

Anne Barrett



Bow Bells to Bluebells

Anne Patrick

My mum, Ann Goodale, married Charles Patrick. Together they had four children. I was the second born. My mum died in childbirth giving birth to her fifth child. We were two girls and two boys: Charles was born in 1923; I was born in 1925; Emily in 1926 and Roy in 1927.



My mum

I was born on 4th January 1925. We lived on Maplin Road in Custom House. Everyone called me Anny.

When my mum died my dad had to support us, so he joined the Merchant Navy. He worked on the run to New Zealand, which would mean three months of working, with two weeks off.

Living with Granny

In those days you sent orphaned girls to a place for 'waifs and strays' and the boys went sent by Dr Barnardo's to Australia. My dad didn't want that and hoped we could stay together. My grandma, Maude Patrick, lived on Rendell Road, Custom House. She already had nine children, but she agreed to take us on. It was a three-bedroom Victorian house. We enjoyed living with granny, but it was a strict life; do as you're told as you would get a wallop! Granny worked hard, even though she had a heart problem. We

would help by scrubbing potatoes, making beds and washing up.

My grandad, Charles Patrick, was a cobbler. He practised in the back room of our house. We children would walk round to the regular customers, asking them if they needed shoes mending. Men's soles and heels cost 2 shillings and threepence and women's cost 1 shilling and sixpence.

Granny always had the range on. She would send us to get a leg of lamb from the butcher Mr Wallers. On a Saturday Mr Wallers would have the meat out on the pavement. He would hold each joint up and ask for offers. Granny would tell us not to pay more than three shillings and sixpence. Mr Wallers would notice it was us – and feel sorry for us as orphans – and would then put in a few extras with the joint. Granny would then cook the joint and we would eat it on a Sunday. On a Monday we would have cold meat and mash, on Tuesday a stew from the bones, and on Wednesday dumplings and gravy.

We had a bungalow bath at home; three people could fit in it. It was often cold at home. We had to put coats on our bed to keep warm. One February the docks flooded and we had to go to the shops in the bath!

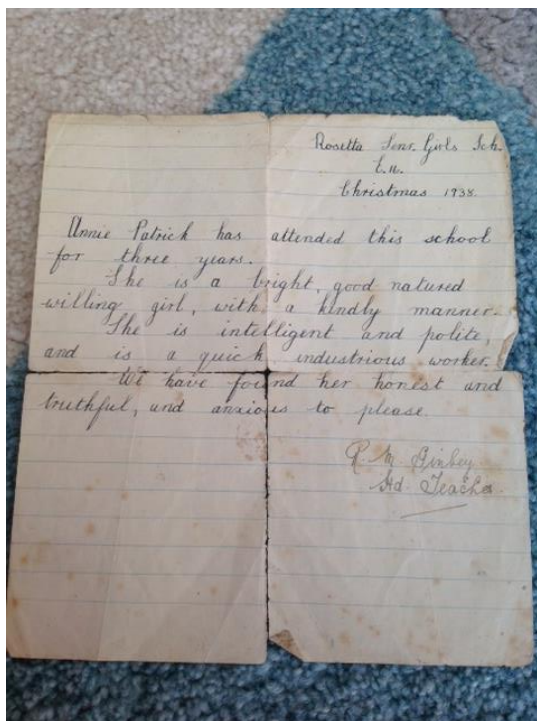
We never had much money. Sometimes I would make crepe paper flowers and then sell them. When I was little granny would buy a big bag of oranges at Christmas and share them amongst the children. We would throw them at each other before we ate them! Emmy's first job was at a peanut factory. She roasted the peanuts and any that were burnt would be thrown out and the local children would gather them and eat them.

Granny and grandad would buy supplies from the local corner shop. Usually they would be 'on the tick'; they would buy on credit and pay it back at the end of the week. Our clothes were passed down from Aunty Maude to Aunty Emmy and me and my sister.

Going to School

We went to the local school, Rosetta Road School, Beckton Park in West Ham, E16. The boys were taught on the top floor the girls on the ground floor.

I was deaf and my sister Emily had bad eyes, so we often went to the clinic at the school.



A letter from Miss Gimbey

One of the things we did at school was housewifery. We had to clean a house, cook a meal and a teacher would judge us. We would also wash, iron and clean.

I do remember a good day out, when the children at the top of the class, were taken to the Guildhall to meet the Lord Mayor of London. We had lamb for lunch.

Miss Gimbey was the headteacher. She was a buxom lady. She would make us stand in line and check that our shoes were shined, that we had our navy-blue knickers on and that we had a hankie in the pocket of the knickers. When I left school, Miss Gimbey gave me a letter; I still have it.

The other teachers I remember were Miss Hussey and Miss Riley. Miss Riley learned to lipread and taught me, because of my poor hearing. I wasn't allowed to join in the singing because of my hearing. Miss Hussey made us embroider silk underwear with her initials.

We would have showers at school, a spray bath once a week. We would wash with

Lifebuoy soap in a hot shower, followed by a cold shower.

I won a scholarship to go to West Ham Grammar School. My granny needed the money, so she sold my place at the school to the bookmaker around the corner. His daughter, Florrie Lines, took my place at the school.

Life by the Docks

In our free time we played in the streets, playing whip & top, hopscotch and marbles. Sometimes we would go to the grocers and get the straw rope that was used to wrap boxes of oranges. We would loop this around a lamp post and then swing round on it.

We would also hop on Woolwich ferry, until someone found us and turfed us off! We knew 'Uncle Louis' and sometimes he would let us have a ride. There was a lift that took you down to the ferry at Greenwich ferry and we used to run down the tunnel, yelling and listening to the echo.

My brothers were mudlarks and were allowed to do what they liked. Granny just wanted them out of the way, although she always favoured the boys. Charles would collect jam jars and bottles and sell them back to the glassworks. His first job was to take these same jars and bottles, throw them and smash them, so they could be recycled.

We would swim in the lido in Beckton Park, although we learned to swim in the docks. The lido was opened by Temmy, the first man to swim the Channel.

We attended three different churches. The vicar of each church had their own country estate and once a year they would take their congregation to their estate. By attending three churches, we had three trips out! One church was run by the Salvation Army, one was Church of England and one a Free Church. We would go to one in the morning, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. One of the estates was Fyfield near London.

Granny and Grandad were labour supporters and supported Jack Jones, a union leader.

Granny sent us to a jamboree outside Hackney to cheer for Jack Jones, in opposition to Oswald Moseley and the Blackshirts.

The grocer was called Pen Hobbs. He sold sweets. On the counter there would be lots of envelopes. You would pay a halfpenny and pick out an envelope. Sometimes you would get a quarter of an ounce and other times 16 ounces of sweets. The sweets were always boiled. Mr Hobbs would feel sorry for us and nod to where the 16-ounce bag was. We still had to go to the school dentist. We would clean our teeth with soot; people didn't know that the acid in the soot actually rotted your teeth.

There used to be a lot of smog in London when I was little. We called them pea soupers. You couldn't see anything. The river was literally at the end of my road, so I could dip my foot in the River Thames.

Starting Work

My birthday is January 4th, but my Granny told people that it was January 3rd, which meant that I could leave school a year earlier than I otherwise would and start work on my 14th birthday.



An aerial view of Clarnico's

My first job was at Clarnico's. The company was owned by Clark, Nichols and Coombe and they combined their surnames to create the company's name. The company made sweets and all sorts of things for Christmas, including crackers and toys. I worked in the

cosak room, dressing dolls mostly. This part of the company was in Hackney Wick but the sweet factory was at Hackney Bridge. It was set alongside other large companies, including Yardley's. I would walk up to Canning Town, catch the train one stop to Stratford and then walk to Hackney Wick. The bus cost 3 and halfpence which was too expensive.

In the cosak room there were four benches, with six girls working at each bench. I had to dress 144 dolls in one day. I would be paid 1 shilling and sixpence a day, so 10 shillings sixpence a week. I started work at 8am and finished at 6pm. We listened to the radio whilst we worked and chatted to each other. The only break was at lunchtime; boiled potatoes and gravy which cost a penny.

You were allowed to eat as many sweets as you wanted whilst you were at work, but you could not take any home with you. My favourite sweet was a walnut whipped cream. (see article on Clarnico in Appendix 1.)

WWII and the Blitz

We were bombed out in 1940. We took cover in our Andersen shelter; me, granny and grandad, Emily and Roy. We heard the bombing whilst we were in the shelter; it sounded like banging. Charlie had already been called up. He was in the marines, first in Dover and then in Australia. My dad went to visit him when his ship was nearby.

When we came out of the shelter, we saw our house had been bombed. The army was there, waiting for us. We wanted to go back inside to collect some souvenirs, including my dad's butterfly wing photographs (which he had brought back from New Zealand). But the army said that they would shoot us if we tried to go inside.

One of our neighbours asked us if we had seen his wife Lil'. Grandad later saw her lying on the road with her baby in her arms; we didn't say anything in case we were stopped from leaving the area. A lot of people died that day.

Near to my home there was a terrible tragedy, where lots of families were sent to a local primary school – South Halsville, Radland Road – in Canning Town. They were all waiting there to be evacuated, having already lost their homes in the bombing. In September 1940, the school was bombed killing almost all of the families sheltering there. The government covered it up, worried it would affect morale and the story only recently came to light (see Simon Calder article in Appendix 2).

I don't know what happened to Clarnico but many of the large companies along the docks were bombed around that time, including Tate & Lyle and Dunlop Tyres.

Escaping London

We walked to Aldgate East Station and managed to catch a train straight through to Amersham. We knew that Aunty Emmy had already managed to find a home in

Amersham with her German husband Jack (Raither).

They argued, Aunt Emmy was small and feisty and stood up for herself, so Jack returned to Germany. She was dad's sister. Jack and Emmy had three children, but two of them died and one joined a convent.

We arrived in Amersham on the Sunday morning and the council gave us all some lodgings at the Wheatsheaf pub on London Road. We shared the pub's rooms with four other families; Mr & Mrs Jacobs, Teddy's Goldberg's mum; Dave Langley the ambulance driver and us. My sister and I shared a room downstairs. There was a narrow set of stairs up to the bedrooms. Many of the rooms were filled with uniforms belonging to the Girl Guides. The Police Station was just down the road from us. Opposite the station was Dr Starkey's surgery.

Brazil's in Amersham

After arriving on the Sunday, on the Monday we went down to Brazil's, the sausage and pie factory. John Brazil was the head of the sausage department. Emily and I had an interview and he accepted us straight away and said that we could start that day. Our pay was 22 shillings and sixpence, which we were delighted with.

We had to make sausages and pies. Sometimes we would have to work long hours, when a large order came in, or when troops stopped overnight in Piper's Wood. A railway ran through and we would send food over to them. On these days I would work from 7am to 11pm. John Brazil was a good boss. During an evening shift he would make sure we didn't go without dinner. He would get empty tins of liver and Spam and put them on the top of the boiler in the middle of the factory. When hot enough he would put sausages inside the tins, cook them and serve them to us with some bread.

When we were less busy, we would be sent to Mantles Green Farm on School Lane, which the Brazil's also owned. We would weed the fields and help with growing food.

Volunteering



People I remember in the photo: Emily Patrick, Maud Patrick, May Alcorn, 3 x sisters Truit, Mary Adams, Margaret Worley, Olive Starkey, Percy Rance, Paige Family, Anne Patrick, Dol Newton

At 17 I volunteered for the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service). I had to go for a medical in

High Wycombe. I made it through all the training, just by lip reading but I failed the medical because of my poor hearing; Dr Ferguson said I wouldn't be able to do it. Dr Starkey, though, suggested I should join the NAAFI (National Army & Air Force Institutes) and he said that he would support my application.

I was accepted and sent to RAF Mildenhall, Bomber Command, in Suffolk. I worked in the kitchens, making food for the airmen. I was there for three years and enjoyed the experience, but we would count the aircraft out, including Lancaster Bombers, and count them back in. It was a harrowing time. The entertainment section was based at Mildenhall so lots of famous people spent time there. I worked alongside Max Bygraves' wife and Vera Lynn's husband worked on the base. Sometimes the airmen would ask for extra chips or an extra egg, which we would try to give them. I had a boyfriend Bill in Amersham, but he went to join the Navy.

Whilst I was there my granny died at the age of 59. I didn't want to have to go back and

look after grandad so I stayed in Suffolk. When I was back in Amersham we all looked after him. He was given extra coupons for milk and fruit because he had been gassed in the First World War. He was 80 years old when he died.

Amersham in the 1940s

My best friend in Amersham was Gwen Starkey. She wasn't related to Dr Starkey but lived opposite the Mill Stream Café on the Broadway. I was her bridesmaid at her wedding. She married a man in the 51st Highlanders, who stopped in Amersham during the war. Gwen's daughter later ran a care home for older people in Chartridge, the Willows.

Gwen and I would go to the Regent Cinema together. We went to the Playhouse too, trying to see Dirk Bogarde. We also went to dances at St Michael's Church on Sycamore Road; they held them several nights a week.

My brother Charlie returned from the marines and eventually he settled down and married

Lorna Constable. He still lives in Fieldway Amersham. Emily married Peter Aldridge and they lived together at 16 First Avenue. Roy married a girl from the North, Mary. He lives in Blackpool.

Statters

At the end of the war the government tried to find everyone a job. I had returned from Suffolk and was living at 16 London Road (Aunt Emmy had gone back to London so we had her house). I was given a job at Statters in Little Chalfont.

On my first day I went in and felt a bit intimidated. It was mostly all middle-aged men and just three women.

I was given white overalls to wear, which soon became black, oily and dirty. I worked on the lathe and milling machine. My job was to work on admiralty boxes; I had to mill them down and then drop a white liquid on to them (flux) in order to make holes in them. It wasn't dangerous.



Staff at Statters: Miss. Spratley, Mrs Skate, Gladys Edlin, Irma von Kerkoven. Helena, Evelyn Edwards, Dorothy Narroway, Megan

I worked 8am to 6pm with an hour's break for lunch (12.30-1.30pm), when we listened to Workers' Playtime on the radio. The girls had to eat separately from the men, in a little space up a ladder and through a hatch. Our food was handed to us through the hatch.

I was given a wage packet on a Friday; it was piece work so you were paid for what you had done. Our manager was Ray Honour.

Every year the company dance was held at the Drill Hall in Chesham. Jim and I both liked dancing so we got together. Our wedding was 11 months after that first dance.

Getting Married

Before we could get married I had to live in Chesham – you had to be living within the bounds of Chesham. I moved in with Jim and his mum on Bellingdon Road.

We got married at St Mary's Church in Chesham in November 1945. I had two bridesmaids, my sister Emily and Phyllis (Jim's cousin). I borrowed a dress from Mrs Lacey; it had been worn by six people before me. I had a bouquet of red carnations. Mrs Mason, who had a florist shop in Chesham, lived on our road and gave the flowers as a wedding gift.



After the ceremony we had a meal at British Legion. It was ham and salad and a wedding cake, made by a baker on Townsend Road, who was a friend of Jim's.

After we got married I had to leave Statters, because you weren't allowed to work with your partner. I went to work in the canteen for the Bucks Laundry, on Waterside.

Jim

Jim's dad was James John Barrett. He specialised in marbling. His mum's name was Jane Miller.

Jim's Mum had a daughter Ada in 1901. Twins Fred and Margery were born in 1915 and the second set of twins, Jim and May were born in 1920. May tragically died when his Mum lost her footing on the stairs. His sister Margery had polio as a child and it left her crippled, which meant she had a very difficult life.

Jim loved football, darts and snooker. Every Thursday night all the young apprentices would come to our house, have dinner and then play darts together. He had a wicked sense of humour. He was really good at telling a joke and was the nicest man that I ever knew.

Our First Home

When we first married we were living with Jim's Mum on Bellingdon Road. It was a two up, two down house with five full time adults living there, Jim's Mother, Margery, Jim and me. Fred was there Monday to Friday then at the weekend he travelled to Neasden to his sister Ada's house where Sheila was staying (Sheila was Fred's wife). Jim and Fred shared a bed mid-week with Mum, Margery and I squeezed into the second bed. Jim and I shared a bed at the weekend!

I would often go and visit Mr Dean, the housing officer at the council offices on the High Street. I kept asking for a house for me and Jim. Sheila was given a prefab, but she

said no so I asked Mr Dean if I could have it and he said 'yes!' It was on Chessmount Rise. For the first time I had a fridge, a (boiler type) washing machine and two bedrooms. My family from London could come and visit and stay in my spare room!

I had coupons to buy furniture. If Jim had had his way he would have cut holes in the floor and we could sit on the floor! Instead we bought things bit by bit, from Brandon's and the Co-op in Chesham. We improvised too. We took fruit boxes, doubled them together, covered them in wallpaper and put them by the bed and used them as shelves.

We had a garden for growing vegetables. We would grow everything; potatoes, carrots, onions, beetroot. Jim also had an allotment for his mum at the bottom of Pond Park. We only grew vegetables – we would scrump the fruit! We would collect blackberries on Ley Hill Common, to make blackberry and apple jelly.

Living on Chessmount Rise was a very happy time of our lives.

I had a neighbour called Barbara, who is still alive. When I went into the John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford (an operation to help my hearing) Barbara looked after Janet. Our neighbours, Beryl and Geoff Hobbs bought a £10 ticket to emigrate to Australia (although they eventually ended up in New Zealand).

Starting a Family

I lost three babies before Janet was born. I was sent to Chesham Cottage Hospital when I lost the babies. Lord Chesham had given the land to build the hospital, on the hill off Waterside. All local people paid a subscription every week, collected on a Friday evening. We paid 1 shilling and sixpence per week. Eventually the hospital went over to the NHS and it was used by local doctors and dentists. It was a proper hospital; where Amersham Hospital had huts, this was a proper building. It was burnt down and there is nothing there now.

The doctor in Wycombe said to me that he would send me to see someone who knew what they were doing and could help me have a baby. My blood group is Rhesus Negative and that was the reason I was losing the babies. I was sent to see Doctor Beatrice Turner, first at Amersham Hospital and then at Shardeloes (which was requisitioned as a maternity hospital from 1939-1948).

Doctor Turner was quite scary. She asked me lots of intimate questions and was very blunt. She examined me in front of lots of students. She gave me violet capsules and told me to take them regularly. We kept in touch – I had to keep walking up Shardeloes Hill to see her and within six months I was pregnant with Janet.

When Janet was due I was sent to the Royal Bucks Hospital in Aylesbury to have her. I could not take the bus, so Dave Langley the ambulance driver (whom I knew from the Wheatsheaf) came to my house at 5am and took me. The ambulance was a simple

vehicle with benches along either side. There was a window behind Dave's cab and he would open and close it and kept asking me if I was alright. I was sick all the way to the hospital. Dave said 'a sick labour is a safe labour.'

Janet was born in 1949. She was 10lbs and I had to stay in hospital for three weeks with her, to get her back to her birth weight. I couldn't believe it when she was born, I was so happy. Jim came to visit me all the time, on the back of a friend's motorbike.

We took Janet home to Chessmount Rise. The walk up the hill to the house was very steep. We had a Silvercross sprung pram, so the baby was not bumped around on the walk up the hill. We wrapped her up in lots of layers. We were regularly given a bottle of orange juice for her (up to the age of five), a bottle of milk and cod liver oil. All of these things were thought to keep the baby well. There was rationing when Janet was little and as she was the only child in the family the

adults would pool their sweet rations and give them to her!



*Our prefab home. Janet in front garden
with playmates.*

When Janet was little I worked at the Regent Cinema in Amersham. I was the cleaner and was allowed by the manager, Mr Smith, to bring Janet and leave her in the pram in the foyer. It was a lovely, luxurious cinema, with a balcony. I never went to the pictures there; I went to the Embassy on Germain Street. It was a Shipman & King cinema. They often showed black and white films starring John Mills. I used to like to watch the newsreel before the film began. I didn't go all that often once we had a baby.



Jim was a wonderful dad and later grandad. He was really soppy about his girls. He would crawl around the floor on all fours and take them around the house. He loved children and he loved to play. They all always called him Jim. He would spend his free time – with the children – on the allotments.



Regent Cinema, Amersham. It was a lovely, luxurious cinema with a balcony. I never went to the pictures there: I went to the Embassy on Germain Street. It was a Shipman and King Cinema with a lovely restaurant on the first floor.

The Queen's Coronation, 1953

Janet was three years old in 1953. There was a coronation party at the top of Chessmount Rise. I made a crepe red, white and blue skirt for her. We were one of the only families with a TV, so everyone came round to our house. It had a 9" screen, about the size of an iPad. We bought it from Keen's in Amersham. Janet also enjoyed watching Muffin the Mule and Bill & Ben.

I also took Janet up to the East End for a street party, to visit my family. We visited my aunt Dolly in Leytonstone and watched Winifred Atwell play the piano in the street, on the back of a flatbed truck. She was brilliant.

Family Life

My second daughter, Pat, was born in 1955. I didn't think I could have any more children, so she was a surprise. I went to see Doctor Heywood and was surprised to be told that I was five months' pregnant! Jim wanted one of children to be a footballer and planned to

call the baby Patrick. When we had a girl we named her Patricia, but Jim always lovingly called her Bill. Jim was a QPR fan and was very vocal when he watched the football!

Pat was born in Amersham Hospital. It was still huts, left over from the Emergency Services Hospital in the war. I had to stay in there 21 days. Pat was a smaller baby – 8lbs and so I didn't have to stay in for so long (to regain her birth weight). I was taken in an ambulance to the hospital and Jim caught the bus.

A New Home on Beechcroft Road

I knew I couldn't keep walking up Chessmount Rise when pregnant, so we applied for a house and were given a new one on Beechcroft Road. We moved there in 1955, just as Janet started school.

The house was of unity construction (concrete blocks). During our first year, together with our next-door neighbours, we grew potatoes, this helped to break up the clay soil and provide us with a bumper crop

for the coming winter. There was a huge long garden at the back and we filled it with vegetables. We grew everything that you could think of.



Children in our garden on Beechcroft Road

Every weekend all the children on our road would come to our garden, because it was the biggest. Jim would organise all sorts of games, including football, tennis and bowls. At the end of the garden the girls made a camp. I would make jam tarts and lemonade and they played a wind-up gramophone. They didn't have many toys; they made their own play.

There was a coal fire in the sitting room but that was the only form of heat. Later on we installed night storage heaters. The house would still be cold inside and there would be icicles on the inside of the windows. We had an electric oven and a serving hatch through to the dining room.

Food was delivered directly to our home. The Co-op would deliver all sorts of things each week, including groceries, milk, coal and clothes. Jim even had his suits made by the Co-op. We always paid by cash but lots of people had an account with them.

Bread was delivered on a Friday by horse and cart. The delivery man would leave the

horse opposite our house, with a nose bag, while he popped in to visit his daughter who lived on our road. There was also a man called Bruno who delivered fruit and veg in a mobile shop. Occasionally a rag 'n' bone man would come round and give a goldfish in exchange.

Every Sunday we had roast chicken. We would listen to Jean Metcalf and Cliff Mitchelmore on Two-way family Favourites while we ate our lunch. Musical requests were sent from the UK and vice versa to our forces still based overseas after the War.

When the girls were little they would wake up on Christmas morning and switch on a torch under the covers. They were the only children in our wider family so would receive lots of presents. On Christmas Day Nan, Margery and Ada would come over. We would always watch the Queen at 3pm and Ada would make us all stand up to watch her! We ate pork for Christmas lunch, followed by Christmas pudding or peaches and custard. Sometimes we would have a glass of egg

nog. All the ladies would always have a glass of sherry. We had an artificial tree, and we would make paper chains. Christmas Day was a bit like a normal Sunday, with presents.

I loved cooking. I have made 15 wedding cakes for my family members, including my daughters, nephews, nieces and friends. I learned to cook at the NAAFI. I've still got my first Kenwood food mixer, from the 1960s and I used it to make all the wedding cakes!

I've always made clothes too. When my niece married I did the reception and made four bridesmaid dresses all for the princely sum of £72 in 1962.

Jim's Career

Jim worked at Statter's for 38 years. Usually he cycled through Waterside and Stubbs Wood to get to work. Sometimes he would catch the steam train from Chesham to Little Chalfont. (Statter's was located where the GE building is now, next to Chalfont & Latimer

station.) Jim worked in quality control and was responsible for checking everything that left the factory. He was therefore popular and unpopular with the staff! He did a good job, was well liked and well respected. When Statter's closed he went to work at Alcan in Chesham, until he retired at 65.

Twice a year we would go on a family outing to London and all the lads at Statter's would clap and blow horns when we went past on the train. We would take the children to Oxford Street to buy their spring/summer and autumn/winter clothes. We would buy them from C&A in Oxford Circus or M&S. Afterwards we would go to Lyon's Corner House or Selfridges for something to eat. Sometimes we would finish the day with a trip to the London Palladium to watch the variety show.

Shopping

There were lots of lovely shops in Chesham. I used to shop at the Co-op. There were several different Co-op Stores, selling groceries, meat, electrical goods, furniture, clothing and a bank. The Co-op was the best shop in Chesham. They would give you a 'divvy' or dividend every time you shopped there. I can't remember how much you needed to spend but in exchange you would receive 2 shillings and sixpence. You would then draw your total dividend at Christmas and that would pay for the children's Christmas presents. We would spend it at Lambert's toy shop. Mrs Lambert would try and get anything that you wanted. Things were scarce though after the war. Jim built the girls' doll's house himself.

One of the others that I remember is the House of Tree, which is where M&Co is now. It had a huge tree growing outside. There was a vestibule at the front and they sold everything. There was also the Electrical Light Company and the Gas Company. People

would stand and gossip outside the Electrical Light shop. There was a little library, where the Oxfam shop is now.

The Elgiva theatre was set up with financial support from a local man, Dougie McMinn. He started with a barrow in the market, which he built up, and then opened a hardware store in a former dressmakers shop. He was very successful and eventually had a warehouse. He made millions and some of this he gave to set up the Elgiva. He was very good to his staff too and gave each long serving employee a £25,000 payout.

Pearce's hardware store has been in Chesham a long time. Mr Pearce first worked in Statter's and the union helped him set up his hardware shop. Next door was Middleton's, a haberdashery shop. They sold fabric to make clothes and bed linen. Another shop that has been in Chesham a long time is Cox's the saddler's. Mr Cox had a broad Buckinghamshire accent. His brother was the headmaster of White Hill School. The shop sold walking sticks, gloves and handbags.

I used to buy my meat from Clay's the butcher. Mr Clay would give me a piece of suet every year so I could make a Christmas pudding. He lived in Great Missenden.

Opposite the Baptist Church was Mr Climpson. He was a wine merchant which sold every type of alcohol. If you asked for something special he would go down to the cellar and bring it up for you.

There was a row of cottages where the Sainsbury's car park is now. Jim's grandad lived there.

There were two pubs in town, with a narrow alleyway in-between. An old man from Waterside would go there every Saturday with freshly cut watercress. People would queue and buy it.

Shackmans was a factory that made watches on Waterside. They even made them for the Queen.

I remember the coal business; when the old man retired his daughter took it on. She used to carry the really heavy sacks of coal on her

back. The coal was then delivered and put in your coal house.

Holidays

We went to Butlin's every year with the children, usually to Clacton. We took the whole family, so it was a big group of us. Butlin's was all inclusive, so all the food and entertainment was paid for when you arrived. It was set up by Billy Butlin, a Canadian. Lots of people who went on to become famous started at Butlin's as Red Coats. One year when we were there Des O'Connor got married. We also saw Cliff Richard, Jimmy Tarbuck and Roy Hudd. There were lots of competitions that you could take part in, including ballroom dancing. We also saw wrestling there for the first time, including Big Daddy. For evening entertainment there was a babysitting service; a nurse on a bicycle would cycle around the site and listen out for babies crying. She would let you know if you needed to check on your baby.



Me and the girls at Butlins.

It was great for children because it was all enclosed and children could run around in safety. They would also do lots of activities in the Beaver Club. We stayed in chalets.

When we were older Jim and I travelled abroad; we visited Malta, Germany and Spain. Jim would always relax when we were on holiday. We also went on coach tours to Scotland and Wales in the summer.

Later Life



Jim and his girls

Janet became an Estate Agent in Amersham and Chesham. She married Robin, from Chartridge, a Church Organ Builder. She has a son and daughter.

Pat left home at 18 to train as an Occupational Therapist. She gained a degree from Leicester University and an MA from Northampton. She married Kevin, an Accountant, from Leicester has two daughters and a son. She was a Lecturer at Northampton University.

I have five great grandchildren, four girls and a boy and soon we're due another baby boy. They call me on Facetime a lot, so I keep in touch with them all. I am the matriarch of the family so they all look to me for help.

Jim and I were married for 62 years, he became unwell in 2006, and died of cancer. My husband and best friend was gone and I miss him terribly.

Emmy died on her 90th birthday. Roy has lived with me on and off over the years and now lives in Blackpool. Charlie is nearby in Old Amersham. I am still in regular contact with Roy and Charlie, we speak at least once a week. We have always remained very close.

Pandemic

As I close my story to date, Covid-19 sweeps across the globe affecting millions of people. The UK is in lockdown, together with much of the world. Until a vaccine is developed there is no protection and I think the world, as we know it, is about to change. At the age of 95 I am philosophical – Que Sera Sera.



My 90th Birthday

Appendix 1

Sweet Success turned sour for Hackney Wick confectionary company

Sarah Ingrams for the Hackney Gazette,
2012

Where the International Broadcast Centre and the Basketball Arena now stand was once the site of Britain's largest sweet manufacturer, Clarnico.

Now the only clue remaining to this part of Hackney Wick's past is the naming of one Olympic neighbourhood Sweetwater.

But a new book, *The Trebor Story*, preserves the area's sweet-making heritage through the stories of the manufacturers.

Author Matthew Crampton, nephew of former Trebor owner John Marks, said he was inspired to write the book to honour the family's achievement after they sold the business to Cadbury's in 1999.

“I’m not a Marks but I’m very close to them so I was in a good position to know about the business but also have the distance to talk about it.

“It’s a huge thing when a family sells a firm. They made money for it but they didn’t do it for the money. Sadly by 1989 it was almost impossible for a very large family firm to compete against the big corporations.”

But back in 1890 Hackney Wick’s sweet-making industry was thriving. Clarnico, on Carpenter’s Road, was the largest sweet manufacturer in the country and employed 1,500 people.

Ideally situated for deliveries of sugar on the banks of the River Lee navigation channel, it was famous for mint creams as well as producing liquorice Chinese Pigtails, coconut-based Toasted Haddocks and the eclectically-named Pig’s Head & Carrots and Dolly’s Musical Bottles.

Founded in 1872 as Clarke, Nickolls & Coombs, its main product was candied peel

though it soon diversified into making marmalade, jam and then sweets. By the 1900s the company had its own fire brigade, ambulance, a brass band that toured abroad and a 100-strong choral society.

“For many people their work provided a lot of social life,” said Mr Crampton. “The social aspect of factory life was crucial. I think the relationship with your employer in those days was much better than it would be for most of us today. If it was a benign employer in those days, you would be very thankful because there was a lot of exploitation.

“I don’t want to romanticise it but I am sure they were seen as a very virtuous employer and in return people felt deeply allied to them in a good sense.”

Though successful at first, the 20th century was “generally a steady decline” for Clarnico, said Mr Crampton.

“It was a tough business. The sugar price was very volatile. In the first two decades of

the 20th century, it veered between eight shillings a hundredweight and 135 shillings.”

Then, in October 1940 the factory was hit by German bombers; a setback from which it never truly recovered though the War Damage Commission paid for it to be rebuilt.

“Sadly it was out of date the moment they built it,” Mr Crampton explained. “It was on several floors in the old style but the forklift truck had transformed how factories worked.”

He said that war rationing took its toll as sugar prices rocketed but Clarnico’s Forest Gate-based competitor Trebor had an ingenious solution.

They paid a scientist to dissolve sugar in water and then imported it, boiled it to evaporate the water to leave sugar.

“By the late 1960s Clarnico was very down at heel. In the end I think the problem was it was a very traditional firm and didn’t move with the times.”

It was bought out by Trebor in 1969 for £900,000 which stopped making all of its products except the most famous. Today Clarnico exists as CNC, a property firm.

<https://www.hackneygazette.co.uk/news/features/sweet-success-turned-sour-for-hackney-wick-confectionary-company-1-1479836>

Appendix 2

Blitz: the bombs that changed Britain

Simon Calder for the Independent, November 2017

As with 9/11, so with the start of the Blitz. On a God-given September day with gentle sun shining through a crystal-clear sky, unimaginable violence ensued.

On that bright Saturday, 7 September 1940, the “Lightning War” began. Wave after wave of Luftwaffe bombers flew in over the North Sea and Essex. They swooped down over east London to unleash their deadly cargo on the docks, where much of the Second World War logistic effort was concentrated.

Besides ships and supplies, London’s Docklands was home to hundreds of thousands of people who kept the Empire’s lifeblood pumping. Their terraced homes were often only yards from the quaysides. On “Black Saturday”, as it came to be known, East Enders found themselves living beneath

the bombsights of Dornier, Heinkel and Junkers aircraft.

Nazi Germany kept up the murderous assault through the night. Just before 6am on Sunday, a bomb fell through the roof of 8 Martindale Road in Canning Town. It failed to explode. But this single impotent bomb signalled hideous potential threat to Dockland communities. As the BBC Two documentary shows with first-hand testimony, news cuttings and some meticulously kept official records, tragedy was soon to follow.

As the dust settled on Canning Town that Sunday morning, my grandfather, Ritchie Calder, took a taxi to the scene to survey the damage of the opening gambit of the Blitz. He was a 34-year-old journalist for the left-wing *Daily Herald*. What he discovered horrified him: shocking disorganisation, compounded by official lethargy.

“Many services and preparations which could have been foreseen had to be hastily improvised while bombs were dropping and people were suffering,” he wrote.

Many residents survived the air raids, but had their homes destroyed. 8 Martindale Road became the location for a terrifying amount of high explosive.

The displaced occupants became, in official parlance, refugees. But rather than being evacuated from the danger zone, they were taken no further than South Hallsville School – a few streets away – in the middle of the area taking the brunt of the bombing.

In the early hours of Tuesday morning, 10 September, what Ritchie Calder described as a “calculable certainty” came to pass.

“Major occurrence 0349 West Ham at South Hallsville School,” read the first despatch. “Badly damaged. 600 refugees accommodated here. Stated to be in panic. Casualties unknown.”

The next despatch attempted to put the first figure on that “unknown”; “at least 200, mainly children”, it mourned. A message sent by rescue workers on the scene was blunt:

“Cancel the buses. Send us morgue vans and ambulances.”

Ritchie Calder had grown up in a world at war. He was eight when the Great War began, 12 when it ended, and 33 when the Second World War started.

“Goering’s arson-squadrons,” as he described the Luftwaffe raids, moved the front line to the cities of a nation that was pitifully unready for the onslaught.

The authorities had prepared for the wrong war. They anticipated that chemical weapons would be unleashed on civilians. But Hitler’s preferred weapons of mass destruction relied upon the brute force of high explosives and incendiary bombs.

As politicians dithered, officialdom only intensified the suffering of survivors who had lost everything.

Each refugee, always desperate and often bereaved, faced a battle with bureaucracy. They had to navigate through a tangle of red tape that must have seemed impenetrable,

visiting a succession of offices in order to procure everything from new identity cards to Government-issue clothing.

Ritchie Calder paced out the painful journey that the destitute had to make, and recorded the walking distance as eight-and-a-half miles.

He was an avowed patriot – though some disputed his profound belief in Britain as he raged against the system.

“It has been my job to expose the faults and to discover the remedy, and in that capacity I have been a constant and often violent critic,” he later wrote.

Remarkably, amid the chaos of a war that Britain was in very serious danger of losing, the establishment began to forge a decent, humane social policy that treated the common man and woman with the dignity they deserved.

The government, shamed into fresh thinking, began to create the foundations of a Welfare State on the rubble of East End terraces.

Soon, bombed-out civilians were able to start reassembling their lives at hurriedly established bureaux which we would now see as one-stop shops.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/blitz-bombs-changed-britain-bbc-peter-ritchie-calder-simon-welfare-state-east-end-luftwaffe-first-a8065236.html>