as they later underpinned future history lessons, literature and so many of our society's norms, which were, and some still are, based on them. Despite these incidents, I was very happy at Kirkby Avenue. I enjoyed all my lessons, especially "composition" as writing stories was called then. We had excellent teachers and Mr Blueman introduced us to singing, which I loved.

There was a small grocery shop to the right of the Post Office, with a few houses between them. Auntie Lily Stimpson. (No.9) used to send me there on errands -often cigarettes. She always gave me a penny for my pains. My mum also used to shop there until he refused to sell my dad his cigarettes one day when he was home on leave (long before I remembered). There were no supermarkets or refrigerators, so most people shopped as and when they needed something. When we left, a family called Mellors owned it. They had a boy younger than us. My Dad used to get upset that he was unable to buy cigarettes once he was home from the war, because he hadn't shopped at the shops such as Mellors or Martins regularly. How could he when he was away in the Navy? He served on the Arctic Convoys. Seven years ago I was privileged to receive the Arctic Convoy medal, so long delayed, for those young men who had to climb ships' masts, chopping ice from rails and deck to stop the ships capsizing as they sailed to Russia, protecting merchant ships carrying food and arms. They were never warm enough in the inadequate clothing that was supplied - mostly wool which got heavy and very wet, then froze on them. Dad used to be angry that these shop owners didn't go to war and then treated him as an outsider when he got back. Sadly, cigarette smoking was encouraged for servicemen, and eventually, his smoking led to being diagnosed with lung cancer. He died at the age of 68.



Fig 10: Bentley Road Post Office

**Memories: Carol Pearson**

To the left of the Post Office was a rough unmade lane which led to the Rec. It also gave access to the backs of the houses in Bentley Road. I remember playing in the cut grass after haymaking on the Rec, as well as on the swings, roundabouts etc of the children's playground. We had to cross the main A19 to get there, but it was only really busy in the mornings and evenings with a few cars, but mainly buses and bicycles of workers going to and from the town and back. My dad cycled home for midday dinner too, but when he was diagnosed with cancer, the consultant said that he must have breathed in other pollutants, such as asbestos, because when he died he had not smoked for 20 years.

It was walking from the Rec, under the railway bridge, to the parneys that I learned to love wild flowers such as cowslips and marsh marigolds, which seem to be rare now. I also loved the wild rose bush in the hedge behind one of the houses, that, even then, seemed incongruous. We would take picnics of a bottle of milk, perhaps some cake or sandwiches and stay out all day, only going home when we were hungry (or my dad arrived). I don't remember any ganging up on each other, even though we knew the children who didn't want to be with us. We just accepted them as they were. One once picked up a kitten and threw it round and round by its tail. I went home and was sick, but just avoided that child after that.

I remember there was a good fish and chip shop. It was next to an uninviting sweet shop in Bentley Road, on the right-hand side, just before the railway bridge leading to St. Peter's Church, opposite the West End opening! I don't remember many fat people though. We used to buy a "pennorth" of scraps when we bought our chips. Massarella's horse drawn ice cream cart came round almost until we left in 1957, when I remember it was replaced by a lad who came on an adapted bicycle. It had a tub with "WALLS" written on it.

Televisions didn't arrive in Earlston Drive until 1952/53, so I loved reading and listening to the radio with my parents, who always had a book on the go. From an early age, my parents introduced me to the library in Cooke Street and I later often went alone to borrow Enid Blyton's or the Just William books. I used to go indoors from playing at 5 o'clock to listen to Children's Hour and Jean, being younger, used to love "Listen with Mother". I enjoyed the evening shows of Life with the Lyons, Ray's a Laugh and Take it From Here, and, at 12.30, Worker's Playtime while we had our dinner before going back to school till 4 o'clock. No leaving at 3.15 like they do today. Jean and I look back on a very happy childhood in Earlston Drive and have revisited our old haunts occasionally. We count ourselves very lucky. No bullying, no vandalism, people knew who we were. My late husband's words, when I first took him around Bentley, was that I had a much nicer environment than he had. He lived in the cellar underneath his parents' hairdresser's shop in the middle of Reading, with no bathroom and the bedrooms were 3 flights up with no heating.

I was a child who just wandered off at will and often my father would cycle home from work for his dinner, then have to go out again, looking for me. When I was quite young, we think about 4, I was given a real antique doll's pram from an old lady who was delighted to give it to a little girl to play with. I hated it. It was old. One day I went for a walk all the way down the cinder track to the Grove, where I saw a tinny cheap navy-blue shining utility doll's pram standing in the street. I liked that one much better, so I just took it and left mine in its place.

## Memories: Carol Pearson

Pretty soon, a man came rushing to our house demanding the pram back, which he got, but we never saw ours again. My mum said he must have sold it for a pretty penny!

I think I was a bit of a handful, when I was growing up, as my Mum often told people. One day she dressed me up in a white dress, white sandals and socks, ready to "go out". I don't know where, but Derek and some of the others were going to the Dyke and I wanted to go with them. There was a big black pipe over it which we all used to run across without incident - except me on that day! The shoes were too new and I slipped in, so I walked home filthy to my waiting parents. I appreciate now how much hard work went into keeping children clean. It wasn't till 1952 that we eventually had a single tub washing machine, and that still had to be filled and emptied manually. This was bought because Mum had been very ill for some time and Dad had to do the chores! This made him realise how hard she, and most housewives, had to work in those days.

I always loved school and was proud to have 'nil' absences on my reports. In fact, I had hardly any days of absence from both Kirkby Avenue and Percy Jacksons. Almost all of our teachers, such as Mrs Severn for English, were excellent and my favourite, Mr Mayman, introduced me to my lifelong love of music. I also was given a German pen friend, Renate, by Mr Brookes. She and I remained close friends for 56 years, till she died. When I moved to PJ's, we travelled there on a special bus from the end of Earlston Drive, and it was lovely to meet up with friends before getting to school. I only missed the return bus once when the whole German class was kept in. We had to recite all the words of "Stille Nacht" before we could go home. I was first out, but still missed the bus and had to walk home. Later, as a mature student, I did a degree in Sociology. I then discovered that the West Riding of Yorkshire had an excellent record for the provision of secondary education. 33% of children had grammar school places, as opposed to 13% in Reading. Some of those in the less academic classes went on to develop either businesses of their own, or develop careers in other industries. Those chances do not seem to exist today.

There was a shortage of housing both during and after the war and Bill pointed out that there was the name of a solicitor alongside that of my mother on the electoral roll of 1945. As you will see in the 'Residents' section below, several people in the street took in lodgers at that time. It was different in those days. I am sure that it was to provide extra income and much needed accommodation when there wasn't enough housing. The house at the junction of Bentley Road and Earlston Drive, on the opposite side to Nicklin's, was still taking in boarders when we left. It belonged to Brenda Wright's grandma. Brenda was a year older than I was and we sometimes chatted on the bus going to Percy Jacksons. We had a Polish man, Jo Janik, lodging with us about 1950. He worked in Bentley pit and taught us to make macaroni cheese - very exotic then! He met a lovely lady called Esther from Bingley on the bus and they married, lived in Hexthorpe, and then went to live in Arizona. They kept in touch with my parents till my father died in 1983.

Holidays were rare, we did once rent a caravan at Mablethorpe, but mostly we visited Dad's parents in Harrogate or Mum's family and her sister in Stockton on Tees (often sleeping top to tail in the few beds available). From there we had day trips to Redcar and Saltburn. Then my



**Memories: Carol Pearson**

cousin bought a caravan in Redcar, near the beach, so we took Grandma and Grandad with us there to give them a holiday too. We had no money for much more than a donkey ride or sometimes on the dodgems but never thought we lacked anything. Children didn't in those days. No one criticised our clothes or toys. We were all grateful for whatever we were given at Christmas and birthdays.

As I entered my teens, like Bill, I didn't play in the street any more, but met my two special friends, Gloria Long and Christine Gray, at St Peter's Church for most of the day on Sundays. Only boys could sing in the choir, but we were able to socialise afterwards. On Saturdays we met the school friends who lived further away, at Clock Corner in Doncaster. We would go to the Market and buy things like luminous socks or flat ballerina shoes, then walk around drooling over the wonderful 1950's evening dresses in the shop windows. We had hats or hairbands with a long bobble/pompom on the end. Each September, as we grew older, we would go as a bigger group of friends to the St Ledger fair at Dockin Hill.

Rita Wadsworth, from No. 36, was born 3 days after I was. We sometimes played with each other, but she used to have to help in the house, or go shopping, more than I did. We've kept in touch all our lives, mainly by Christmas and birthday cards recently but also in letters and emails. She once was able to visit me in Reading, and I visited her once on my way further North. We last met in 2009 at the Percy Jackson's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion.

I don't remember having any grand ambitions about my future, except that I loved the musicals at the pictures, and I always wanted to sing like Doris Day and have the same hair style. I loved singing and was in the school choirs at Kirkby Avenue and at Percy Jackson's. Our knowledge of the outside world came from our regular visits to the local cinema, The Don. We called the Coliseum the 'Collar' and said it was 'a fleapit', so the only time I went there was to see Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock" because it was said people were dancing in the aisles. They didn't on my visit.

I had no idea of "class" during my childhood. We were all the same. It broke my heart when we moved to Reading because I was thrust into a very real class system at Kendrick Girls' Grammar School, where only the children of professional people were guided into university. I left school after O levels in 1959, but once I was married with a family, after doing A levels at evening classes, I finally went to Reading University as a mature student in 1972, graduating in Sociology in 1975, and subsequently gained a Master's in Education in 1986.

## **6 PERSONAL MEMORIES of CAROL BURKILL (now SUMMERILL)**

My father, born James Robertson Burkill on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1914, was known as Bob. He came from the Yarborough Terrace area and had four brothers and a sister. Their mother died when they were young so they all had jobs to do as children around the house. My mother, Beatrice Brough, was born on 4th July 1918 and brought up in Marshgate. She had two brothers. As a child, she used to have to pluck chickens and skin rabbits.

My parents were married on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1937 at St George's Church (now called Doncaster Minster) and they moved straight into No 17 Earlston Drive. They had 8 children: Robert 'Bob' Burkill (1939), Geoffrey Burkill (1942), Michael Burkill (1944 dob unknown, lived for approx. 6 months), myself Carol Burkill (1945), Christine Burkill (1949), Colin Burkill (1952, died in infancy), Janet Burkill (1954-2003, handicapped), Diane Burkill (1962). We were all christened in St George's Doncaster Minster.

Janet was called 'mentally handicapped' in those days, but she didn't have Down's Syndrome. Later the term to describe her was as having a Learning Disability. Now it is referred to as Special Needs. In society today, one has to be politically correct! She went to a special school near Percy Jackson's. As she got older, she went to the Training Centre (I think it was on the same site), where they did little jobs for a very minimal wage. She died, aged 49, on 1st November 2003 of natural causes. At the inquest the coroner commended my mother for looking after Janet all those years, at my mother's age.

Our home wasn't the best at housework in Earlston Drive, but we all survived. We were fed well and went twice a year on holidays, grew up and worked hard for a living. My parents did a good job with bringing us all up. My mother was a very popular dinner lady at Kirkby Avenue for many years.

It is true that my mother didn't clean up. Even in her later years, when we got carers in to help, she wouldn't let them do anything - and we, the children, didn't know where to start! My grandmother was the same. Having said that, we were well fed with nourishing dinners as she loved cooking and was a good cook. The doctor once came to our house when I was a child and he said to my mother, "The dinner smells lovely," and that he "could see why we rarely called him out." Fortunately, we all survived the muddles.

Another time, my mother had gone on holiday and when she got back the house had been burgled. Her neighbour Jen (who was always cleaning) went in the house before mum came home and let Diane know, saying the house had been ransacked. Diane's daughter, Rachel, was first on the scene and her first thought when she walked in was: 'It looked no different to what it usually did'. We often smile at this.

One negative thing about being from a large family was that the children were always the first to be blamed, usually my older brothers. There were many knocks on our door accusing one of them but when it was looked into it usually wasn't they who were the culprits, although

**Memories: Carol Burkill**

maybe they were with whoever did what. Now if the knock on the door had been about Colin, then yes, he could have been guilty. Lots of neighbours turned their noses up at us being a large family although it's water under the bridge when you are a child. I loved living in Earlston Drive and all the children to play with.

When Janet got older and Diane had grown up a little, my Mum devoted more time to Janet (Diane went with them everywhere too) as all the rest of us were married and had flown the nest. Mum then helped to set up a youth club for the mentally handicapped (as they were then referred to) and helped to fund raise. They bought the 'Old Yarborough Club' which was down Yarborough Terrace, where they ran a youth club for them, birthday and Christmas parties too. Mum and others ran a bingo session where the local community came and supported them, thus raising money through the bingo sessions and raffles. They took the children to pantomimes, to the seaside and day trips out, at a nominal fee to parents, and their handicapped child went free.

Mum became the secretary for the Don Valley Mentally Handicapped Society. They bought a chalet in Bridlington for the use of the mentally handicapped and their families. Some of the residents of Earlston Drive played their part too in a tote run by the society. Diane used to collect the money from the likes of Mrs Marriott, Mrs Stimpson, Mrs Robertshaw, Mrs Sunley, Mrs Blackburn and Mrs Moorhouse, to name a few. Mum went to meetings with councillors, doctors, education people and they always had a qualified youth leader at the youth club. Dr Stalker, the Public Health Doctor for Doncaster, was a regular visitor to the youth club. The children loved him. Unfortunately, he died last year (2020). Mum's reward for the years of work she put in to the Don Valley Mentally Handicapped Society was an invitation to Buckingham Palace to attend one of the Queen's Garden Parties for The International Year of the Disabled. She was as pleased as Punch to be invited.



**Fig 11: Mrs Burkill's invitation to the Palace Garden Party in 1981**

**Memories: Carol Burkill**

My father worked at the Plant Works as an electrician. He was a very private, thoughtful and quiet man, and kept very much to himself, but he did sometimes talk to people and helped neighbours with electrical jobs. He loved his garden and grew beautiful flowers. In the evenings, he would go to the local pub at 10 pm for a drink, but he didn't drink much and was only there for half an hour as the pub closed at 10.30.

When he was 75, he had some health problems, but didn't discuss them with anyone. He thought he was seriously ill and went missing on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1989. He went to the river Don, took off his clothes, left them on the bank and drowned himself in the river. It seemed he had planned exactly where to go in because his body wasn't found straight away, but further down the river in Goole. They had to put his supposed date of death as 29<sup>th</sup> December 1989.

My mother died at the age of 92 on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2011, in the house in Earlston Drive that they bought when they got married. She had lived there approximately 74 years.

Everyone in Earlston Drive was distraught when Stephanie Raynes tragically died, you could not meet a lovelier girl. Her ex-boyfriend had knocked on our door to ask me to ask her to come out. I went over and she told me her parents wouldn't let her out because he was threatening her. A few days later I saw her going out and remarked, "I thought you weren't allowed out". She replied that he had gone away so she was allowed to come out. Tragically he had hoodwinked them all. I was later told that he had gone to France to buy a gun and had returned. After she died, Jacqueline Barlow and I used to go to see Mr & Mrs Raynes, where Mr Raynes used to show us slides onto a white wall or a screen of Bill's time in America. I have a lovely picture of Stephanie with her mum.

It was so lovely to hear from Carol and Jean Pearson after all these years. I have often thought about them, their family and Tiny, the little dog, and wondered how they were. Especially when my youngest sister started horse riding and spent all her weekends 'mucking out', riding and staying at my house, as the riding school was not far from our house. I often wondered if Jean ever started horse riding. (Yes, she did! Only the Pawson's daughter, Anne, and one of the Massarella's girls, rode when we were in Earlston Drive. It was expensive. CP)

Yes, Earlston Drive was a fun place to live when we were children, although I don't suppose we appreciated it at the time. All those lovely games that Jean has remembered, which I had forgotten about till now. My brother used to call marbles mibs. I spent many an hour on Nicklin's wall playing Two Ball. Can you imagine the children playing those games now? Unfortunately, not. They only want to be on iPads etc. Having said that, I live in a cul-de-sac like we used to, but it is too dangerous with cars nowadays. Earlston Drive is packed both sides with parked cars.

**Memories: Carol Burkill**

I remember when we came home from school, Jean used to let us in their house as their mum and dad were at work, and we got home before Carol. We used to enjoy sliding down the banister but we were soon banished from the house to the outside when Carol arrived home from school.

Another memory was one Christmas: Jean had a beautiful camel coloured duffle coat; I think it was a Christmas present. It had been snowing and was quite deep and we were playing at the bottom of their garden. Jean climbed over into next door's garden and went straight through the snow into some soot - all over her new coat! Her mum was not best pleased. She had to go in and I was sent home! Then, there was the nice lady, Lily Stimpson, who lived next door to Mrs Sunley at No.9, opposite the Pearsons. She had dark hair and she used to stand at the gate and talk to the children. Carol called her Auntie Lily. She gave me a bracelet once but I don't recall what happened to it. It was the only jewellery that I remember anyone giving me. I'm not sure, but I think she said her son had brought it from abroad.

## 7 THE RESIDENTS

Listed below are the residents of the 52 houses for the years 1945, 1949 and 1953, starting at No 1 and moving in numerical order to No 53. The names are taken from the voter registration lists. There were two registrations in 1945 – one in May and then a further one in September, to include service personnel returning home. The 1945 names have been taken from the later one. The registrations of 1949 and 1953 were taken in the autumns of those years. Only the names of residents over the age of 21 are listed; children's names, where known, are included in the comments.

Comments provided by:

**WTR** Bill Raynes

**CP** Carol Pearson (now Edgar),

**CB** Carol Burkill (now Summerill)

**GJ** Grace Jones (now Griffiths).

### No.1

1945 Thomas and Constance Marriot

1949 ditto

1953 ditto

They had no children. Wartime notice in their front garden. My dad used to run raffles etc. and I had to post the results. He made a notice box with a glass door in which to place the results. One week the glass was broken and I cut my hand leaving a scar which I have to this day. A chicken run at the bottom of their garden in the backs was a favourite meeting point for the kids. (GJ)

Mr M was a bricklayer. They seldom spoke to or smiled at children. (WTR)

### No.2

1945 Ernest Stambridge

1949 ditto plus Audrey Stambridge

1953 ditto

Michael Stanbridge was their only child and didn't mix much with the other children in the street (CP)

### No.3

1945 Harry and Lily Stephenson

1949 ditto

1953 ditto

Two children post war. (GJ)

Peter was a year older than me but didn't mix in the street. (CP)

### No.4

1945 Albert and Pattie Elson

1949 ditto

1953 Alfred, Margaret and Herbert Desmond Fielding

Two sons, Brian, born around 1939, and Danny, and a younger daughter, Sheila. (GJ)

Danny Elson once pushed me into a huge bank of nettles and I suffered for days. They were very religious Methodists and Mr Elson was very severe. I think he was one of the preachers. Mrs Elson always seemed to look down on my parents. They were very disapproving when my Mum and Dad took in the Fletcher family for a month or so because they had nowhere to live. I didn't like the Fletchers either and was glad when they left. (CP)

Danny was a few years younger than me. He sometimes played with us. He was rather "namby-pamby" and a bit on the mardy side. I remember several of us playing Monopoly at their house a few times in 1945/46. Clifford Ayres says that Brian had a younger brother called Danny. (WTR)



**No.5**

1945 Isaac, Annie and Frederick Betton and Ernest Crouch  
 1949 ditto minus Frederick Betton  
 1953 ditto

**No.6**

1945 Henry and May Langley  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

The Langleys and Mortons may have been related. (CP)

Clifford Ayres says that Langleys were parents-in-law to Mr Morton. Cliff says he received a phone call recently to inform him that the Morton's son, Paul, had died aged 69 after a long illness. (WTR)

**No.7**

1945 Lily Randall  
 1949 Horace and Ida Morton  
 1953 ditto

Ida did hairdressing from the house. She did my hair for my wedding. (GJ)

Mrs M gave me my first "hair do" for my cousin's wedding. They had an only son called Paul who was quiet and blond. Mr Morton was, I think for the time, dark with curly hair and a bit "dashing" with tattoos on his arms - one was a snake. (CP)

**No.8**

1945 Frederick Sunley and John and Lois McGeever  
 1949 Frederick and Doris Sunley and Norman Wilson  
 1953 ditto

Mr S ran a carpentry business from his garden shed at the bottom of his garden. They had a daughter post war. (GJ)

The Sunleys were opposite us and had a daughter called Marilyn who used to play with Susan Peill. They had another daughter, Noelle, much later. Fred Sunley was a wonderfully skilled cabinet maker. I liked Mrs Sunley. (CP)

I liked the Sunleys too. (WTR)

**No.9**

1945 Katherine Cookey  
 1949 William and Lily Stimson and William Stimson Jr.  
 1953 William and Lily Stimson

I liked Lily Stimson and called her Auntie Lily. She called a spade a spade. She made no secret of the fact that she and her husband, Bill, didn't have the same interests. She liked to go out dancing and enjoying herself. When it was cold, she liked to stand in front of our fire and pull her skirt to feel the warmth. We also liked Bill, a quiet, kind miner who had very bad lungs. Their son, Will, did well but married a rather upmarket girl who wanted nothing to do with his parents. He once borrowed my dad's copy of T E Lawrence's 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom' but never returned it, so my dad was upset. When I was ill once, Lily looked after me as my Mum had to go to work and we got on very well. She said she would have liked to have a daughter. After we went to Reading I went to stay with her for a week so I could see the friends I had left behind. She used to have a white Staffordshire Bull Terrier which was as soft as butter in the house but a killer for other dogs. She used to take my sister Jean and me for walks with it and had a stick to twist in its collar when it decided to go on the attack. She was a real character and I have fond memories of her. (CP)

She was a nice lady and once gave me a bracelet (CB)

**No.10**

1945 Charles and Helen Hurworth  
 1949 Charles and Kenneth Hurworth  
 1953 Charles Hurworth

Ken joined his parents on demob. He married Christine from Yarborough Terrace (tall, one of three sisters with a foreign surname) who worked at Bentley Rd. Post Office. A baby was born to them whilst I was still at home. (GJ)

**No.11**

1945 William Stead and May Keithley  
 1949 George Carter  
 1953 George Carter and Edna M. Carter

**No.12**

1945 Albert and Violet Burnett  
 1949 ditto plus Ronald Burnett  
 1953 Albert and Violet Burnett

Ron was their son. (GJ)  
 Ronnie Burnett was about 18 at the end of the war. (WTR)

**No.14**

1945 George and Rhoda Harrison and Phyllis Wilson  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 George and Rhoda Harrison and Reginald and Phyllis Garrity

There was no No.13. Mrs. Harrison thought it unlucky. They insisted that their house be renumbered. The poor woman developed a most aggressive strain of cancer and underwent a series of horrendous amputations. (GJ)

**No.15**

1945 Mathew and Hilda Ashmore  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

Had children Trevor (b. June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1932), John (b. Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1933) and Janice (b. about 1944). Trevor, a keen cyclist, had a very bad road accident in about 1954. He married one of the twins from York Road. John lived at No.16 after he was married. He was a plumber for Nicklins and later for himself. He and his wife fostered many children. (GJ)

I used to play with Janice. We once went on holiday with her parents to Bridlington but I don't remember much about it. Matt was a miner. John was a keen cyclist and I remember he and his girlfriend going off on their bikes. (CP)

I remember Janice Ashmore her husband and mum emigrated to South Africa. Her brothers and their families followed later. Janice is now back in Doncaster. (CB)

I am in touch with Janice again, on Facebook's Kirkby Avenue School Group (CP)

Trevor was the leader of our little group of street lads. We wandered around the whole district as well as playing in the street. He was an even-tempered boy: I can't recall him ever being rough or nasty to the younger boys. I never saw him after his accident. John was a nice lad and was also part of our group. Mrs Ashmore was very nice. I remember going in their house once and noticing that although the radio was playing quite loudly nobody was listening to it and thinking that it was very silly thing to have going on. Mr. Ashmore was a rather quiet, mild sort of man. (WTR)

**No.16**

1945 Albert and Sarah Owen  
 1949 George and Peggy Cox  
 1953 Albert and Sarah Owen

The Owens were really nice people. Their daughter, Peggy and husband, lived with them until she got one of the new houses on Haselmere Grove. Peggy Cox had their first baby, Susan, while living there. She had a very smart, high, new Silver Cross pram that smelt lovely with the baby in it. (CP)

**No.17**

1945 James and Beatrice Burkill  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

The Burkill's were a happy-go-lucky lot. Mrs B was often at the gate talking to us children. She was friendly and kind but my mother disapproved that she had so many children and didn't keep her house very clean. Mr B worked at the Plant. I played with Geoffrey and Carol. Robert was a nice lad and used to stick up for other youngsters in the street if anyone picked on them. It isn't that long ago that Robert's wife got in touch with me, through Friends Reunited, about Kirkby Avenue School being demolished. Mrs B was still in Earlstown Drive and going out and about. Now I know that she was working for the Mentally Handicapped at the time. (CP)

Mrs. Burkill was brought up in Marsh Gate. She was married at about 17 and they had eight children. As stated, she was often at the gate talking to the children and watching them play, the only mother in the street really to interact with them as a group. Mr. B. was very quiet. Cliff Ayres told me years later that he committed suicide. Robert was quite young for our group but he sometimes played with us. He seemed relatively mature for his years. (WTR)

For more detail, including Mrs Burkill's invitation to Buckingham Palace, see the main text.

**No.18**

1945 Frederick and Emily Redfearn  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

Once when I came home on the bus, Mr R rolled down the road in front of me very drunk, but harmless. (CP)

Mr R. was a miner. They had one son, Alan, born on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1935. He was one of our group. Once, out of friendship, I went with him on his paper round. At the bottom of one of the streets in the Grove he asked me to take a paper to a house half-way down the street. As I ran there with it, I realised what a mug I was to do that when he was getting paid for it. That was the only time I ever delivered a paper. (WTR)

**No.19**

1945 Frank and Ivy Wolstenholme and John Hall  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 Frank and Ivy Wolstenholme, Lois Wolstenholme and John Hall

Mr Wolstenholme was a miner. They had a daughter Lois; she and her husband, Jack Frost, lived there for some time. (GJ)

Lois was born in 1933 or 1934. When I was about five, I was in the street with Lois and another boy – probably Darrell Nicholls. Lois said that boys were different from girls in a way that was not obvious; an agreement was reached that we would expose ourselves to each other. Although it was done very quickly and without being observed by anyone else, there was sufficient time to verify the truth of her original statement. (WTR)

**No.20**

1945 Muriel Fotheringham  
 1949 ditto plus Oswald Fotheringham  
 1953 ditto

They had a daughter post war, Ruth. I think that Mr F. was away in the services during the war since I can hardly remember him even though their house was opposite to ours. (WTR)  
 They later had a son called Philip, who was younger than Ruth. (CB)

**No.21**

1945 William and Constance Ward  
 1949 Harold Gledhall and Rose Knowles  
 1953 ditto

Mrs. Ward's married younger sister lived in Jossey Lane and when she had her second child she passed her first one, Darrell Nichols (born in 1934) to Mrs W to bring up because she couldn't have children of her own. No doubt because of this he was often in some kind of trouble. I think that today he would be classified as "disturbed". Once he tossed a large stone over a haystack and it hit me on the forehead producing profuse bleeding. I'm not sure what Mr W did although I remember that he had a car. Mrs W had those unsightly brown marks on her lower legs which many older women had in those days due to frequent sitting very close an open coal fire. Harold and Rose were a middle-aged couple; I didn't know that they not married. "Mrs" G. was often seen vigorously polishing her front step. Perhaps she had OCD. (WTR)

By the time I went out to play in the street, the Wards had left, so I didn't ever see a car in the street till Mr Hughes' car some years later (CP)

**No.22**

1945 George and Alice Robinson  
 1949 Norman and May Varley  
 1953 ditto

We liked the Varleys. They had a little girl and my sister and I would help look after her and take her out in the pram. (CP)

**No.23**

1945 Fred and Mary Binns  
 1949 Edward and Doreen Rice  
 1953 George, Eliza and Sheila Chadwick

**No.24**

1945 Alice Robinson  
 1949 ditto plus Edwin Robinson  
 1953 ditto

**No.25**

1945 John and Emma Carrier  
 1949 Joseph and Rose Lloyd  
 1953 ditto

Doreen Carrier was about my age. She went to live with her grandmother when first her mother and then her father died. (GJ)

Mr Carrier was killed in an accident at Bentley Colliery. Mrs C. was a large-boned woman with a reddish face and a very deep voice. She also died early, leaving Doreen an orphan while still very young. (WTR)

**No.26**

1945 George and Edith Sayles  
 1949 Percy and Edna Moorhouse  
 1953 ditto

The Sayles had a young daughter. After moving to Hexthorpe Mrs S committed suicide. Mrs M was one of the few older people who spoke to children in the street. (WTR)  
 Mrs M was dark and round and very kind. (CP)

**No.27**

1945 Samuel and Sarah Swaby  
 1949 Harold and Emily Blackburn  
 1953 ditto

The Swabys had children. Sam was brother to Walter who lived next to us. I always thought they were Jewish refugees. (GJ)

**No.28**

1945 Alice Schofield  
 1949 James and Alice Hughes  
 1953 ditto

Mrs Schofield was widowed and had a daughter called Cherie (or Cherry). Mr H moved in as a lodger and married her and they had their own daughter called Pauline. Hughes was a plumber and the first man in the street to have a car. When widows were subsidised to go over to the War Graves, Alice went and so did Mr H. My Dad was in the British Legion at the time and he resigned in fury that this man, who had not served in the war was being paid for to go over with her. (CP)

**No.29**

1945 Eric and Elsie Lumby  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

Mr L. was a tall, lugubrious fellow with a reddish face. They had no children. He rode a bike to work. (WTR)

**No.30**

1945 Franklin Ledger  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

Mr Ledger was related to Mrs Dexter at No.31. He and the Dexters were all getting on in years. They were a miserable lot who never spoke to or smiled at children. (WTR)

**No.31**

1945 Andrew and Evelyn Dexter  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

**No.32**

1945 George and Gladys White  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

Mr W was a miner. He was quite friendly with my dad. They had two children post war. I used to play with Sylvia White but, like Michael Stambridge, she didn't mix with us much. She had to help a lot in the home after her mother had another baby boy. I think she left school at 14 to become a hairdresser. When I got in touch with Friends Reunited, I found Barry was a policeman in Canada. I asked him what happened to Sylvia but he didn't reply. (CP)

For a long time we thought their surname was "Oakes". I knew little about them although Mr White always said "Hello" to me. (WTR)

**No.33**

1945 George Ayres and Edith Brown  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

George Ayres was born in 1911. He was a joiner. His son, Clifford, was born on Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>. 1935. He was my first close friend. We often played Cowboys and Indians in the back lane. Later we were both in the gang led by Trevor Ashmore. Mrs A died in childbirth in the summer of 1942. (My squeamish mother told me that she had died of kidney disease which I believed until 2009.) Edith Brown was Mr Ayres' mother who moved in some time after his wife's death. Cliff has lived in Stranraer for many years. Mr Ayres lived well into his nineties. (WTR)

Mrs Brown always wore a ratty fur coat and smoked clay pipes. (GJ)

Cliff Ayres can't remember his grandmother smoking a clay pipe, but she did smoke cigarettes. (WTR)

**No.34**

1945 George and Nellie Parnham  
 1949 ditto plus Dennis and Betty Woodward  
 1953 George and Nellie Parnham

The Parnhams came from Nottingham. Mr P was a retired miner. Once I came across an old ration book that Mrs P had thrown away in a dustbin outside their house and I saw that she was born in 1883. They were very nice. Betty, born about 1920, was their daughter. They also had a son Frank who was older and was a soldier in the war. I remember seeing him for the first time as he walked up the street after being demobbed in 1945. Mr P died in 1955. (WTR)

**No 35**

1945 Norman and Frances Raynes  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

For more detail, see main text.

I always liked Stephanie but, being quiet and a little older, she kept to herself and wasn't part of the street "gang". She had a lovely smile. She had a boyfriend called Alan Attenborough and they used to meet at the end of the street, near the backs, but she asked us to tell her if "Our Bill" or her dad was coming. One of the men at the Reunion in 2009, Dave Watts, told me he had a crush on Stephanie all the time he was at Percy Jackson's but she was never interested in him. It is hard to believe it is more than 50 years since she was murdered. I was on holiday in Guernsey at the time, and her photograph took up the whole front page of the Daily Mirror on a newsstand. Such a waste of a promising life. (CP)



**No.36**

1945 Richard and Louise Wadsworth  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

Two children, Gary born 1939 and Rita born 1943. Rita was a bonny lass – as my Mum used to say. We've kept in touch. It was hard for her as she was an unmarried mother at 17. People were so condemning in those days, not like now. (CP)

Mr W worked at the Plant Works. He talked with my father often but never said anything to me. I remember once hearing Gary crying inside the house, "No father, no", as he was about to be punished by his father for some misdeed. Mr W died suddenly from a heart attack in 1961. Soon after that Gary was married and went to live in South Africa. Mrs W talked to my mother a lot. Rita was a very good-looking girl who played a lot with my sister. (WTR)

**No. 37**

1945 Frank and Vera Barlow  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

Their daughter, Jacqueline, was born around 1940. She also played with my sister. They were a very quiet couple; Mrs B had a very freckled face. I believe that in the fifties Mr B ran for the council but was not elected. Mrs B lived well into her nineties. Jacqueline lived in Arksey for many years but, after her husband's death moved to Balfour Road, Bentley. (WTR)

**No 38**

1945 Gladys Roebuck  
 1949 ditto plus Jack Roebuck  
 1953 ditto

My mother liked Mrs Roebuck and they used to stop and chat. (CP)  
 Mr Roebuck was an ambulance driver. He and Mrs. R were very nice. Their son Colin was born in the early forties. There was a younger son called Geoffrey. (WTR)

**No.39**

1945 Frederick and Muriel Haigh  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

They had a daughter Margaret who was about my age. I think there were two more children. (GJ)

**No.40**

1945 Thomas and Sarah Bell  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

Seemed a really old couple but I think her father lived there too. (GJ)

**No.41**

1945 Ernest and Liberta Willey  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

Cross-tempered and ratty – they would never return our ball. (GJ)  
 We didn't like Mr Willey. (CP)

**No.42**

1945 Walter and Margaret Swaby  
 1949 George and Grace Bennett  
 1953 ditto plus Alice Brenda Hall

The Swabys had a daughter Betty (b.1929). (GJ)

We liked the Swabys. We once went on a coach trip to Whitby with them. I have some photos of us all on the moors and at the seaside. (CP)

No Bennet children I can recall. (GJ)

**No.43**

1945 George and Lily Jones  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

Three children – Grace (1935), Derek (1943) and Vera (1944). My parents bought the house for £440. The £25 deposit was provided by my mother who had saved from aged 14 to 28 when she married my father. She worked making brass taps at Peglers. (GJ)

For more detail, see main text.

**No.44**

1945 Edward and Florence Thompson  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto plus Tom and Mabel Langton

“Great Uncle Ted” was some sort of cousin to my maternal grandfather. “Great Aunt Anne” was “dying” for years. Her daughter, Mabel, and husband, Tom, lived with them as carers. Mrs. T survived her husband and daughter and lived in a nursing home until nearly 100. Tom lived at No.44 until the 80s, I think. (GJ)

**No.45**

1945 George and Mary Butler  
 1949 Charles and Annie Harrison  
 1953 ditto

I remember the Harrisons at No.45. They had a lovely brown spaniel called Judy who had silky ears and liked us to stroke her. Also, a pretty daughter called Barbara who married a nice-looking young man called Bernard. They had to live with Barbara’s parents until they were able to find a house of their own. Mr Harrison asked if we would remove our dividing fence so he could drive between our two front paths to park his car in the garage he had built to replace his shed. My parents were pretty easy going and agreed, but we later regretted it because he would leave the car between our two houses with the engine going and the exhaust used to come in our windows and fill our house with fumes. When Dad asked him to stop, they wouldn't speak to us anymore. Had that been me, I would have put the fence back up! (CP)

**No.46**

1945 Cyril Barker and Lilian Pearson  
 1949 Frank and Lilian Pearson  
 1953 ditto

Frank and Lilian were my parents, and I have a sister, Jean, who was born in 1946. Cyril Barker was a solicitor, and a lodger for a short time. As I mentioned above, many women took lodgers because of the housing shortage. It was quite normal. More about my family in my Memories, above. (CP)

For more detail, see main text.

**No.47**

1945 Martin and Jane Farkin and Teresa Cope  
 1949 Martin and Jane Farkin  
 1953 ditto

The Farkins and had two daughters. One, who married a Pole, moved out when the new houses were built on Haslemere Drive. They had two boys, one of whom came in our house and stole the watch I had been given for Christmas. His grannie found it all smashed up a few weeks later. Their other daughter married a serving soldier. They had two children, Maureen and Anthony. I liked playing with Maureen when she came to stay. She spoke “posh” and so most of the other children in the street were not interested. I always liked meeting different children and was interested in the different lives they had. They had been posted to Aden and told me about flat topped houses and people in Arab clothes. (CP)

**No.48**

1945 Wilfred and Gladys Robertshaw  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

I liked them. She was so friendly. I didn't know that Brian was adopted until Bill mentioned it, but he had lovely blonde curly hair and Mrs R. was very proud of him when he was going to train to be a surveyor. She was a very kind lady and I visited her once when I went back to Doncaster. (CP)

I found the Robertshaws to be very friendly too. My mother told me that their son, Brian, was adopted. He was a few years younger than me but we became friendly for a few years in the early fifties. Around 1953 he had a Grundig tape-recorder and it was at his house that I first had my voice recorded; it was quite a shock to hear it. (WTR)

**No.49**

1945 James and Ethel Cuffling  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

Their daughter Joy, a couple of years my senior, was the only child of elderly parents. (GJ)  
 The Cufflings were mentioned in Janet Greenwood Barker's book ('In Parallel') about her childhood when her mother ran “The Drum” in Watch House Lane. Joy was her best friend. (CP)

**Fig 12: 'Best Friends'**

**Joy Cuffling (L) & Janet Greenwood,  
 at the Percy Jackson GS in 1949.**

**No.50**

1945 George, Edith, Joseph and Lucy Hartill  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 George and Edith Hartill

**No.51**

1945 Charles and Katherine Peill.  
 1949 ditto  
 1953 ditto

The Peills had an only daughter called Susan, never part of the “gang”, but played with Marilyn Sunley. (CP)  
 Susan Peill came back to Earlston Drive to live in her mother's house. (CB)

**No.52**

1945 Evelyn Emberton  
 1949 Evelyn Emberton and William Emberton  
 1953 ditto plus Patricia and Sylvia Emberton

Two sisters. Pat and Sylvia, the youngest. Their dad was out East in the Army for many years. (GJ)  
 The Embertons were considered a bit “posh” and kept to themselves. Their son lived next door. (CP)  
 As said, the Embertons were distinctly aloof. (WTR)

**No.53**

1945 Henry and Annie Emberton and Charles Phillip and Lillian Clark  
 1949 ditto minus Lillian Clark  
 1953 ditto

The Embertons were William Emberton's parents. The Embertons at No. 53 had Southern accents and some residents considered them snooty and standoffish. (WTR)  
 Once I moved to Reading, I was also sometimes accused of being "posh" by my Doncaster friends because of my acquired accent. One of the Embertons' daughters lived in Felixstowe and when they visited, I used to go and play with the granddaughter, Diana, who was the same age as me. I've mentioned before that I used to like finding out about people who lived somewhere else. I still am very interested in people and their stories. (CP)

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Ken is the author of '*Percy Jackson's: A history of the Percy Jackson Grammar School*', 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2010, published by Troubador/Matador.

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