



Fancy dress: Empire Day 1936

School

Although we were nearer the Council School I was bound to go to the Church School, back to my roots! I remember the first day walking into the HUGE, to a five-year-old, main hall and meeting Mr Loose, the Head, a man to be respected in every way. I progressed through the classes and teachers, Miss Courtenay, Miss Leeming, Miss Greenwood, Mr Hughes(?) and Miss Jones in a blur! The first two were the Infants and we had a separate play yard. After that the boys had a separate yard from the girls. Just as well because some of the yard games approached sudden death. Stout Horses where we made long crouching backs onto which others jumped until the whole lot collapsed, the Whip where we linked arms and rushed round to see how many were thrown off at the end. You had to join in or be classed as a wimp but I soon worked out the safest places to be!

Friends

My best friends were Peter Aylott and Fred Caldow. Pete lived in Beacon Lane and Fred in Downham Road so our play area of choice was the Beacons. We knew every inch of it. We skidded down the ruts on the sandstone outcrops and got lost in the rhododendron thicket. We had an old pram chassis which made a terrifying ride down the steeper parts. The pools were reputed to have drag down weeds so we kept out of those more or less. In school Betty Potts was my chief rival for top swot. I remember Derek Massey who became a butcher. There was Val Scott who, if he is still around, may not wish to be reminded of joining me in our cowboy suits to play the part of New Zealand sheep farmers one Empire Day!

Castle Buildings

By 1936 Castle Buildings were being built. Charlie Peers the builder was an old acquaintance of my parents. They were ready to move on from the Mount, which I assume they rented, to a place of their own. Mr Peers was keen to get his new development occupied so a deal was done and Bradleys moved into 1 Castle Buildings and set up the new Cycle Shop. Shortly after T.A. Ball, Funeral Director, moved into No 2. Once the family was settled it was completed by the birth of my sister Val in late 1937. Gradually the rest of the shops were finished and

the garages at the back. I had a great time watching all this going on. I got into trouble one day when I returned from my supervisory duties to tell Mum that work had stopped because they were 'buggered for bricks'! By this time the Castle had been mainly demolished but we could play in the ruins. There were mysterious half-demolished staircases which went down into cellars! What's all this about Health and Safety? The old Castle grounds down to the Mount were not built on in my time, though Castle Drive was built. Nor was the area latterly occupied by Kwiksave. So we had an excellent area all through the war for a variety of games. The 'Buildings' gradually grew a group of kids, the Kirkhams at No 4, the Holfords, Ralph Jordan and his evacuated cousin in the war, and several from Castle Drive. We had a good time! We also had the area by the Hospital where the Baptist Church now is as another wild area, with fabulous blackberries. Later we spread to the Dales for larger space, not so encroached on as now. This provided stimulating sledging in the winters of '40 and '41 later and mini-cliffs of sandstone from which we flew arduously constructed model aircraft to their doom in the gorse bushes.

Local business

I remember the businesses in Heswall particularly well because many of them had carrier bikes on which errand boys (no girls!) delivered to customers and my father was the local repairer. He employed two mechanics, Reg Hensby from Thornton Hough and Bob Anyon from Neston, who worked in a large double garage at the back. One of my jobs was to take out the bills for this work to the shopkeepers every three months or so and I would stand and look at them earnestly so that they paid straightaway! In the days before supermarkets the shops marched up Pensby Road in their specialisms: Kellys the bakers, Reddys the butchers, Meakins, bakers but especially cakes, Tarbucks the fish, Egertons general grocers and so on. On the opposite side was the Bon-Bon (no prizes for guessing that), Ron and Ernie Banks – we called him Tango Banks, I wonder if he ever knew. Then there was Marles for ladieswear, Woodward's the butcher, the Post Office, Miss Lloyd newsagent and bookseller with a copy of 'Eves without Leaves' somewhat oddly for a pillar of the Methodist Church, in the window. I wonder if she thought it was about the Garden of Eden! There could be a lot more, and I am still in the Thirties, but I have no doubt that I am testing your patience so I will call a halt at this point!



My parents, Bill and Doris with brother Alan